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PM condemns terror attack in Australia, expresses India's support for fight against terrorism

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday condemned the terrorist attack targeting Jewish people celebrating the first day of Hanukkah at Bondi Beach in Australia. He offered condolences to the families of the victims and expressed India's support in the fight against all forms and manifestations of terrorism.

"Strongly condemn the ghastly terrorist attack carried out today at Bondi Beach, Australia, targeting people celebrating the first day of the Jewish festival of Hanukkah. On behalf of the people of India, I extend my sincere condolences to the families who lost their loved ones. We stand in solidarity with the people of Australia in this hour of grief. India has zero tolerance towards terrorism and supports the fight against all forms and manifestations of terrorism," PM Modi posted on X.

PM Modi's statement comes after at least 12 people, including one shooter, were killed in a shooting near a Jewish gathering at Bondi Beach in Sydney. As many as 29 people, including two police officers, were injured in the shooting.

A senior law enforcement official has identified one of the gunmen as Naveed Akram from Sydney's Bonnyrigg, Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) News reported. Authorities said that there is no longer an active threat; however, they asked people to avoid the area.

New South Wales (NSW) Police have said that it has been declared a terrorist incident. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese chaired a National Security Meeting and termed the shooting a "devastating terrorist incident".

Albanese said, "This afternoon, there has been a devastating terrorist incident at Bondi at the Hanukkah by the Sea celebration."

He said, "This is a targeted attack on Jewish Australians on the first day of Hanukkah, which should be a day of joy, a celebration of faith." He called the incident an "act of evil antisemitism, terrorism" that has struck the heart of the nation.

He stated, "An attack on Jewish Australians is an attack on every Australian."

Anthony Albanese said that police and security agencies of Australia are working to find anyone related to this incident and mentioned that the agencies will provide factual updates as quickly as possible, ABC News reported.

Albanese said, "Every Australian tonight will be, like me, devastated by this attack on our way of life. There is no place for this hate, violence and terrorism in our nation."

He said, "Let me be clear: We will eradicate it. Amidst this vile act of violence and hate will emerge a moment of national unity where Australians across the board will embrace their fellow Australians of Jewish faith."

In an earlier statement, NSW Police Force said, "Two people are in police custody at Bondi Beach; however, the police operation is ongoing, and we continue to urge people to avoid the area. Please obey ALL police directions. Do not cross police lines." **IANS**

Modi likely to celebrate Pongal with farmers during January TN visit

CHENNAI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to undertake a three-day visit to Tamil Nadu from January 13 to 15, during which he is likely to participate in Pongal celebrations alongside farmers, according to state BJP sources. The proposed visit, coming in the run-up to the 2026 Assembly elections, is being viewed within the party as a key outreach initiative aimed at rural voters and cultural consolidation in the state. **PTI**

CM Bhagwant Mann casts vote in his native village

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Sangrur, December 14



Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Sunday cast his vote in his native village here and expressed hope that the newly elected Zila Paishads and Block Samitis will give further impetus to development of the state.

Interacting with the media persons after casting his vote, the Chief Minister said that these elections are beneficial for overall development of the rural areas. He said that these act as the foundations of the democracy as the people are able to perform at the grass root level. Likewise, Bhagwant Singh Mann said that these elections act as a Launchpad for the young politicians who aspire to serve the masses.

The Chief Minister urged the people to come out and vote in big number thereby becoming active partners in growth and progress of the state. He said that this right has been obtained after a lot of struggle by our grandfathers and it should be used cautiously in the larger public address. Bhagwant Singh Mann urged the people to use the vote for electing the right candidates who can be their voice in the public arenas.

Outrightly rejecting the allegations of opposition regarding the misuse of official machinery, the Chief Minister said that the administration deserves kudos for organising free, fair and transparent polls. He said that the opposition especially Akali Dal Badal has always patronised the gangsters and they have tried to use them in these polls too. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that in such situation the administration can't idle and see these gangsters flexing their muscles and sabotaging the poll process.

The Chief minister said that more than 2400 candidates from opposition are contesting the polls which clearly reflects that there has been no use of the official machinery. He said that the elections are being organised by the commission in a free and fair manner adding that baffled by their defeats the opposition is indulging in such cheap tactics.

11 killed in shooting near Jewish gathering in Australia's Sydney

CANBERRA, DECEMBER 14



At least 11 people, including one gunman, have been killed and 12 others are injured after a shooting incident near a Jewish gathering at Bondi Beach in Australia's Sydney on Sunday evening (local time), local media reported, citing police. A second shooter is among the injured and has been taken into custody, ABC News reported.

Police have said that people still need to avoid Bondi Beach, despite the two shooters having been neutralised. According to police, there is an ongoing bomb threat in the area, and they are working to disarm what they have termed an improvised explosive device (IED), local media reported.

In a statement, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has termed the scenes in Bondi "shocking and distressing."

He stated that he has spoken to the Australian Federal Police (AFP) Commissioner and New South Wales (NSW) Premier and urged people to follow information shared by NSW police.

In a statement shared on X, Albanese stated, "The scenes in Bondi are shocking and distressing. Police and emergency responders are on the ground working to save lives. My thoughts are with every person affected. I have just spoken to the AFP Commissioner and with the NSW Premier. We are working with the NSW Police and will provide further updates as more information is confirmed. I urge people in the vicinity to follow information from the NSW Police." Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar said that he is "appalled" by the shooting attack and called the incident the result of "an anti-semitic rampage" in the streets of Australia over the past two years.

"I'm appalled by the murderous shooting attack at a Hanukkah event in Sydney, Australia. These are the results of the anti-Semitic rampage in the streets of Australia over the past two years, with the anti-Semitic and inciting calls of 'Globalise the Intifada' that were realised today. **PTI**

Day after Messi event chaos, Bengal Guv visits Salt Lake stadium for on-ground inspection

KOLKATA, DECEMBER 14



A day after chaos erupted during Argentine football icon Lionel Messi's event at Salt Lake stadium here, West Bengal Governor C V Ananda Bose on Sunday visited the venue for a first-hand inspection.

Bose, accompanied by Chief Secretary Manoj Pant and senior police officers, inspected different parts of the stadium as part of his assessment of the incident, officials said.

Bose was "denied" entry into the Salt Lake stadium on Saturday, after chaos and crowd trouble at the venue marred Messi's event. He had found the gates closed and the stadium lights switched off on his arrival. The governor had alleged that the move was intended to block his entry and sought a detailed explanation.

Bose had earlier dubbed the incident at the Salt Lake stadium a "dark day for the sports-loving people of Kolkata".

He had directed the state government to arrest the event organiser, holding them squarely responsible for the chaos, and also blamed the police for failing the government, the people and the chief minister.

What was supposed to be a marquee football spectacle turned into widespread violence and disorder at the stadium on Saturday after Messi's brief and tightly ring-fenced appearance, his first at the venue since 2011, left large sections of the crowd frustrated.

They failed to catch a glimpse of their superstar despite having travelled from far and wide, paying hefty sums for tickets. **PTI**

Messi event chaos in Kolkata: Chief organiser sent to 14-day police custody

A court here on Sunday sent Satadru Datta, the chief organiser of the Lionel Messi football event at Salt Lake stadium where chaos erupted a day ago, to 14-day police custody.

Datta was arrested by the Bidhannagar Police on Saturday for alleged mismanagement of the event from Kolkata airport, where he had gone to see off Messi and his entourage on their way to Hyderabad.

During the hearing, Datta's counsel questioned the basis of the arrest, stating that his client had been "victimised".

The state counsel said the organiser of the event was responsible for crowd movement, and his team members moved around on the pitch in such a way that spectators could not see the World Cup-winning captain of Argentina from the galleries.

Air quality worsens in Delhi, AQI settles in 'severe' zone

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14

Delhi battled toxic fumes on Sunday as the air quality slipped into the 'severe category with a reading of 459, according to the Central Pollution Control Board. A thick layer of smog blanketed the city overnight, leaving people gasping for air.

As per the CPCB, an Air Quality Index (AQI) between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 to 100 'satisfactory', 101 to 200 'moderate', 201 to 300 'poor', 301 to 400 'very poor' and 401 to 500 'severe'.

On the weather front, the minimum temperature settled at 8.2 degrees Celsius, 0.4 notch below the season's average, and the maximum temperature is likely to hover around 24 degrees Celsius.

The relative humidity was 100 per cent at 8.30 am, the IMD said.

In light of the deteriorating air quality in the national capital, the Delhi Directorate of Education on Saturday directed all schools to conduct classes for students up to Class IX and XI in a hybrid mode

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has invoked Stage-IV actions under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) with immediate effect to curb further worsening of air pollution levels in Delhi-NCR. **PTI**

Jaishankar meets European, UK, Egyptian counterparts at UAE summit

DUBAI, DECEMBER 14

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has met with his counterparts from Europe, the UK and Egypt on the sidelines of a high-level international summit in the United Arab Emirates, where leaders and policymakers gathered to discuss key geopolitical and security challenges.

In a social media post on Saturday, Jaishankar said "it was great to be" with Luxembourg's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Xavier Bettel, Poland's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski, and Latvia's Foreign Minister Baiba Braze.

The minister was in the UAE capital Abu Dhabi to attend the three-day Sir Bani Yas Forum 2025, which concluded on Sunday.

Jaishankar also met UK Deputy Prime Minister David Lammy on the sidelines of the summit.

"Good to see UK DPM @DavidLammy on the sidelines of Sir Bani Yas Forum 2025," he said in another social media post.

In another meeting, the External Affairs Minister said it was "nice to catch up" with Egypt's Foreign Minister Dr Badr Abdelatty.

Sir Bani Yas Forum is an annual platform that brings together global leaders, ministers and experts to deliberate on regional and international issues. **PTI**

Bihar minister Nitin Nabin appointed BJP's national working president

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14



The BJP appointed Nitin Nabin, a cabinet minister in the Bihar government, as the party's national working president on Sunday. The BJP parliamentary board picked Nabin for the post.

"Bharatiya Janata Party's parliamentary board has appointed Nitin Nabin, a minister in the Bihar government, the Bharatiya Janata Party's national working president with immediate effect," BJP national general secretary Arun Singh said in a notification.

Nabin, 45, who belongs to the Kayastha community, is likely to succeed incumbent BJP chief J P Nadda and is one of the youngest leaders to occupy the post, party leaders said.

He has served as a minister in the Bihar Government multiple times and is a five-time MLA. **PTI**

Technology should amplify human judgment, not replace it: CJI Surya Kant

CUTTACK (ODISHA), DECEMBER 14



Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Sunday said technology should amplify human judgment and not replace it.

He was addressing a symposium on 'Ensuring justice for the common man: strategies for reducing litigation costs and delays' here.

"Pendency of cases in courts clogs every level of the judicial structure, from the trial court to the constitutional court. And when a blockage occurs at the top, the pressure only intensifies below," he said.

He also stressed the need to strengthen judicial infrastructure to reduce pendency. **PTI**

Chairman Dalvir Dhillon visits polling stations in Dhuri, boosts morale of AAP volunteers

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Dhuri, December 14



Chairman of the Punjab Small Scale Industries and Export Corporation, Dalvir Singh Dhillon, on Sunday visited various polling stations in the Dhuri constituency and interacted with volunteers of the Aam Aadmi Party, encouraging them and appreciating their dedicated efforts during the polling process.

Addressing the volunteers, Chairman Dalvir Singh Dhillon said that the hard work, discipline, and direct connect with the public displayed by AAP volunteers have strengthened the party at the grassroots level. He stated that volunteers are the backbone of the Aam Aadmi Party, playing a crucial role in taking the government's pro-people policies and welfare initiatives to every household.

Expressing gratitude for the enthusiastic response shown by the people of the Dhuri constituency during the election process, Chairman Dhillon said that public trust is the greatest strength of the Aam Aadmi Party. He added that the development works undertaken by the government and its people-centric decisions over the past nearly four years have generated visible enthusiasm among the electorate.

Chairman Dhillon expressed confidence that the people of the Dhuri constituency would exercise their right to vote keeping in mind development, transparency, and honest governance, and would ensure a decisive victory for the Aam Aadmi Party candidates.

He further stated that with the continued support of the people, the pace of development in the Dhuri constituency would be accelerated further in the coming days.

Extensive security arrangements ensured peaceful polling across Jalandhar Range: DIG

ASHOK KAURA
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Phagwara, December 14



Deputy Inspector General of Police, Jalandhar Range, Naveen Singla on Sunday visited several polling stations across Kapurthala, Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur districts and reviewed security arrangements put in place for the polling process. The DIG inspected multiple polling booths and held review meetings with senior police officers to assess deployment, coordination and ground-level preparedness, with a focus on ensuring a peaceful and incident-free election.

Speaking to This correspondent later in the afternoon, DIG Singla said polling across the three districts remained peaceful throughout the day and no untoward incident was reported from any location. He stated that elaborate and well-coordinated security arrangements had been made to ensure that voters could exercise their franchise in a free, fair and secure environment.

The DIG informed that adequate police deployment had been ensured at all 2,799 polling locations comprising 3,467 polling booths, where a total of 8,394 police personnel were deployed for election duty in entire Jalandhar range. The security grid was further reinforced by 149 mobile patrolling parties, 41 inter-district nakas and 11 inter-state nakas to maintain effective law-and-order management during the polling process.

During the review, DIG Singla emphasised strict neutrality of the police force and directed officers to maintain heightened vigilance, particularly at sensitive and hypersensitive polling booths.

He instructed field officers to ensure uninterrupted patrolling, strengthen communication between various formations and respond promptly to any emerging law-and-order situation.

Stray dog attack leaves child seriously injured in Model Gram



PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ludhiana, December 14

A shocking incident was reported from the Model Gram area of Ludhiana on Sunday morning, where a stray dog brutally attacked a small child, causing severe injuries to the child's face. The injured child was immediately rushed by family members to Civil Hospital for medical treatment. The child's condition is stated to be serious.

According to local sources, the same stray dog has allegedly attacked several other residents in the same street earlier as well, creating fear and panic among the people of the area. Residents have expressed strong resentment against the Municipal Corporation and its Health Department, accusing them of failing to control the growing menace of stray dogs.

Social activist Arvind Sharma said that despite repeated directions issued by the High Court and the Supreme Court regarding the management of stray dogs, the local civic administration has allegedly remained inactive. He alleged that the inaction of the authorities has led to repeated incidents of attacks, putting innocent lives at risk.

Sharma further stated that he has already lodged a complaint with the Punjab State Human Rights Commission (PSHRC), Chandigarh, and plans to submit a reminder following the latest incident. He termed the attack on the child as extremely painful and unfortunate and alleged that the Municipal Corporation has failed to act in this serious matter.

The incident has once again highlighted the urgent need for effective measures to address the stray dog problem in the city, as residents continue to demand immediate action to prevent further loss of life and injuries.

Special Cell Rajpura arrests drug smuggler with 10 kg opium



RAJESH DEHRA
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Rajpura, December 14

Continuing the anti-drug campaign launched by the Punjab government and acting on the directions of senior officials, the Special Cell Rajpura, led by In-charge Sub-Inspector Manpreet Singh, apprehended a drug smuggler and recovered 10 kilograms of opium from his possession.

Providing details to the media, SPD Gurbans Singh Bains, DSP Manjit Singh, and Special Cell In-charge Sub-Inspector Manpreet Singh said that during a naka (checkpoint) on Sirhind Road in Rajpura, a canter bearing registration number PB-10-FV-4197 was stopped on suspicion. Upon searching the vehicle, the police recovered 10 kg of opium and arrested one person on the spot.

The accused has been identified as Davinder Singh, son of Jaspal Singh, a resident of the Samrala police station area in Ludhiana district. During preliminary interrogation, it was revealed that he had brought the opium from Jharkhand and was planning to supply it to various cities in Punjab.

Police officials stated that no previous criminal cases have been found against the accused so far. A case has been registered, and Davinder Singh was produced before the Court, which granted a two-day police remand. Further interrogation is underway.

DLSA organises anti-drug awareness seminars in Hoshiarpur villages

DALJEET AJNOHA
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Hoshiarpur, December 15



Acting on the directions of the Punjab State Legal Services Authority, SAS Nagar, and under the guidance of District and Sessions Judge Rajinder Agarwal, the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Hoshiarpur, organised anti-drug awareness seminars in Hoshiarpur and various villages of its sub-divisions.

The seminars were conducted under the leadership of DLSA Secretary Neeraj Goyal with the objective of creating awareness among the youth against drug abuse. Panel Advocates Ashish Jyoti and Barjinder Singh, Retainer Advocate Sarita Kanwar, Chief Legal Aid Defence Counsel Vishal Kumar, and Deputy Chief Legal Aid Defence Counsel Sandeep addressed the gatherings.

While interacting with the youth and local residents, the speakers stressed that the primary aim of the campaign is to motivate the younger generation to stay away from drugs and adopt a positive and healthy lifestyle.

3rd National Gatka Refresher Course begins in Chandigarh, focuses on standardising officiating practices



PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, December 14

The 3rd National Gatka Refresher Course commenced at Gurdwara Babe Ke, Chandigarh bringing together officials from several states for a three-day upgrade in technical training sessions. The programme features theory sessions, practical demonstrations and evaluations aimed at standardising officiating practices across the country.

Throughout the day experts led modules on competition planning, scoring norms, foul assessment, tournament discipline and field-of-play management. Participants also undertook practical exercises designed to strengthen their on-ground decision making.

Speaking at the inaugural session World Gatka Federation (WGF) president Advocate Harjeet Singh Grewal announced a significant move in maintaining the discipline protocol of the sport. Gatka promoter Grewal, who is also serving as president of National Gatka Association of India (NGAI), informed that the WGF has introduced the 'Black Card' as a fourth foul category card in the international Gatka rules book. "This measure reinforces the dignity of technical officials, smooth conduct of bouts and ensuring to maintain discipline in players during competitions. This punitive card will be used in cases of unruly, indisciplined, unwanted or unholy behaviour," he stated.

Sukhchain Singh Kalsani, vice chairman of the International Sikh Martial Art Council, emphasised that ongoing capacity-building is essential to uphold fairness and integrity in competitive Gatka. Speaking on the occasion President, Gatka Association of Chandigarh Hardeep Singh Butrela, Municipal Councillor Chandigarh said structured refresher courses not only sharpen the proficiency of officials but also help preserve uniformity in the rapidly developing sport.

Offering a global perspective, Phool Raj Singh, Chairman of the International Affairs Directorate, shared the WGF's plans to accelerate international expansion.

DTF mourns untimely death of teacher couple

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ferozepur, December 14

Democratic Teachers Front (DTF) expressed deep anguish over the untimely death of a teacher couple from Moga district while proceeding on election duty, the leaders held the state government responsible for the tragedy. Also Terming the move as arbitrary and condemnable, leaders of various teachers' and employees' unions have strongly criticised the district administration for issuing directions to register FIRs against teachers and other employees who failed to attend election rehearsals.

Leaders of the Democratic Teachers' Front (DTF) Punjab, 6635 ETT Teachers' Union, Computer Faculty Association and SSA-RMSA Employees' Union said that Returning Officers-cum-Sub Divisional Magistrates in different constituencies of Ferozepur district issued blanket orders for lodging police cases without even ascertaining the genuine reasons for the absence of employees from election duty.

The union leaders said teachers are already overburdened with non-academic work, despite the Punjab government's claims of ushering in an "education revolution". They alleged that teachers are being deployed for election duties as far as 100 kilometres from their homes, causing immense hardship and bringing school education to a standstill..

They further pointed out that Booth Level Officers (BLOs), who were earlier exempted from election duties, are now being forced to perform multiple duties simultaneously, leading to undue harassment.

With iron rod, chemist thwarts robbery attempt

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Tarn Taran, December 14

In a feat of confidence and quick thinking, a shopkeeper here has managed to fend off two armed robbers, forcing them to flee without causing financial or other damage.

On Jandiala Road on Friday night, chemist Sanjay Gupta, owner of Anmol Pharmaceutical, was sitting near the 'galla' (cash box) at his shop at around 9 pm, when two masked robbers arrived there on a bike.

The miscreants entered the shop with a pistol and a sharp edged weapon, threatening to kill Gupta if he did not hand them the cash kept in the cash box. The shopkeeper showed them the empty cash box, as he had cleared it — he did so routinely — before their arrival.

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51-yr-old trader found dead

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Amritsar, December 14

Panic gripped the Hathi Gate area when a shoe shop owner was found murdered, his hands and legs tied, with injury marks on his body.

The police suspect that victim Yashpal (51) was murdered and have launched a probe.

Assistant Commissioner of Police Jaspal Singh said police are investigating various angles. "Yashpal was apparently murdered, and we are ascertaining the motive," he added, noting that the probe is at an initial stage.

Yashpal lived alone on the upper floor of his shop, while his family resided in the Islamabad area. He slept there alone. Today, people found the shop shutter half-open and his body lying with hands and legs tied, plus marks of thrashing. They informed the family and police, who discovered he had been killed.

The police have sent the body for post-mortem examination to ascertain the cause of death. The ACP said they are also scanning CCTV cameras in the area for clues about the perpetrators.

Midday meal workers' meeting organised

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Tarn Taran, December 14



Midday meal workers of the Valtoha block, under the banner Mid-Day Meal Workers Union, Punjab, recently organised a meeting at Gurdwara Sahib Sri Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib, Amarkot, and discussed their demands.

Union block president Sukhwinder Kaur presided over the meeting. In her address, Kaur called for two uniforms — for warm and cold months — to be provided by the Punjab Government, and also demanded life insurance worth Rs 5 lakh for the workers. She also demanded for an increase in the monthly salary to Rs 18,000.

Sophia Khemkaran, Baljit Kaur Assal, Sukhwinder Kaur Dasuwal, Rajwinder Kaur, Sunita Kumari, and Gurpreet Kaur also addressed the gathering during the meeting. Punjab Subordinate Service Federation leader Nirmal Singh extended support to the demands of midday meal workers.

Punjab bags second award in State Performance Category of National Energy Conservation Awards- 2025



PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh/New Delhi, December 14

Exemplary efforts of the Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann led Punjab government in the arena of energy efficiency and conservation has earned national recognition to the Punjab with the state bagging second Award in the State Performance Category of the National Energy Conservation Awards -2025.

Punjab New and Renewable Energy Resources Minister Aman Arora received the coveted award from the President of India Droupadi Murmu at the National Energy Conservation Awards 2025 ceremony held today at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

Interacting with media after the award ceremony, Arora said that with the winning of this prestigious award the state of Punjab has stood among the top performers in the country in the field of energy efficiency. Pointing out towards the initiatives and steps taken by the state government led by Punjab Chief Minister S. Bhagwant Singh Mann for upgrading the infrastructure, he added, "We have installed 18000 solar tube-well pumps in the agriculture sector and efforts are on to increase the numbers. Besides these 185 Energy efficient motors have also been installed in MSME sector including Verka Plants. Stepping further the state government has also successfully installed rooftop projects of 35MW capacity in the government buildings in the state."

Aman Arora stated that energy efficiency in the buildings is one of the key areas to save energy in commercial sector by adopting energy efficient design, building material and using Energy Conservation Building Code.

He added that apart from this, Punjab has taken the lead to develop and notify Punjab Energy Conservation Building Code by amending National Energy Conservation Building Code for the composite climate zone applicable in the state.

The implementation has started by incorporating the building bye-laws. So far 850 buildings have been put under compliance of the ECBC rules.

Appreciating the efforts of PEDA authorities and officials for taking initiatives in the field of Energy Conservation & Energy Efficiency, Arora revealed that due to all these efforts 12000 million units have been saved so far.

Emphasising that with the expansion of industry and need of more infrastructure, the demand of power is on the rise and shifting from conventional power generation to renewal energy sources such as solar, hydel and biomass is the need of the time that will pay in many ways for energy efficiency and conservation and most importantly to save our environment.

Guv flags fake news, social media rush; backs journalists' demands, promises to take issues to Centre

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, December 14



Punjab Governor and UT Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria on Sunday underlined that a free, credible and responsible media was the central force that keeps Indian democracy vibrant, accountable and strong, warning that the growing menace of fake news, misinformation and unverified content in the digital age posed a serious challenge to public trust.

In his inaugural address as the chief guest at the two-day All India Media Meet in Chandigarh, Kataria said media was not merely a conveyor of information but the conscience-keeper of society, a watchdog of citizens' rights and a balancing force for the legislature, executive and judiciary. "The more independent the media, the stronger India will be; the more responsible it is, the brighter our democracy will be," he said.

Referring to the rapid rise of social media, web platforms and artificial intelligence, the Governor said the speed and volume of information had blurred the line between fact and fiction, making truth verification the biggest challenge before journalists today. He cautioned that while the information revolution had empowered democracy, it had also fuelled an industry of rumours, propaganda and fake news, placing a far greater responsibility on mainstream media to uphold accuracy, balance and ethical reporting.

Kataria said journalists and media employees worked round the clock, often in risky conditions and with limited resources, and their welfare, security, fair wages, social security, health cover and legal protection were inseparable from the credibility of democracy itself. He assured full support in pursuing genuine and legitimate demands of media professionals and said he would take up their issues with the government at the highest level.

In his address, Kataria also paid tribute to India's rich journalistic legacy, from the freedom movement to nation-building, recalling the role of iconic publications and editors who shaped public opinion and social reform. He praised The Tribune Group for upholding journalistic integrity since its founding in 1881 and lauded the Tribune Employees Union for its social outreach, including disaster relief, blood donation camps and humanitarian initiatives.

Stressing that the media should not only highlight problems but also inspire solutions, Kataria said Punjab and the country were passing through a phase of economic, social and technological transition, where balanced and constructive journalism could play a decisive role. He expressed confidence that the All India Media Meet would generate meaningful ideas to strengthen journalism and reaffirm its role in building a "Viksit Bharat 2047".

Welcoming the chief guest, President of The Tribune Employees Union, Anil Kumar Gupta, highlighted Kataria's political and social journey spanning nearly five decades. General secretary Ruchika M. Khanna conducted the proceedings and recalled Kataria's long association with the media, including his role during the Emergency when he helped bring out a newspaper using a cyclostyle machine hidden in the jungles of Rajasthan and ensured its distribution despite government crackdowns.

Zila Parishad, Panchayat Samitis elections conducted peacefully: SEC

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, December 14

As per programme notified by the Commission, general elections to elect the members from 347 zones of 22 Zila Parishads and from 2838 zones of 153 Panchayat Samitis has been satisfactorily and peacefully conducted in the State. No loss of life or major clash had been reported from anywhere.

The Commission has ordered re-poll at the following places:- 1. Block Samiti Attari, zone no 08 (Khasa) (Booths No. 52,53,54,55) and zone no. 17 (Varpal Kalan) (Booth no. 90,91,93,94,95) - District Amritsar. 2. Block Samiti Chananwal (Zone No. 04), Village Raisar Patiala (Booth No. 20) - District Barnala 3. Village Babania (Booths No. 63 and 64), and Village Madhir (Booths No. 21 and 22) in Block Kot Bhai, Gidderbaha District Sri Muktsar Sahib, 4. Village Chanhiya (Polling Station 124) - District Gurdaspur 5. Pollling Booth 72, Panchayat Samiti Bhogpur (Zone No. 4) -District Jalandhar Re-poll will be held on 16.12.2025 between 08:00 am to 04:00 p.m.

Drug module busted in Amritsar; four held with 4 kg heroin, ₹3.90 lakh drug money, one pistol

N.P.S. CHAMAK
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Amritsar, December 14

Amidst the ongoing drive to make Punjab a safe and secure state as per directions of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, Counter Intelligence (CI) Amritsar has busted a drug supply module linked to foreign-based smuggles with the arrest of four operatives and recovered 4 Kg heroin, Rs 3.90 lakh drug money and one .32 bore pistol along with magazine and five live cartridges from their possession, said Director General of Police (DGP) Punjab Gaurav Yadav here on Sunday.

Those arrested have been identified as Yuvraj Singh, a resident of Roriwal in Amritsar; Varinder Singh, a resident of Dhaul Kalan in Amritsar; Jagroop Singh, a resident of Sangna in Amritsar and Jugraj Singh, a resident of Sarkaria Enclave in Amritsar. Police team have also impounded their black-coloured Hero Splendor motorcycle (PB-02-EE-0627) and white-coloured Honda Activa (PB-02-EX-2265), which they were using to deliver the consignments.

DGP Gaurav Yadav said that police teams from CI Amritsar had received reliable inputs that associates— Yuvraj and Varinder of foreign-based handler Lakhwinder Singh alias Baba Lakha had retrieved a heroin consignment from Ajnala sector and were expected to deliver it to suspect Jagroop Singh near Gurdwara Morcha Sahib in

Man found dead with gunshot wound in Abohar

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Abohar, December 14

A 37-year-old man was found dead after suffering a gunshot injury at his home at Bazidpur Bhoma village, around 30 km from Abohar. According to sources, most members of the victim's family live abroad. He got divorce from his wife in 2016 and had reportedly been mentally disturbed since then. According to initial information, Brar sustained a gunshot wound in the head at his residence. Residents rushed him to the local government hospital, where doctors declared him "brought dead".

BJP candidate's brother injured in attack in Faridkot

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Faridkot, December 14

BJP block samiti candidate Amar Singh's brother, Lakhwinder Singh, was seriously injured in a violent attack in Ghugiana village of Faridkot district on Sunday evening.

The incident took place outside the victim's house, where assailants allegedly used sharp-edged weapons and also vandalised the candidate's car. The entire incident was captured on CCTV cameras installed at the house.

Singh was rushed to Guru Gobind Singh Medical College and Hospital, Faridkot, where he is undergoing treatment. BJP leaders Sandeep Singh Sunny Brar and district president Gaurav Kakkar visited the hospital to inquire about his condition.

BJP leaders alleged that Congress and Aam Aadmi Party supporters carried out the attack, claiming it was a result of frustration over the BJP's growing influence in villages and the anticipated victory of their candidate. They also demanded strict action against the culprits.

Faridkot SP(H) Maninder Bir Singh said the incident was not related to the ongoing zila parishad and block samiti elections. He stated that the clash occurred several metres away from the polling booth and appeared to be the result of a personal dispute. Police have initiated an investigation and assured appropriate legal action based on the findings.

Waste segregation stalled in several wards as MC lacks transfer stations

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Amritsar, December 14



Despite the Municipal Corporation (MC) launching door-to-door garbage collection, waste segregation is yet to begin in several wards, mainly due to the absence of designated transfer stations for the private operator. The MC has identified 11 locations in the city, of which five are likely to be allotted to the agency for developing transfer stations.

Meanwhile, the plan to set up small composting units within government office premises, to process waste generated there, has also not materialised. Officials said the MC had forwarded a list of 11 potential sites to the company, and allotments would be finalised after internal discussions. Once the locations are approved, door-to-door collection will be operational across 85 wards.

The contractor, 3R Company, has already procured around 40 new vehicles, in addition to the 25 older ones deployed for waste lifting. The Municipal Town Planning (MTP) Department will hand over the approved sites after issuing CLU certificates.

The shortlisted locations for parking and transfer stations include: 1 acre at Hall Gate Old Sabzi Mandi Market parking; 6 kanals at Bhagtanwala dump site parking; 6 kanals at Chheharta near India Gate parking; 1 acre at E-Block Ranjit Avenue parking-cum-transfer station; 1 acre at Ghanupur Kale parking/transfer station; 1 acre at Chabhal Road MRF Centre transfer station; an adjoining 2-acre site near the Chabhal Road MRF Centre for parking and transfer; and the centralised waste processing facility at Bhagtanwala, spread across nearly 25 acres, among others. MC officials have inspected these sites and the final selection will be made through mutual consent.

Mayor Jatinder Singh Bhatia said the MC would allot the required sites shortly. "Locations have already been identified and the corporation is extending full cooperation to the company. Two sites for vehicle parking have already been handed over. We will leave no gap in ensuring the city's cleanliness," he said.

Congress caught red-handed using liquor and ladies suits to influence Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad elections: AAP

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Batala/Chandigarh, December 14

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday launched a scathing attack on the Congress after a vehicle allegedly carrying liquor, ladies' suits, weapons, live cartridges and Congress party flags was intercepted in Batala during the ongoing Zila Parishad and Panchayat Samiti elections.

AAP Punjab General Secretary and Media In-charge Baltej Pannu said the incident has completely exposed the desperation, panic and anti-democratic mindset of the Congress, which has already accepted its defeat even before the election results.

Pannu said that opposition parties had initially tried to mislead the public by falsely claiming that AAP had got their nomination papers rejected. "Now that the final list of candidates is out and it is clear that candidates from all political parties are contesting the elections, traditional parties like the Congress have once again resorted to their old, disgraceful tactics, distributing liquor, suits and money to buy votes," he said.

Referring to the Batala incident, Baltej Pannu said that AAP MLA from Batala and Punjab AAP Working President Sherry Kalsi intercepted a vehicle which was allegedly being used to distribute liquor and ladies' suits to influence voters. "What is even more shocking is that weapons, live cartridges and Congress flags were also recovered from the same vehicle. This clearly shows how low Congress is willing to stoop to win elections," Pannu said.

Calling it "open goondaism", Pannu said such practices have no place in a democracy. "The Congress still believes that it can mislead and purchase the mandate of the people of Punjab with liquor and clothes. This is nothing but their frustration and fear of inevitable defeat," he added.

Baltej Pannu asserted that AAP will not allow such hooliganism at any cost. "Mann government will not tolerate this kind of lawlessness. The people of Punjab are vigilant and aware. They will not sell their votes for liquor or suits," he said.

Highlighting AAP's governance record, Pannu said, "AAP is seeking votes on the basis of work, 600 units of free electricity, uninterrupted daytime power supply to farmers, mohalla clinics, world-class government schools and people-centric policies.

The Mann government has delivered on its promises, and people will vote for work, not for bribes." He said the incident in Batala proves that traditional parties have failed to understand the changed political

'Sacrilege attempt' foiled at gurdwara in Ferozepur

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ferozepur, December 14

An alleged desecration attempt at a Jeevan Arai village gurdwara in Guruharsahai subdivision was foiled on Saturday morning after an alert priest overpowered an "intoxicated youth" and handed him over to the police.

The alleged incident took place when the Guru Granth Sahib was being taken for a religious ceremony at a devotee's residence.

The granthis were preparing to carry the sacred "saroop" when the youth, identified as Lalit, a resident of the same village, reached the shrine, allegedly in an inebriated condition.

The accused allegedly attempted to pull the sacred cloth covering the Guru Granth Sahib. Ranjit Singh, one of the granthis, immediately intervened and prevented any harm, following which villagers apprehended the youth and informed the police.

SAD candidate Nirmal Singh joins AAP ahead of elections

RAMAN CHAMAK
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Amritsar, December 14



Even as campaigning for the zila parishad and block samiti elections formally concluded, political activity continued on the ground in Amritsar.

A day ahead of the polls, Amritsar Improvement Trust Chairman and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in-charge for the Amritsar North Assembly constituency Karamjit Singh Rintu on Saturday claimed that an Akali Dal (Badal) candidate contesting the Kamla Devi block samiti election had joined the AAP along with his supporters.

According to Rintu, during election outreach activities, Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) candidate Captain Nirmal Singh said he was impressed by the policies of the Aam Aadmi Party and the development works carried out in the Amritsar North Assembly segment.

Captain Nirmal Singh, along with his associates, formally joined the AAP and extended support to the party's block samiti candidate, Gurpreet Singh Babbu. Rintu welcomed Captain Nirmal Singh and his supporters into the party and inducted them by presenting a siropa at a formal ceremony. He said the development reflected growing public confidence in the Aam Aadmi Party at the grassroots level.

Claiming strong support for the AAP in the ongoing zila parishad and block samiti elections, Rintu said the party was receiving an overwhelming response from voters.

Chandigarh bags first position in National Energy Conservation Award 2025

A.S. PRASHAR
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
CHANDIGARH, DECEMBER 14



The Chandigarh Administration has achieved a significant milestone by securing first position in the National Energy Conservation Award (NECA) 2025 under the Group–5 category, comprising Union Territories and various States, for exemplary performance in the field of Energy Conservation and Energy Efficiency.

The awards are conferred annually by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) under the Ministry of Power, Government of India, on the occasion of National Energy Conservation Day, observed on 14th December, to recognize outstanding achievements in energy efficiency.

The Chandigarh Administration has undertaken several landmark initiatives, including notification for procurement of minimum prescribed star-rating appliances in Government buildings, preparation and implementation of the State Energy Efficiency Action Plan (SEEAP), notification of the Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC), promotion of electric cooking (e-cooking), and other demand-side management and sustainability measures. These concerted efforts have significantly enhanced energy efficiency outcomes across sectors and positioned Chandigarh as a leading performer at the national level.

The award has been conferred based on the State Energy Efficiency Index (SEEI), a comprehensive national assessment framework developed by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) in collaboration with the Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE). The index evaluates the annual energy efficiency performance of States and Union Territories across key sectors including Buildings, Industry, Transport, Municipal Services, and Cross-Sectoral Initiatives, taking into account policy implementation, institutional mechanisms, renewable energy adoption, infrastructure development, and overall energy efficiency outcomes.

The award ceremony was held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, where the Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, presented the award to Shri H. Rajesh Prasad, IAS, Chief Secretary, Chandigarh Administration, and Er. C. B. Ojha, Chief Engineer, Chandigarh Administration. The energy efficiency and conservation initiatives are being steered by the Energy Management Cell (EMC), established under the Engineering Department, which functions as the nodal department of the Chandigarh Administration.

Panchayat Samiti clections conclude peacefully in Mohali with 54.93% voter turnout

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Mohali, December 14



The Panchayat Samiti elections in SAS Nagar district for Kharar, Majri and Derabassi blocks concluded peacefully on Sunday evening with an overall voter turnout of 54.93 percent, said Deputy Commissioner-cum-District Election Officer Mrs. Komal Mittal, here today.

Giving block-wise details, she said that Kharar recorded 49.95 percent, Derabassi 56.31 percent, and Majri 56.86 percent voter turnout.

The Deputy Commissioner informed that all polling parties have returned safely and ballot boxes have been deposited at the designated Collection Centres/Strong Rooms at Derabassi and Government Polytechnic College, Khoonimajra (for Kharar and Majri blocks).

She stated that the polling process remained smooth throughout the day and no law and order issue was reported till the close of voting.

Expressing gratitude to all political parties, candidates, their supporters and voters, Mrs. Mittal said that the district administration and police officials remained on close vigil to avert any untoward incident. She also congratulated all officers and staff deployed on election duty for ensuring a free, fair and impartial election process.

The Deputy Commissioner further informed that counting of votes will be held on December 17 at Government College, Derabassi, and Government Polytechnic College, Khoonimajra.

The Deputy Commissioner further informed that counting of votes will be held on December 17 at Government College, Derabassi, and Government Polytechnic College, Khoonimajra. Till then, the ballot boxes will remain under tight security arrangements.

Leopards sighted in Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary, citizens asked to exercise caution



PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, December 14

In view of the recent wildlife survey and the confirmed presence of leopards, jackals and other wild animals in Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary (SWLS), Saurabh Kumar, Chief Wildlife Warden, along with Anup Kumar Soni, Conservator of Forests, and Navneet Srivastava, Deputy Conservator of Forests, conducted a field inspection of the sanctuary and reviewed the preparedness of the Department on Saturday.

During the inspection, the team visited various locations where leopard movement has been recorded through camera traps and field observations by frontline staff. The team also inspected several water bodies and assessed the habitat conditions for migratory birds within the sanctuary.

The inspection revealed the presence of leopard and other wild animal activity at multiple locations inside the sanctuary, corroborated by camera trap images and pugmark evidence, indicating active movement across the forest area. Such presence is natural and reflects a healthy forest ecosystem.

However, keeping in view the safety of the general public as well as wildlife, the Forest Department is preparing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), in consultation with the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, for visitor management in Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary and other related matters. The SOP will include the following precautionary and wildlife management interventions:

- Installation of Do's and Don'ts awareness boards and warning signages at strategic locations inside and outside the sanctuary, highlighting the presence of leopards, sambar, jackals and other wild animals along with safety guidelines.
- Awareness generation and sensitization of local villages and nearby residents regarding animal behaviour and necessary precautionary measures.
- Repair and strengthening of existing fencing at vulnerable points of the sanctuary.
- Clear demarcation and regular monitoring of designated visitor trails.
- Strict supervision of visitor activities, including regulation of trekking activities, to prevent unauthorized movement inside forest areas.
- Enhancement of monitoring and surveillance through an increased number of camera traps.

The Forest Department assures that regular monitoring is being carried out and all necessary measures are being taken to ensure public safety while maintaining wildlife conservation priorities. Visitors are advised to cooperate fully and follow the prescribed guidelines in letter and spirit, and to avoid venturing into restricted areas.

The Forest and Wildlife Department further requests citizens to exercise caution and vigilance, and to report any wildlife sighting or emergency on the dedicated helpline number 0172-2700217.

GRIID marks International Day of Persons with Disabilities with 3-day celebrations

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, December 14

The Government Rehabilitation Institute for Intellectual Disabilities (GRIID), Sector 31, Chandigarh, celebrated the International Day of Persons with Disabilities with a three-day series of activities themed "Fostering Disability-Inclusive Societies for Advancing Social Progress."

A vibrant carnival and exhibition was organised at GRIID on Wednesday. Anuradha S. Chagti, Secretary, Social Welfare & Women and Child Development, UT Chandigarh Administration graced the occasion as the Chief Guest, while Devjit Sarkar, CEO and Director, Swaraj Engines Ltd., attended as the Guest of Honour. Also present during the occasion was Dr. Ajeet Sidana Joint Director GRIID.

During her speech, Chagti highlighted her long association with GRIID, its strong collaboration with the Social Welfare Department, and the importance of empowering persons with disabilities to become active contributors to society. She appreciated the dedicated efforts of the faculty, special educators, and staff in organising meaningful programmes supporting children and adults with disabilities.

Special children and college students presented a Unified Bhajan, Bollywood Mashup–Unified Dance, Bhangra, and other cultural performances. Mementoes and prizes were distributed to participants and contributors.

Earlier, GRIID organised a Medical and IQ Assessment Camp benefiting 27 individuals and also conducted a Fancy-Dress Competition for special school students, in the presence of Chief Guest Mrs. Anju Katyal and other dignitaries.

On Tuesday, an athletic beet featuring relay race, shot put, discus throw, lemon-and-spoon race and other events was held at the Sports Complex, Sector 7, graced by Chief Guest Dr. G.P. Thami, Director GRIID and distinguished guests.

University Business School organises Alumni Meet to mark its Golden Jubilee, Silver Jubilee & Decade

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, December 14



University Business School, Panjab University, Chandigarh, one of the region's top B-schools which is dedicated to providing top-notch education in the field of management sciences, organized its Golden Jubilee, Silver Jubilee & Decade celebration Alumni Meet on Sunday under the chairmanship of Prof. Parmjit Kaur with the coordination of Prof. Rupinder Bir Kaur Kaur, the faculty co-ordinator of Alumni Relations, UBS, Panjab University, Chandigarh.

The meet was held at two venues, i.e., Law Auditorium (Arts Block-IV) and University Business School (Arts Block III), Panjab University. The event began with an inaugural address by Chief Guest Diprava Lakra, Finance Secretary, Chandigarh UT, followed by the presidential address by Prof. Yojna Rawat, DUI, Panjab University. The occasion was further graced by Chetan Khanna, Chief Human Resources Officer, Kale Logistics Solutions, and Sukeerat Singh Gill, Assistant Vice President and Head of HR, Airtel as Guests of Honour. Eminent alumni leaders, including Kuldeep Kaul, Founding Member of the UBS Alumni Association, and Anurag Aggarwal, President of the Association also graced the occasion and shared their insights and experiences. The function was also graced by revered faculties of UBS, namely Prof. S.C. Vaidya, Prof. Prof. A.K. Vashisht and Prof. Meenakshi Malhotra.

The programme started off with the warm welcome of the Chief Guest, other dignitaries, alumni of Golden Jubilee batch of 1975, Silver Jubilee batch of 2000 and special invited young alumni of batch 2015 by Prof. Parmjit Kaur, Chairperson and Prof. Rupinder Bir Kaur, the faculty co-ordinator of Alumni Relations, UBS.

New office-bearers of IMA Chandigarh elected unanimously

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, December 14

Dr. Jeet Ram Kashyap, Professor and Head of the Department of Cardiology at Government Medical College & Hospital (GMCH-32), Chandigarh, has been elected President-Elect for the 2027–28 term.

Other office bearers elected unopposed include Dr. Mrs. G.K. Bedi as Honorary Secretary, Dr. Nirmal Bhasin as Vice President, and Dr. Vivek Malhotra as Finance Secretary. The newly elected team also comprises Dr. Suchet Sachdev as Joint Secretary; Dr. Sushil Kumar Gupta as Chairman, Central Working Committee (CWC); Dr. Aditya Jindal as Chairman, NSSS; Dr. Paramjit Singh as Chairman, IMA-AMS; and Dr. Sanjeev Bhatia as Chairman, IMA-CGP. The newly elected team will be associated with present President Dr Anil Kumar.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Jeet Ram Kashyap said he would carry forward the initiatives of his predecessors and work in close coordination with the Chandigarh Administration for the betterment of public health. He emphasized that addressing professional issues and day-to-day challenges faced by doctors, in collaboration with the Administration, would remain among his key priorities. Dr. R. S. Bedi, National Chairman, IMA-AMS (Hqrs), congratulated the newly elected team and expressed confidence that it would work cohesively to take IMA Chandigarh to newer heights.

PGIMER's Oral Health Sciences Centre receives prestigious national accolades



PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, December 14

The Oral Health Sciences Centre (OHSC), PGIMER, Chandigarh, earned significant national recognition at two major national dental conferences held from November 28 to 30, 2025.

Prof. S.P. Singh, Professor & Head, was honoured with the Outstanding Professor Award at the Indian Orthodontic Society Conference in Visakhapatnam and Dr. Sanjeev Verma, Additional Professor, Unit of Orthodontics, was elected to the Executive Committee for the third consecutive term.

Classifieds

CHANGE OF NAME

I Gurpreet Singh Saggu S/o Labh Singh Vpo Bhaini Mehraj disit Barnala have changed my name to Gurpreet Singh

I Swaranjit Singh Sarao S/o Gurtej Singh R/o Vpo Kamalpur district Sangrur have changed my name to Swaranjit Singh.

I hitherto known as RAJINDER SINGH S/o JAGAT SINGH residing at H.No.B-IV/314, Santan Wali Gali, Barnala, District Barnala, Punjab-148101, India, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as RAJINDER SINGH BATTH

I hitherto known as NANKI KAUR W/o NANU SINGH, Residing at H.No.10, New Dhillon Colony, Patiala, District Patiala, Punjab-147001, India, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as NANKI

I, Inderjot Minhas Wife Of Sukhdeep Singh Bawa Resident Of 534 Model Town, Jalandhar, Punjab Have Changed My Name From Inderjot Minhas To Inderjot Bawa After Marriage. All Concerned Please Note.

I Sikander Singh S/O Gurdev Singh Vpo. Kheri Kalan Dist. Sangrur has changed name Sikander Singh to Sikander Singh Chahal

I Gurpreet SIngh Bhathiare S/O Jagtar Singh R/O Near Talwandi Road Patti Duna Singh Galib Kalan Tehsil Jagraon distt Ludhiana have changed my name Gurpreet Singh.

I, Kiran Kaur Sidhu w/o Gurpreet singh R/o barnala, District Barnala have Changed my Name to Kiran Kaur.

I, Sarvjeet Kaur, Sarbjeet Kaur W/O Nirbhay Singh R/O H. No. 419 B C Bazaar Ambala Cantt. Ambala, Haryana 133001 changed my name to Saravjit Kaur.

I Saroj Gupta W/o Late Surinder Kumar Gupta R/o H.no. 6769/2, St.no. 3, Naveen Nagar, Jassian road Haibowal Kalan (Ludhiana) have changed my name from Saroj Gupta to Saroj.

I Vikas S/o Deen Dyal R/o H.no. 121, near Shiv Mandir, Noorwala Road, Dashmesh Puri Colony Basti Jodhewal (Ludhiana) have changed my name from Vikas to Vikas Kumar .

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Iqbal Singh s/o Saggar Singh Brar r/o balamgarh road Muktsar District Sri Muktsar Sahib. changed my minor daughter's name Ishmeet Kaur to Ishmeet Kaur Brar (10th class unique id 8617818), changed my name Iqbal Singh to Iqbal Singh Brar and changed my wife's name Jasveer Kaur to Jasveer Kaur Brar.

I Sourav Gupta S/O Late Surinder Kumar Gupta R/o H.no. 6769/2, St.no. 3, Naveen Nagar, Jassian road Haibowal Kalan Ludhiana Punjab (India) declare that my father's name Surinder Kumar Gupta is Incorrect. His Actual and Correct name is Surinder Kumar . For all future Legal Purposes.

ਅਸੀਂ ਨਰਿੰਦਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਪੁੱਤਰ ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਸੁੱਚਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਅਤੇ ਜਗਦੀਸ਼ ਕੌਰ ਪਤਨੀ ਨਰਿੰਦਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਵਾਸੀਆਨ ਪਿੰਡ ਤੇ ਡਾਕਖਾਨਾ ਲੱਲੀਆਂ ਕਲਾਂ, ਜ਼ਿਲ੍ਹਾ ਜਲੰਧਰ, ਪੰਜਾਬ–1440 28 ਬਿਆਨ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਸਾਡੀ ਲੜਕੀ ਵੰਨਸ਼ਦੀਪ ਕੌਰ ਉਰਫ ਵੰਨਸ਼ ਸਾਡੇ ਕਹਿਣੇ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਹਰ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਮਨ ਮਰਜੀ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਲਈ ਅਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੀ ਤਮਾਮ ਚੱਲ ਵਾ ਅਚੱਲ ਜਾਇਦਾਦ ਤੋਂ ਬੇਦਖਲ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਾਂ। ਇਸ ਨਾਲ ਲੈਣ ਦੇਣ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲਾ ਆਪਣੇ ਨਫੇ ਨੁਕਸਾਨ ਦਾ ਖੁਦ ਜ਼ਿੰਮੇਵਾਰ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ। ਮੇਰੀ ਜਾਂ ਮੇਰੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਦੀ ਕੋਈ ਜ਼ਿੰਮੇਵਾਰੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਵੇਗੀ। ਸਬੰਧਿਤ ਨੋਟ ਕਰਨ।

LOST AND FOUND

I Jaswinder Singh S/o Gurdial Singh R/o H.No. 306, St. No.10, Manjit Nagar, Jassowal Patiala Punjab that I have Lost my original Registry wide Vasika No. 17475 Dated 19/01/2006 Have been lost in Manjit Nagar Patiala on 04.12.2025.This Regards DDR is Registered LRN 655090/2025 Dated 04/12/2025 at PSOC Tripuri Patiala / if someone found inform Ranjit Kaur (Bank Loan Manager) on mobile no. 8146565484

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UICET hosts Golden Jubilee Alumni Reunion of batch of 1975

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, December 14

Dr. S. S. Bhatnagar University Institute of Chemical Engineering & Technology (UICET), Panjab University, Chandigarh, hosted the Golden Jubilee Alumni Reunion of the batch of 1975, bringing together distinguished alumni, faculty members, students and guests for a warm and nostalgic celebration.

The event commenced with a welcome address by Prof. Anupama Sharma, Chairperson, UICET, who highlighted the institute's rich legacy and the contributions of its alumni community over the decades. Cultural performances were presented by the students.

The members of the 1975 batch signed an MoU with the institute to renovate classrooms with state-of-the-art facilities, contributing ₹30 lakh towards the initiative. Alumni also shared their professional journeys and encouraged students to pursue entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities.

Rajiv Janjua clinches overall gross title at SJOBA Golf Tournament-2025

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, December 14

The St John's Old Boys Association(SJOBA) Golf Tournament 2025, held in fond memory of Old Boy Sahil Sharma, concluded on a high note with Rajiv Janjua lifting the coveted Overall Gross Winner Trophy with a score of 76 gross at the Chandigarh Golf Club(CGC). Played under clear winter skies, the 18-hole tournament brought together alumni golfers spanning decades. SJOBA is the alumni association of Chandigarh's prestigious St John's High School, Sec 26.

The prize distribution was held at the Chandigarh Golf Association(CGA), and was graced by Chief Guest Diprava Lakra, Finance Secretary, Chandigarh. The other dignitaries present included Ravibir Singh, President, CGC and Ranjit Pachnanda, IPS (Retd.), President, CGA. Notably, this year the SJOBA Golf Tournament was held in association with the GB Legends, an organisation driven by a 'passion for excellence' and a strong commitment to promoting golf as an Olympic sport.

As many as 104 golfers competed across various categories for net and gross honours. In the Handicap 0–9 category, Dilsher Grewal emerged winner with 36 points, while Sahil Sehgal finished runner-up with 33 points. The Handicap 10–18 category witnessed a closely fought contest, with Manu Khosla winning on 33 points, edging past Harman Mangat, who also scored 33 points but finished runner-up on countback (BB9). In the Handicap 19–24 category, Manraj Sohi claimed victory with 30 points, followed by Uday Mahajan with 29 points.

Kunal Sekhri, President, SJOBA, said: "This year's edition marked a significant step forward in youth engagement. In an initiative to promote sporting culture and nurture future golfers, 40 student golfers aged 7 to 17 from six leading schools of Chandigarh were invited to participate.

PU to start 'Advanced Diploma in Child Guidance and Counselling'

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, December 14

Department of Psychology, Panjab University (PU) will launch an Advanced Diploma in Child Guidance and Counselling in collaboration with the Savitribai Phule National Institute of Women and Child Development (SPNIWCD) Regional Centre, Mohali.

PU and SPNIWCD, Mohali, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to mark the start of the partnership in the presence of PU Vice Chancellor, Prof Renu Vig, and Regional Director of SPNIWCD, Mohali, Dr Sunita Seshadari.

The duration of the RCI-approved course will be one year and will train learners to undertake mental health activities for children and families. It will include structured internships in schools, communities and child-care settings. The collaboration is part of the joint effort to provide academic enrichment and career opportunities to students.

Speaking on the occasion, PU Vice Chancellor, Prof Renu Vig, highlighted the urgent need to address mental health concerns and the Nasha Mukti Abhiyan and called for strategies to support students' mental health and for creating peer groups for meaningful engagement. She appreciated the initiative of the department and stressed the importance of having a large number of trainees, who could also act as peer mentors in university departments, hostels etc.

Rich tributes paid to 1971-war hero Flying Officer Nirmaljit Singh Sekhon on Martyrdom Day

YOGESH KAPOOR
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ludhiana, December 14



A wreath-laying ceremony was organised to pay tributes to the Param Vir Chakra recipient Martyr Flying Officer Nirmaljit Singh Sekhon on his martyrdom day at district administrative complex here on Sunday.

Martyr Nirmaljit Singh Sekhon, a native of the village Issewal in Dakha had sacrificed his life during the Indo-Pak War of 1971.

Deputy Commissioner Himanshu Jain along with senior Indian Air Force officers paid tributes to him by laying wreaths while the Punjab Police and Air force presented the Guard of Honour to the Martyr. A two-minute silence was also observed during the ceremony.

Martyr Nirmaljit Singh Sekhon, born on July 17, 1943 was commissioned in the Indian Air Force on July 04, 1967. During the Indo-Pak war of 1971, Srinagar Air Field was attacked by a wave of six Pakistani aircraft on December 14, 1971. Flying Officer Nirmaljit Singh Sekhon despite being under attack displayed exceptional flying skills and took off to counter the enemy attack. The Officer exhibited extreme courage, valour and determination par excellence to thwart the Pakistani attack and destroyed two enemy aircraft forcing the enemy to return.

Martyr Nirmaljit Singh Sekhon, born on July 17, 1943 was commissioned in the Indian Air Force on July 04, 1967. During the Indo-Pak war of 1971, Srinagar Air Field was attacked by a wave of six Pakistani aircraft on December 14, 1971.

Being heavily outnumbered, Flying Officer Nirmaljit Singh Sekhon eventually made the supreme sacrifice in the service of the nation while fighting the enemy.

Amritsar MC, CEEW host seminar to conclude Zero Waste Schools programme

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Amritsar, December 14

The Amritsar Municipal Corporation (MC), in collaboration with the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), recently organised a seminar titled "Zero waste schools programme convening: Closing the loop from audit to action" in Amritsar. The event marked the conclusion of the Zero Waste Schools Programme, an initiative aimed at empowering students to transform their school campuses into zero-waste zones through practical waste management solutions.

During the seminar, key findings from detailed waste audits and knowledge, and attitude and practices (KAP) surveys conducted across 10 participating schools were shared. The programme highlighted how structured audits and student-led action plans contributed to measurable improvements in waste segregation and management practices at the school level.

The event was presided over by Mayor Jatinder Singh Moti Bhatia. Municipal Commissioner Bikramjit Singh Shergill Surinder Singh, non-government organisations, students and teachers from eight participating schools, and researchers from the CEEW were among the attendees of the event.

The civic administration lauded the schools concerned for taking part in the first phase of the programme.

Participating schools presented their school-level waste management action plans, developed on the basis of audit findings.

Addressing the gathering, the Mayor said children possessed immense potential to bring about behavioural change in society. Public awareness and active citizen participation were key to making the city cleaner, he added, saying the civic body remained committed to strengthening systems for waste collection, processing and disposal of legacy waste.

The programme created a shared platform of responsibility for schools and students, he added.

The Municipal Commissioner described waste management as a daily administrative challenge, emphasising the individual responsibility of citizens.

He congratulated the CEEW and the participating schools for initiating meaningful change, and urged more schools to partner with the municipal corporation to implement practical zero-waste solutions.

He added that the programme should be expanded to neighbourhoods, with students taking responsibility for their localities, and assured full administrative support in this regard.

CEEW Programme Associate Adeel Khan presented the outcomes of the programme, saying it was designed by students, and for students.

He added that the initiative aimed to enable children to drive change starting from their own campuses.

He said activities such as waste audits, assignments and school action plans resulted in noticeable improvement in students' knowledge, attitudes and behaviour, and demonstrated the potential for scaling the pilot programme across Punjab, and other parts of the country.

DRI seizes gold worth ₹80 lakh; one arrested in smuggling case

GURKIRPAL SINGH
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ludhiana, December 14



The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Zonal Unit Ludhiana, has busted a gold smuggling racket and seized foreign-origin gold worth over Rs 80 lakh following a well-coordinated intelligence-led operation conducted on December 12, 2025.

Acting on specific and actionable intelligence about the smuggling of gold from Thailand into India by air and its subsequent distribution in Punjab, officers of the DRI Chandigarh Regional Unit positioned themselves at Ambala Junction to intercept an identified carrier travelling by train from Kolkata. After deboarding at Ambala, the suspect boarded a bus heading towards Ludhiana, which was subsequently intercepted by DRI officers.

During interrogation, the carrier revealed that he had travelled from Kolkata to Delhi and then to Ambala, carrying foreign-origin gold smuggled into India from Thailand via flight. The gold was intended to be delivered in Punjab on the instructions of members of an organised smuggling syndicate.

Following due legal procedures, a panchnama was drawn in the presence of independent witnesses, leading to the recovery and seizure of 601 grams of foreign-origin 24-carat gold, valued at approximately Rs 80.01 lakh. The accused was arrested under the relevant provisions of the Customs Act, 1962.

Further investigation is underway to trace the source of procurement, financial and hawala channels, earlier consignments, and other members of the smuggling syndicate, including both backward and forward linkages, DRI officials said.

Extortion attempt foiled, one accused arrested after encounter in Ludhiana



PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ludhiana, December 14

The Ludhiana Police successfully foiled an extortion attempt involving a demand of Rs 1 crore after a dramatic encounter at Samrala Chowk, leading to the arrest of one accused, while his accomplice managed to flee.

According to Jaskarkit singh Teja deputy commissioner of police, (Rural)Sachin Verma, a resident of Vishkarma Nagar, Tajpur Road, Ludhiana, had lodged a complaint on December 4 stating that he received death threats via WhatsApp calls from individuals claiming to be members of the "Amrit Dalam Group," demanding Rs 1 crore as extortion. An FIR was registered at Police Station Division No. 7 under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023.

On December 12, Sachin Verma again received a WhatsApp call from an international number, in which the caller reiterated the threat and demanded money. After negotiations, the amount was reduced to Rs 10 lakh. The caller informed that two associates, Rohin Masih and Jayan Masih, would collect the money near Samrala Chowk.

Acting swiftly under the directions of Police Commissioner Swapan Sharma and senior police officers, a trap was laid by a police team led by Inspector Gagandeep Singh. When the complainant handed over a decoy bag to the suspects, one of them opened fire on the police party with an illegal pistol. The police retaliated in self-defence, injuring the shooter in the leg.

The injured accused was identified as Rohin Masih of Batala, Gurdaspur district, who was arrested and sent to hospital for treatment. His accomplice, Jyan Masih, escaped from the spot and is currently absconding.

MP Aujla raises demand for new railway station and track

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Amritsar, December 14



During the Lok Sabha's Zero Hour, MP Gurjeet Singh Aujla urged the Union Government to give immediate priority to major railway development projects in Amritsar. Aujla said that although Amritsar is an international religious and tourist hub, its railway infrastructure has not kept pace with the city's growing needs.

He thanked Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu, saying that his eight-year-old demand for Central Government acquisition of land for the Patti-Makhu rail link has finally been accepted. Reiterating his call for a new rail line and a modern railway station, he said, "The state government lacked the resources, so I appealed to the Centre for intervention, the acceptance of which is welcome news. Amritsar now urgently needs a new, modern railway station."

Aujla recalled that former Railway Minister Piyush Goyal had stated in Parliament that the "Amritsar railway station has been approved," but the project was stalled due to design-related issues.



Revenue Patwar Union Ludhiana and Kanungo Union Ludhiana paying tribute to Chaudhary Dharinder Singh Chauhan and Rajinder Pal Balvir Singh Tharikem, on Sunday. BPE

Mayor conducts surprise inspection at night shelter

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ludhiana, December 14

For ensuring proper facilities for the homeless at the night shelters, Mayor Principal Inderjit Kaur conducted surprise inspection at the night shelter of civic body in Ghoda colony near Cheema chowk during the night hours.

During the inspection, Mayor took feedback from the visitors and distributed blankets among them.

Further necessary directions were issued to the concerned officials of the civic body to regularly monitor the situation at the night shelters and keep a record of the visitors.

Mayor Inderjit Kaur stated that every effort is being made to facilitate the homeless at the night shelters and the concerned staff has been directed to take up maintenance work, wherever required.

Mayor Inderjit Kaur stated that the civic body has also tied up with different NGOs, Gurudwara management committees for providing food to the homeless at the night shelters situated in different parts of the city.

City buses have also been deployed for ferrying the homeless to the night shelters during the night hours.

Mayor Inderjit Kaur stated that every effort is being made to facilitate the homeless at the night shelters and the concerned staff has been directed to take up maintenance work, wherever required.

Mayor Principal Inderjit Kaur further stated that working under the guidance of Chief Minister (CM) Bhagwant Singh Mann, they have been working for the welfare of the public at large.

Nawanshahr traders' body vice-president found murdered

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Nawanshahr, December 14

The vice-president of Nawanshahr Traders' Association, Ravi Sobti, was reportedly brutally murdered, triggering panic and grief among traders and residents of the town. Sobti had been missing since Thursday night and his family had lodged a 'missing person' complaint with the police after he failed to return home. Acting on the basis of technical surveillance and phone location tracking, the police recovered his body from the Balachaur area under shocking circumstances.

According to information received, Ravi Sobti had gone out on Thursday evening to bring a migrant woman employed at his house from village Mahalo but did not return. Despite overnight search by the police following the family's complaint, his whereabouts remained unknown until his body was traced. The police recovered Sobti's body from a car in the Balachaur area, where it had been brutally attacked with sharp-edged weapons. In an apparent attempt to destroy evidence, the accused allegedly set the body on fire while it was lying on the rear seat of the vehicle.

Preliminary investigations revealed that Sobti was murdered within Nawanshahr itself, after which the accused took the body in a car towards the Balachaur region with the intention of disposing of it. The police have taken the car into custody and sent the body to the Civil Hospital for post-mortem examination.

Informed sources said that the police have detained a few migrant persons in connection with the murder and are interrogating them to ascertain the motive behind the crime.

A case has been registered and further investigation is underway to establish the sequence of events and fix accountability.

Training programme on AI-powered tools, techniques at LKCTC

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Jalandhar, December 14



Lyallpur Khalsa College Technical Campus (LKCTC) in association with Maharaja Agrasen University, Solan (HP) and IIT Delhi (Virtual Labs) is organising a seven-day Faculty Development Programme on 'AI-powered tools and techniques for Research and Teaching'. The programme will conclude on Wednesday.

The event started with lighting of lamp by chief guest Prof YS Brar (Dean Academics and Professor and Head Department of Electrical Engineering, IKGPTU), guest of honour Dr Ekonkar Singh Johal (Deputy Registrar, IKGPTU), Sukhbir Singh Chatha (Director, Academic Affairs KCL Group), Dr RS Deol (Director LKCTC), Dr SK Sood (Deputy Director) and Dr Sandeep Rahar (Principal, School of Pharmacy).

Dr RS Deol (Director, LKCTC) gave a warm welcome to all the dignitaries, guests and participants present. He stated that it must be explored as to how AI can be used responsibly, creatively, and effectively. /"Teaching is at its best when it is personalised, interactive, and inclusive. AI helps bring this vision closer to reality. The future of education and research will not be defined by technology alone, but by how we choose to use it.

When researchers combine AI with curiosity, they push the boundaries of knowledge. When teachers combine AI with compassion, they unlock the potential of every learner. And when students combine AI with creativity, they shape the innovations of tomorrow. AI is not just a technological revolution; it is a human opportunity. An opportunity to learn more deeply and to expand what is possible in classrooms, laboratories, and communities around the world/", he said.

Teacher couple killed as car plunges into canal amid dense fog in Moga

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Moga, December 14



A school teacher couple died in a road accident in the Baghapurana area of Moga district on Sunday morning when their car skidded off the road and plunged into a canal near Sangatpura village due to dense fog that severely reduced visibility.

The deceased have been identified as Kamaljit Kaur and her husband, Jas Karan Singh, both serving as school teachers in Moga district.

According to officials, Kamaljit Kaur had been deputed for election duty at a polling booth in Sangatpura village. She was travelling with her husband in a car from their residence in Dhurkot Ransinh village when the accident occurred.

According to officials, Kamaljit Kaur had been deputed for election duty at a polling booth in Sangatpura village. She was travelling with her husband in a car from their residence in Dhurkot Ransinh village when the accident occurred.

Due to heavy fog, the driver lost control of the vehicle, causing the car to skid off the road and plunge into a canal. Both occupants died on the spot.

Jas Karan Singh was originally a resident of Mansa district. On receiving information, police and administrative officials reached the spot, recovered the bodies, and initiated further proceedings.

3 held for Shiv Sena youth leader's death

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Muktsar, December 14

The police on Saturday claimed to have arrested three persons in connection with the death of Punjab Shiv Sena youth leader Shiv Kumar Shiva of Muktsar, whose body was found on the Bura Gujjar road here on December 6.

Those arrested were Ramandeep Singh, Ankush and Sukhwinder Nikku, all residents of Muktsar and friends of the deceased.

Shiva left his residence on December 5, but never returned. The family had alleged that he was killed after being administered some poisonous substance. A case of culpable homicide not amounting to murder was registered on Friday.

bright Punjab Express

Harnessing n-energy

The government is all set to table a new Atomic Energy Bill, 2025 which will allow private players in the nuclear energy field to meet the growing needs of the country. The draft in this regard was cleared by the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week. The bill has been branded as SHANTI - Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India. This legislation marks the most significant reform in India's atomic energy sector since its inception, breaking the decades-old monopoly of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and opening the doors for private participation in a domain that has remained tightly controlled and shrouded in secrecy for over 60 years.

The Bill is expected to be tabled in Parliament early next week during the ongoing Winter Session. Once enacted, SHANTI will consolidate multiple existing laws, address regulatory gaps, and create a unified legal framework to accelerate nuclear expansion at scale.

India has set an ambitious target: 100 gigawatts (GW) of nuclear power capacity by 2047, nearly an eleven-fold increase from current levels. Today, the country operates 25 reactors with a combined installed capacity of 8,880 megawatts, and 17 more reactors are under various stages of construction.

The roadmap aims to reach 22,000 MW by 2032, before scaling up to 100 GW by 2047 - an essential step toward achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070 and realising the vision of Viksit Bharat. India's base load power can only be met with atomic energy once the coal and gas-based thermal plants are decommissioned to fight climate change.

Meeting these targets will require massive capital infusion, cutting-edge technology, and faster project timelines - conditions that cannot be fulfilled by government funding alone. By inviting private players into the nuclear ecosystem, the SHANTI Bill seeks to unlock investment, spur innovation, and position nuclear energy as a central pillar of India's clean-energy future.

In this connection, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's observations are important. He said, "We are moving toward opening the nuclear sector as well. We are laying the foundation for a strong role for the private sector in this field too. This reform will give new strength to our energy security and technological leadership.' India is already a nuclear weapons state having acquired atomic bombs in 1998.

For the first time, private companies will be allowed to participate in core activities such as exploration of atomic minerals, fuel fabrication, equipment manufacturing, and potentially even aspects of plant operations. The Bill replaces outdated provisions of the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, creating a streamlined structure for licensing, safety, and compliance. A new independent nuclear safety authority is expected to be established to ensure transparency and adherence to global standards.

Amendments to the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act will clarify operator and supplier responsibilities, introduce insurance-backed caps, and provide government backstops-critical to attracting private and foreign investment.

SPIRITUAL WORLD



Nuclear Energy Mission



Dr Anil Kakodkar

Rapid deployment of nuclear energy at scale has become essential for realising Vikasit Bharat. Besides access to clean energy, nuclear energy also promises long term energy as well as climate security. Thanks to sustained and self-reliant efforts in the Department of Atomic Energy, India has emerged as a self-reliant, responsible country with advanced nuclear technology, despite the embargos that were placed around us by the international community. The country is now technology ready to realise the Nuclear Energy Mission's target of reaching 100 GW generating capacity by the year 2047.

While this may appear to be ambitious, given our past track record, the policy initiatives and actions, particularly the legislative ones that are on cards, should help overcome the challenges. Besides securing clean energy and addressing climate risk, nuclear energy mission has the potential to boost the economy in a significant way since the entire value chain would be within the country. It would create jobs at all levels across the full spectrum of activities involving materials, manufacturing, construction, commissioning, operation and maintenance, quality assurance, safety and neighborhood engagement. There are also the challenges in terms of trained and qualified human resource. While we are well placed to address all this challenge, industry confidence in continuity of the programme would be a prerequisite.

What are the challenges that lie ahead? The most important among them is the accelerated deployment at scale commensurate with the time targets. More than 90 GW or around 200 reactors are to be added in just two decades. Clearly one needs multiple implementing agencies in addition to NPCIL, NTPC and BHAVINI to take up projects with standardised design of reactor plants in fleet mode. While we should deploy the programme with technologies consistent with our national nuclear energy policy, PHWR technology clearly is the proven and economically competitive indigenous technology ready for a rapid scale up. NPCIL should thus constructively hand hold and mentor other entities in PHWR technology while implementing its own programme. Other mature technologies can also be considered as an additionality, provided they meet the economic and safety criteria.

There is also the crucial issue of investments which for the nuclear power utility segment alone would be of the order of 20 lakh crores. The investments for fuel cycle infrastructure would be in addition. Supplementation by private sector finance is thus critical. While nuclear has a sound economic case, policy support on par with other clean energy technology would be inevitable.

Securing nuclear fuel for the intended capacity is the next key challenge. While the global uranium resources are substantial, the increasing demand for uranium driven by nuclear energy expansion as well as the constraints on uranium supply, would lead to an interim supply deficit and price volatility. This could become a major fuel supply security challenge given the complex geopolitics associated with nuclear commerce. India with its vast thorium resources should thus switch over to thorium and become energy secure at the earliest. This needs acceleration of our thorium based nuclear power programme and related technology development. Utilisation of thorium as well as realising much higher energy value from uranium, which in any way would become the need of the hour, would inevitably involve reprocessing and recycle of nuclear fuel. Our capability in closed nuclear fuel cycle would thus come in handy to ensure a secure and sustainable energy supply and realise credible long term nuclear waste management. This however, is a sensitive nuclear technology and its governance and control need to be retained with the Government. Most countries including USA have not been able to resolve the issue of permanent disposal of used nuclear fuel. The fuel management interface between privately owned nuclear utility and Government owned nuclear recycle enterprise needs to be properly codified into the law.

It seems to me that given the larger thrust to nuclear energy worldwide, a greater emphasis on nuclear recycle would be inevitable. The backend fuel cycle in comparison to front end, would thus become an equally large if not larger enterprise. Thorium, because of proliferation resistance it offers, becomes even more relevant in this context.

We need to recognise that our PHWR systems are most flexible and best suited in facilitating a broad variety of fuel cycles particularly in the context of our plans to transition towards thorium. While the Fast Breeder development needs to be accelerated to enable large-scale conversion of thorium to fissile uranium-233, now that we are able to set up large PHWR capacities leveraging imported uranium, PHWRs offer a handy choice to do the same and accelerate our advance towards thorium utilisation. Development work necessary for this purpose should be the prime preoccupation of R&D in DAE even as nuclear utilities in public and private space carry out accelerated capacity addition leveraging standardised and proven designs.

We could expect the proposed nuclear bill to address concerns of all stake holders including some discussed above and propel the nuclear energy mission to achieve the expected goals.

Former Secretary, Department of Atomic Energy & Former Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission

CII proposes 6-pronged investment roadmap for India's next decade of growth



Ahead of the Union Budget 2026-27, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on Sunday proposed a comprehensive, six-pronged investment strategy anchored in fiscal prudence, capital efficiency and investor confidence.

Sustained investment growth, spanning public, private, and foreign investments, will be central to maintaining India's momentum as one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, according to the apex industry chamber.

"The forthcoming Union Budget 2026–27 has to serve the dual role of stabiliser and growth enabler, and promoting investments will be one of the most critical components in this regard," said Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII.

The recommendations emphasise strengthening public capital expenditure as the backbone of infrastructure-led growth, while simultaneously unlocking private and foreign investment through targeted incentives, institutional reforms, and enhanced global engagement.

First, bolstering public investment remains essential. Public capital expenditure has been the key driver of India's post-pandemic recovery, catalysing infrastructure expansion and crowding in private capital.

To sustain this momentum, CII recommends increasing central capital expenditure by 12 per cent and capex support to states by 10 per cent in FY27, with continued emphasis on high-multiplier sectors such as transport, energy, logistics, and the green transition.

To strengthen project selection and execution, the chamber also proposes institutionalising a Capital Expenditure Efficiency Framework (CEEF) to prioritise high-impact projects, track physical and financial progress, and evaluate outcomes based on productivity and regional spillovers.

CII has further called for launching a Rs 150 lakh crore National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) 2.0 for 2026–32, with a clear list of shovel-ready projects including PPP projects, to provide multi-year certainty to investors, developers, and states.

Such a framework would strengthen credibility by aligning fiscal policy with medium-term debt sustainability, according to the CII.

Second, facilitating private investment will be the next major priority. While public investment lays the foundation, private and foreign capital will be the true accelerators of India's transformation.

"The Government has provided a big demand push via income tax relief in last year's Union Budget and recently via GST 2.0. Investments, especially private sector investment, will be the next big driver for economic growth that needs to be focused on in the next fiscal to continue the growth momentum," added Banerjee.

Third, to attract long-term capital for priority sectors, CII suggests establishing an NRI Investment Promotion Fund. This can be a government–private holding company, with up to 49 per cent government stake, that channels NRI, FPI, and institutional investments into sectors such as infrastructure and AI.

The Fund can raise capital through long-term convertible bonds benchmarked to FCNR rates, offering secure returns with equity upside, and including special India Global Diaspora Bonds.

Fourth, CII proposes strengthening the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) by forming a Sovereign Investment Strategy Council (SIFC) to align investments with national priorities, ensure governance excellence, and benchmark performance against leading global sovereign funds.

Fifth, simplifying ECB processes and providing higher borrowing limits, longer tenures, and partial risk cover for infrastructure and manufacturing projects would improve access to global capital while maintaining external sustainability.

A single-window clearance mechanism for large FDI proposals, backed by dedicated facilitation cells at the Centre and in the states, with deemed approval within sixty to ninety days, would deliver predictability, reduce administrative delays, and accelerate big-ticket investments, said the CII.

Sixth, to deepen global investor engagement, CII recommends establishing an India Global Economic Forum as a government-led platform that brings together MNCs, sovereign wealth funds, pension funds, private equity, and other institutional investors for structured dialogue with senior government leadership on emerging investment opportunities across sectors. IANS

PIB Fact Check debunks Pak propaganda claim of Rafale, S-400 destruction during Operation Sindoor



The Press Information Bureau's (PIB) Fact Check unit has once again exposed Pakistani propaganda being circulated on social media, which falsely claims that Pakistan destroyed India's Rafale fighter jets and S-400 air defence systems during Operation Sindoor.

According to the PIB Fact Check, several Pakistan-based propaganda accounts are sharing a doctored, AI-generated video of former Indian Army chief, General Ved Prakash Malik (Retd), falsely portraying him as praising Pakistan's military capabilities and admitting the alleged destruction of India's defence assets.

"The video in question is fake and has been digitally manipulated using AI tools," PIB Fact Check said in a post, rejecting the claims.

"General Ved Prakash Malik (Retd) has NOT made any such remarks," it clarified.

The government fact-checking agency warned that such fabricated content is being deliberately circulated to mislead citizens and undermine public confidence in India's defence preparedness and military capabilities.

"Such fabricated content is intended to mislead citizens and undermine confidence in India's defence capabilities. Verify facts. Stop misinformation," PIB Fact Check said.

The fake video claims that Pakistan possesses superior weapons and equipment, and alleges that the destruction of Rafale jets and the S-400 missile defence system is proof of its military dominance over India. It even suggested that India needs to upgrade its defence equipment.

Countering this narrative, PIB Fact Check shared the authentic video clip in which General Malik is heard saying that during Operation Sindoor, neither country crossed each other's borders, highlighting the evolution of modern warfare.

"During Operation Sindoor, we didn't even cross each other's border. Technological advancement is so immense. We now have standoff weapons; both nations have them. So we can hit each other while being away from the border," General Malik said in the original video.

"But definitely, in India we have better weapons and equipment," he stressed. IANS

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NEWSBRIEFS

Over 3,000 people take part in Assam Rifles Half Marathon 2025, promote 'Fit India' and national unity

NEW DELHI: The Fifth edition of the Assam Rifles Half Marathon 2025 was successfully organised on Sunday at the Headquarters of the Directorate General Assam Rifles at Laitkor in Meghalaya's state capital Shillong. The runs were flagged off by Lieutenant General Vikas Lakhera, Director General Assam Rifles. Held as a key initiative to promote the "Fit India Movement", the annual event -- first conducted in 2021 -- has grown significantly in popularity among running enthusiasts across the country. This year's event witnessed participation from across India, with more than 3,000 participants representing 26 states and two Union Territories across various age categories, reflecting the spirit of unity in diversity and promoting national unity. **IANS**

Over 850 caught for drunken driving in Hyderabad, Cyberabad

HYDERABAD: More than people 850 people have been caught for driving vehicles under the influence of alcohol during the special weekend drive in the limits of Hyderabad and Cyberabad Police Commissionerates, police said on Sunday. While 460 drivers were apprehended during the two-day drive in Hyderabad, the Cyberabad traffic police caught 407 offenders. Hyderabad traffic police conducted a two-day special drive on December 12 and 13 against drunken driving to ensure road safety. During the special drive, a total of 460 drivers were caught driving vehicles under the influence of alcohol. **IANS**

Telangana CM thanks Messi for enthralling fans in Hyderabad, congratulates security personnel

HYDERABAD, DECEMBER 14



Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Sunday thanked football legend Lionel Messi and his teammates, Luis Suarez and Rodrigo de Paul, for the GOAT India tour event in Hyderabad.

"I wholeheartedly thank G.O.A.T Lionel Messi football greats Luis Suarez and Rodrigo de Paul, for accepting our invitation and gracing our city of Hyderabad and enthralling all our sports lovers especially youth," Chief Minister poster on 'X'.

CM Revanth Reddy, who played the friendly match against Messi's team at Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, also thanked the Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, for attending the event.

"We are deeply grateful to our leader Rahul Gandhi ji for joining us and making the evening a memory of a lifetime," he said.

"I thank and congratulate all officers, security personnel, organisers and staff on duty across the city for ensuring we were able to showcase to the world that means sports, Telangana means excellence, and Telangana means hospitality," the Chief Minister said.

"On behalf of my entire government, I thank all sports lovers and fans for their best conduct and disciplined manner in which we played hosts to our guests," he added.

The celebrations included a vibrant musical concert and an elaborate laser show, featuring performances by Rahul Sipligunj and Mangli.

Before the friendly match, a 'Meet & Greet' programme was organised in honour of Lionel Messi at Falaknuma Palace.

CM Revanth Reddy, along with Rahul Gandhi, attended the event, where several distinguished personalities had the opportunity to interact with the football legend.

Messi was in Hyderabad on Saturday, where he appeared in many photo-ops, was seen kicking a ball with kids and interacting with officials. The visit came soon after the chaos witnessed at his first stop in Kolkata.

A huge controversy erupted after his blink-and-miss performance at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata, for which fans had forked out huge amounts for tickets. **IANS**

Water storage in TN's Cauvery delta tanks increases as rain boosts water storage

CHENNAI, DECEMBER 14



Copious rainfall during the northeast monsoon and sustained inflows in the Cauvery river system have significantly improved water storage across irrigation tanks in the Cauvery delta, offering major relief to farmers ahead of the peak agricultural season.

Of the 764 irrigation tanks in the delta region, 386 have now reached full capacity, a sharp rise from just 42 tanks recorded three months ago. In addition, 329 tanks have filled beyond 75 per cent of their capacity, underscoring the extent of the recovery in water availability across the agrarian heartland of Tamil Nadu.The delta districts of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Mayiladuthurai and Pudukkottai together account for 737 system tanks fed by rivers and canals, in addition to rainwater, along with 27 non-system tanks dependent entirely on rainfall.

Thanjavur district has the highest concentration of irrigation tanks at 561, followed by Pudukkottai with 170. Tiruvarur has 28 tanks, while Nagapattinam and Mayiladuthurai have three and two tanks, respectively.

A majority of these tanks are located in tail-end areas and play a crucial role in supporting paddy cultivation, particularly during the samba season.

Typically, these tanks receive substantial inflows during September and October. However, this year saw an early rise in storage levels, with many tanks crossing the 50 per cent mark by the end of August itself. **IANS**

Two die by suicide in Bengal's Malda amid alleged fear over SIR process

KOLKATA, DECEMBER 14

Two persons died by suicide within a span of 24 hours in West Bengal's Malda district, allegedly triggered by fear and anxiety linked to the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise, police said on Saturday.

On Friday night, a young man reportedly died after panicking over an error related to his father's name on the Election Commission's website. On Saturday morning, another man was found hanging at his residence, police said.

The second deceased has been identified as Abul Kalam. For reasons yet to be fully ascertained, he was unable to fill up the enumeration form under the SIR exercise. It is alleged that some of his neighbours frightened him by suggesting that he could be sent to a detention camp.

According to preliminary accounts, the fear of being sent to a detention camp had been weighing heavily on him. His body was found hanging inside his house on Saturday morning.

Local sources said the 52-year-old hailed from Balubhorat village in Harishchandrapur-I block of Malda district. He had earlier lived in Jaipur for a long period, where he worked at a hotel. The unmarried Abul Kalam later quit his job and returned to his village home.

The SIR process has recently begun in the state. While others in his locality received enumeration forms, he did not. It has emerged that the man did not possess either a voter identity card or an Aadhaar card. In addition, his parents' names were reportedly not found in the 2002 voters' list. **IANS**

Two women among seven militants held in Manipur; arms recovered

IMPHAL, DECEMBER 14

Security forces in Manipur have arrested seven militants, including two women cadres, from different districts and recovered some arms and ammunition during the past 24 hours, officials said on Sunday.

A police official said that the five militants belonging to the outlawed United National Liberation Front (UNLF) and People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) were arrested from different locations in Imphal West, Imphal East and Bishnupur district.

He said that the security forces comprising the central and state have arrested two active women cadres of UNLF (Koireng faction) from Moirangkampu Sajeb Makha Leikai area in Imphal East district. The arrested militants were identified as Takhellambam Sanathoi Chanu alias Loingakpi alias Sanathoi (19) and Kongbrailakpam Rameshori Devi alias Langlen alias Bemma alias Buchu (19) from Imphal East district. Two mobile phones were seized from their possession.

The Manipur Police arrested a drug dealer, identified as Baseimayum Yaibi (47), from the Porompat Pangal Leirak area in Imphal East district. **IANS**

CM Yogi-led UP govt's mass marriage scheme brings relief to over 4 lakh underprivileged families

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14



As the wedding season gathers pace across Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's Mass Marriage Scheme has emerged as a major social support initiative for economically weaker families, particularly from the Dalit, backward, minority and other vulnerable sections.

Launched in 2017, the scheme aims to ease the financial burden of marriage for poor families while ensuring dignity and social inclusion for daughters.

Over the past eight years, more than four lakh marriages have been solemnised under the programme, with ceremonies conducted collectively and in accordance with religious traditions.

The current financial year has witnessed an unprecedented response.

Against a target of 57,000 beneficiaries for 2025–26, the state government has received more than 1.20 lakh applications so far.Of these, more than 21,000 have been approved, while over 14,000 marriages have already been conducted.Officials expect the numbers to rise significantly in the coming months as more applications are processed.

According to official data, the scheme has benefited more than 2.20 lakh daughters from poor Dalit families, making them the largest beneficiary group. This is followed by more than 1.30 lakh beneficiaries from backward classes and over 40,000 from minority communities. Around 16,000 families from the general category have also availed of assistance under the scheme.Each couple receives financial support of Rs 1 lakh, which includes essential marriage items, a cash transfer directly credited to the bride's bank account, and full arrangements for the wedding ceremony. **IANS**

DELHI/NCR

CAQM seeks strict enforcement of SC order on outdoor sports amid poor air quality

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14



The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has directed Delhi and neighbouring NCR state governments to ensure immediate and strict compliance with the Supreme Court's order mandating the postponement of outdoor physical sports competitions during periods of adverse air quality.

In a draft communication dated December 13, shared on X, the CAQM flagged concerns that despite clear directions issued earlier, some schools and institutions in Delhi-NCR were still conducting outdoor sports activities, potentially exposing children to serious health risks.

The directions stem from a November 19 order of the Supreme Court in the MC Mehta vs Union of India case, which had underscored the dangers posed by deteriorating air quality, especially to children.

Acting on the court's observations, the CAQM had earlier instructed states to postpone outdoor sports competitions scheduled during November and December.

It noted that the prevailing air pollution scenario across the NCR continues to be severe, making such activities contrary to both the spirit and intent of the apex court's directions. **IANS**

President Murmu honours DMRC's East Vinod Nagar Metro for sustained energy conservation efforts

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14



The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), on Sunday, has received national recognition for its energy efficiency initiatives, with East Vinod Nagar Metro Station on the Pink Line winning the 'Best Performing Unit Award' in the Metro Stations sector at the National Energy Conservation Awards (NECA) 2025.

The award was presented by President Droupadi Murmu at an event held at the Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on National Energy Conservation Day.

DMRC Managing Director Vikas Kumar received the honour on behalf of the organisation, acknowledging the metro station's consistent and measurable efforts to reduce energy consumption and promote sustainable practices.

The Bureau of Energy Efficiency, under the Ministry of Power, selected East Vinod Nagar Metro Station after a detailed evaluation of applications received from metro rail systems across the country.

According to officials, the station stood out for its sustained reduction in overall electrical energy consumption and improvement in its Energy Performance Index over the past three financial years.

DMRC said the recognition was achieved through regular monitoring of energy usage across station operations and the implementation of targeted energy conservation measures.

A key initiative included the retrofitting of 405 conventional tube light fixtures, each of 2×28 watt capacity, with energy-efficient 2×14 watt LED tube lights, leading to substantial power savings.

The station also operates a 150 kilowatt-peak rooftop solar power plant, which meets nearly 49 per cent of its total energy requirement.

This has significantly reduced dependence on grid electricity and lowered the station's carbon footprint.

In addition to the NECA honour, East Vinod Nagar Metro Station holds a 'Platinum' rating under the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) certification awarded by the Confederation of Indian Industry, reflecting its adherence to high standards of sustainability and environmental responsibility.

DMRC officials said the award reaffirms the corporation's long-term commitment to energy conservation, adoption of renewable energy and innovative efficiency measures.

The organisation continues to focus on environmentally responsible urban transport solutions as part of its broader sustainability agenda for the national capital. **IANS**

No link between Covid-19 vaccines and sudden deaths in young adults: AIIMS

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14



A year-long autopsy-based study conducted by the AIIMS, New Delhi, found no scientific evidence linking Covid-19 vaccination to sudden deaths among young adults, reaffirming that the vaccines are safe and effective.

The study, titled 'Burden of Sudden Death in Young Adults: A One-Year Observational Study at a Tertiary Care Centre in India', has been published in the 'Indian Journal of Medical Research', the flagship journal of the Indian Council of Medical Research.

Researchers closely examined sudden death cases of people aged between 18 and 45 years using verbal autopsy, post-mortem imaging, conventional autopsy and detailed histopathological tests. According to the findings, there was no statistically significant association between Covid-19 vaccination status and sudden deaths in the young population.

The researchers found that most of the deaths were caused by well-known medical conditions, with cardiovascular diseases emerging as the leading cause.

Respiratory illnesses and other non-cardiac causes were also identified in several cases. The study also noted that both Covid-19 infection history and vaccination status were similar across younger and older age groups, and no causal link between vaccination and sudden deaths was found. These results, the researchers said, are in line with global scientific evidence that supports the safety of Covid-19 vaccines. **IANS**

NGT closes suo moto case over sewage in Delhi's Satpula Lake after water quality improves

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14



The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has disposed of a suo motu case relating to alleged discharge of raw sewage into Delhi's Satpula Lake after noting that the latest inspection reports indicate improvement in water quality and compliance with environmental norms.

A Bench headed by Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava, and comprising expert members Dr A. Senthil Vel and Dr Afroz Ahmad, was dealing with an original application registered suo moto (on its own) on the basis of a news report titled "On revamp priority list Satpula Lake being filled up with raw sewage from drain", published in April 2024. The green tribunal noted that the news item had highlighted the pumping of untreated sewage into Satpula Lake from a large drain near Saket Court in South Delhi. It also noted that the lake was identified in 2021 as one of the wetlands proposed for rejuvenation by the Delhi government, and that it is located within a park maintained by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA). **IANS**

Delhi Police bust spurious drug racket; unearth manufacturing unit, arrest two

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14

The Cyber Cell of the Crime Branch, Delhi Police, has busted a major and highly organised racket involved in the manufacture, repackaging and nationwide sale of spurious Schedule-H medicines, recovering counterfeit drugs and related material worth over Rs 2.3 crore, the officials said on Sunday. Two accused have been arrested in connection with the case.The arrested persons have been identified as Gaurav Bhagat, a resident of Meerpur Hindu village in Loni, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, and Shree Ram alias Vishal Gupta, a resident of Nirmal Vihar, Sabhapur, Delhi.Police said the operation was conducted under the leadership of Inspector Manjeet Kumar and supervised by ACP Anil Sharma.Acting on specific secret information and sustained ground-level intelligence supported by technical surveillance, the Cyber Cell conducted a raid at Teliwara in Sadar Bazar, one of Delhi's major wholesale pharmaceutical and cosmetic markets. **IANS**

Indian Railways records 18 pc jump in production of hi-tech LHB coaches

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14



Indian Railways has registered steady progress in the production of high-technology Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB) coaches, which are designed to provide improved safety, enhanced riding comfort, and better operational performance for passengers.

During the current financial year 2025-26 (up to November 2025), a total of more than 4,224 LHB coaches have been manufactured. This represents a robust 18 per cent increase over the 3,590 coaches produced during the same period of the previous year. The rise in output reflects the continuous strengthening of manufacturing capacity and improved production planning across railway units, according to a Railways Ministry statement issued on Sunday.In terms of factory-wise performance during this period, the Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai, has produced 1,659 LHB coaches, followed by the Modern Coach Factory (MCF), Raebareli, with 1,234 coaches and the Rail Coach Factory (RCF), Kapurthala, with 1,331 coaches, collectively contributing to the overall growth in LHB coach production, the statement said. **IANS**

CM Saini releases ₹380 crore for Bajra farmers under Bhavantar Bharpai Yojana

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, December 14




Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said the state government has today released Rs. 380 crore for Bajra-producing farmers under the Bhavantar Bharpai Yojana. He said prosperity in the state is not possible without the prosperity of farmers, and therefore, farmers' welfare remains the top priority of the government. Farmers are provided subsidies on agricultural machinery from sowing to harvesting. In case crops are damaged due to natural calamities, provisions for compensation and crop insurance are in place. After harvesting, arrangements have been made for procurement of every grain of produce, and payments are transferred directly into farmers' bank accounts.

The Chief Minister was addressing office-bearers of the Kisan Morcha at his official residence, Sant Kabir Kutir, here today.

On the occasion, OSD to the Chief Minister Bharat Bhushan Bharti, BJP State President Mohan Lal Badoli, State General Secretary (Organisation) Phanindranath Sharma, State General Secretary Surender Poonia, State General Secretary Archana Gupta, Kisan Morcha State President Rajbala, along with other senior office-bearers were present.

The Chief Minister urged the office-bearers of the Kisan Morcha to motivate farmers across the state to adopt micro-irrigation, stating that it would not only conserve water but also reduce cultivation costs for farmers.He said that all 24 crops of farmers are now being procured at Minimum Support Price (MSP). So far, Rs. 1.64 lakh crore has been deposited into the bank accounts of 12 lakh farmers against crop procurement. He added that the government stands firmly with farmers during times of disaster and, over the past 11 years, Rs. 15,728 crore has been disbursed as compensation for crop damage.To make crop procurement more convenient, the "Meri Fasal Mera Byora" portal has been launched. Through this portal, farmers can sell their crops and also avail financial assistance for fertilizers, seeds, loans and agricultural equipment from the comfort of their homes.The Chief Minister informed that for crop losses due to natural calamities during the Kharif season 2025, compensation amounting to more than Rs. 116.51 crore has been released to 53,821 farmers.

He said the present government has completely abolished the Abiana system that had continued since British times. Not only this, outstanding arrears of Rs. 133.55 crore related to past Abiana dues payable by farmers have also been waived. He added that the government has increased the sugarcane price to Rs. 415 per quintal, which is the highest in the country.

Sharing other farmer-friendly decisions, Saini said that 108 mandis in the state have been connected to the e-NAM portal for online sale of crops. Asia's largest modern apple, fruit and vegetable market has been established at Pinjore. Under the Haryana Operational Pilot Project, land improvement has been carried out on 1,54,985 acres across the state.He said under the Natural Farming Scheme, verification of 19,723 farmers has been completed for adopting natural farming over 31,873 acres. Under this scheme, assistance of Rs. 75 lakh has been provided to 2,500 farmers at the rate of four drums per farmer, and Rs. 1.30 crore has been transferred directly to farmers' bank accounts as subsidy for the purchase of 523 indigenous cows.

Paddy scam raised serious questions over govt's transparency & accountability: Kumari Selja

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
New Delhi/Chandigarh, December 14

The General Secretary of All India Congress Committee, former Union Minister and Sirsa MP Kumari Selja said that in Haryana, paddy was sold in mandis without actually arriving there by issuing fake gate passes. Paddy was brought from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh and sold in the names of local farmers. This paddy scam has raised serious questions over the transparency and accountability of the BJP government in the state, even as it continues to claim corruption-free governance and administration. Kumari Selja said the government must bring the truth to light in this entire matter, take strict action against those responsible, and immediately provide farmers with their rightful dues and relief.

Haryana Energy Minister launches sharp attack on Congress over 'Vote Chor, Gaddi Chod' rally



PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, December 14

Haryana's Energy, Transport, and Labor Minister Anil Vij on Sunday launched a sharp attack and sarcasm on the Congress party's "Vote Chor, Gaddi Chod" rally being held in Delhi, saying that Congress has been wailing to hide its failures for a long time, and today they are holding the such rally.Responding to questions from media personnel on this matter, he said that for a long time now, the Congress party has been losing wherever elections have been held in the country. Congress raises questions on EVMs regarding its own losses and is now talking about vote theft, even though Congress leaders have never been able to clearly explain to the public how the vote theft happened.

He said that the voter lists on which we contested and won elections were the same voter lists available to Congress candidates, and if those voter lists were wrong, then first they should take resignations from the Congress MLAs who won from those places, and then hold rallies in Delhi.

Dense fog triggers massive vehicle pile-up in Rohtak; 2 dead, 24 injured

ROHTAK, DECEMBER 14

Low visibility caused by the season's first dense fog led to a massive pile-up of over 30 vehicles on National Highway-152 D near Kharkara village under Meham subdivision on Sunday morning, causing chaos on the route. Vehicular traffic remained disrupted for over two hours following the accident. Residents of Kharkhara village and the Meham police rushed to the scene, calling Dial 112 vehicles to transport the injured to government hospitals in Meham and PGIMS, Rohtak.The villagers helped rescue several people trapped in the damaged vehicles, transporting them to hospitals in their private vehicles. "The mishap occurred around 8 am. We immediately informed the police and the toll plaza staff. Since no ambulance was available at that time, the injured were taken to the hospital in police jeeps and private vehicles," said a local resident.Two of the injured, Ashish (30) of Charkhi Dadri and Sohan Lal (35) of Jind, succumbed to their injuries while 24 other injured, including women and children, are undergoing treatment at PGIMS-Rohtak and other hospitals. "Ashish was traveling in his car when it collided with a truck from behind due to low visibility. The impact was so severe that his car was badly damaged, and several vehicles behind also collided with one another, creating a chain reaction typical of fog-related accidents," said sources at the police department.

Subhash, SHO of Meham Police Station, confirmed that two persons died and over 24 were injured in the collision.

Bhupinder Hooda backs Rahul Gandhi's EVM charge, says Election Commission has lost neutrality

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14



Senior Congress leader and former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Sunday endorsed Rahul Gandhi's allegation that the Election Commission is no longer neutral, claiming that recent elections had exposed deep flaws in the electoral process.Addressing the party's "Vote chor, gaddi chhod" rally at Ramlila ground in the national capital, Hooda said the elections held recently, including those in Maharashtra, Haryana and Karnataka, had now "proved" what Rahul Gandhi has been alleging for months, that the constitutional authority tasked with safeguarding free and fair polls had failed in its duty."The Constitution gave every citizen the right to vote after Independence. Today, that very right is being manipulated," Hooda said, alleging large-scale interference in the voting process. Referring to growing public distrust in electronic voting machines, Hooda said citizens were openly demanding a return to a transparent voting system. "Even the common man says, get rid of EVMs," he said.

The former chief minister cited Germany as an example, claiming that courts there had ruled that electronic voting systems were vulnerable to manipulation and therefore unacceptable in a democracy.

Hooda said the Congress would not remain silent and warned of a nationwide agitation under Rahul Gandhi's leadership. AGENCIES

3 buses collide in Jhajjar due to low visibility

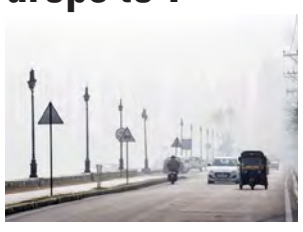
JHAJJAR, DECEMBER 14

Three buses collided at Kulana Chowk in Jhajjar, Haryana, due to low visibility caused by dense fog on Sunday morning.According to the SHO of the Machrauli area, the first bus from Khatusham suffered significant damage compared to the second bus. The accident occurred when a truck was standing in the middle of the road."We saw that there were 3 buses, the first one with the most damage was coming from Khatusham. AGENCIES

HIMACHAL/J&K

Cold wave continues in Kashmir; day temperature drops to 7

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 14



Due to nightlong cloud cover, the minimum temperature improved on Sunday and rose above the freezing point throughout Kashmir Valley, while the maximum temperature dropped further. The Meteorological (MeT) department officials said that due to nightlong cloud cover, the minimum temperature throughout the Valley rose above the freezing point while the maximum temperature dropped further."Srinagar city recorded 2 degrees Celsius as the minimum temperature today, as Gulmarg recorded 1.4 and Pahalgam 2.4 as the minimum temperature today. The maximum temperature was 7.7 degrees in Srinagar yesterday, while it was 7.2 and 9 degrees in Gulmarg and Pahalgam, respectively," the MeT department said.

Jammu city had 11.4 degrees as the minimum temperature, while it was 11.2 in Katra, 7.9 in Batote, 5.5 in Banihal and 4.7 in Bhaderwah, the MeT department officials said.Despite the cloud cover and fog at most places in Srinagar city and the rest of the Valley, there is no possibility of any snowfall in the plains, while isolated light snowfall might take place in the higher reaches in the coming days.The MeT forecast does not indicate any major change in weather during the next 10 days, giving rise to apprehension that the month might not witness any major snowfall in Jammu and Kashmir. IANS

'Chitta-free Himachal' drive gains momentum

SHIMLA, DECEMBER 14

Continuing its intensified crackdown against drug abuse, the Himachal Pradesh Police conducted a special and intensive state-level operation across multiple districts, registering nine cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. The coordinated drive was carried out simultaneously at identified vulnerable locations throughout the state as part of the government's wider anti-drug campaign.

During the operation, police teams inspected 254 deserted and semi-public locations and checked 596 vehicles across districts including Solan, Kinnaur, Sirmaur, Baddi-Barotiwala-Nalagarh, Mandi, Kullu, Lahaul and Spiti, Hamirpur, Bilaspur, Kangra, Nurpur, Dehra, Chamba and Una. A total of 301 individuals were checked and counselled as part of preventive and corrective measures aimed at curbing substance abuse.

As per legal procedures, blood and urine samples of nine individuals were collected for examination. Persons found at isolated or deserted locations were appropriately counselled, documented and, where required, handed over to their family members after due verification, police officials said.

Director General of Police (DGP) Ashok Tewari said the drive involved extensive inspections and thorough searches at secluded hill slopes, forest patches, abandoned buildings, vacant rooms, parking areas, river banks, old bus stands, garage sheds and other locations frequently misused for drug-related activities. He described the operation as systematic, intelligence-based and backed by strong inter-district coordination to ensure lawful and effective enforcement.

The DGP said the operation was part of the statewide anti-chitta movement launched on November 15, 2025, by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, aimed at realising the vision of a "Chitta-free Himachal". The core objective, he added, was to prevent young people from falling into drug addiction and to dismantle group-based drug use at secluded locations that often serve as entry points into substance abuse.

Appealing to the public, especially the youth, Tewari urged citizens to share information related to chitta or other drug activities by dialling 112 or contacting the nearest police station, assuring that the identity of informants would be kept strictly confidential. AGENCIES

Shimla orchardist duped of ₹36 lakh on pretext of quick returns on IPOs

SHIMLA, DECEMBER 14

An apple orchardist of Shimla has been duped of Rs 36 lakh by a scammer on the pretext of quick returns on online share trading and Initial Public Offerings (IPOs), the police said here today.

In the police complaint, the victim stated that he received a phone call from an unknown number and the caller introduced himself as a representative of a company named, 'Indniv Pro'. He alleged that the scammer promised him exorbitant returns on his investments in IPOs within a short span of time.

Lured by the offer, the victim downloaded the app suggested by the scammer and started trading after depositing Rs 15,000. Later, he was lured into investing in an IPO and paid Rs 14 lakh in multiple installments.The victim alleged that the scammer then demanded Rs 10 lakh as service charge. He again sought Rs 10 lakh, claiming a server error and told him that the previous Rs 10 lakh had been credited to his trading account. After some time, the scammer demanded around 30 per cent as processing charge, making the victim suspicious.He filed a complaint with the police, which registered a case and initiated an investigation. He alleged that he had paid around Rs 36 lakh to the scammer. The police have advised people to not fall for such offers and always be cautious while investing money and trade only through reliable platforms. The police have also advised people to never download any suspicious app, not to open suspicious links sent through text messages and immediately contact on the toll-free cyber crime helpline number 1930 in case of a cyber fraud. AGENCIES

Water crisis in Mandi to end soon: Himachal Deputy CM Agnihotri

MANDI, DECEMBER 14

Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri inspected the main pipeline of the Uhl river-based drinking water supply scheme for Mandi town near Sakor village and directed officials to work out a permanent solution to stabilise the pipeline and ensure uninterrupted water supply to residents.The Deputy Chief Minister said during the recent monsoon, landslides triggered by hill slopes collapsing had repeatedly damaged the 28-km-long main pipeline supplying water to Mandi city. To address the issue, a team of experts from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Mandi, was asked to assess the site. Based on their recommendations, work on realigning the pipeline is currently underway. AGENCIES

Drill held at Srinagar airport to assess winter preparedness

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 14

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) on Saturday conducted a dry run and preparedness exercise at Srinagar International Airport to assess operational readiness ahead of the winter and snow season, officials said.

An Airports Authority of India spokesperson said the exercise focused on preparedness for fog and low-visibility conditions, which frequently disrupt flight operations during winter.

The drill was conducted jointly by AAI, airline airport managers, the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), ground handling agencies (GHAs), the medical inspection unit and other concerned stakeholders.

"The objective was to evaluate overall preparedness, inter-agency coordination and the functionality of passenger and operational facilities during adverse weather conditions," the spokesperson said. As part of the exercise, heating arrangements inside the terminal building were checked for adequacy and proper functioning. Passenger waiting areas, lounges and circulation spaces were inspected to ensure comfort during cold weather, while illumination levels inside the terminal were also verified. AGENCIES

Eight illegal structures of drug peddlers demolished in Jammu

JAMMU, DECEMBER 14

Eight illegal structures, including houses belonging to alleged drug peddlers, were demolished in a major drive in Jammu, while a person was arrested along with 6.64 grams of heroin in Kathua district on Saturday, officials said.In a major action against drug peddlers and land grabbers, the officials said Jammu administration carried out a demolition drive at Narwal Bala village in Bahu tehsil on the directions of district magistrate Rakesh Minhas, in coordination with Senior Superintendent of Police, Jammu, Joginder Singh.The district administration demolished eight illegal structures of drug peddlers involved in multiple cases under NDPS Act, the officials said, adding that despite allowing sufficient time, the peddlers did not mend their ways and were actively involved in illegal sale and purchase of narcotics substances. IANS

To plug leakage, MC starts replacing old water supply pipes in Solan

SOLAN, DECEMBER 14

The Solan Municipal Corporation (MC) has begun overhauling its dilapidated water supply infrastructure. The residents of the city face an acute shortage of water during the summer and have been eagerly awaiting the replacement of the old worn out rust-ridden pipes.

The work to lay four new pipes from Mohan Park kick-started two days ago. The Jal Shakti Department has been assigned the task to overhaul the system at a cost of Rs 7.59 crore in the first phase.Mayor Usha Sharma, who inspected the work, said that these efforts would help in plugging at least 25 per cent water leakage occurring due to old dilapidated pipes. New pipelines would be laid from Mohan Park to the Jaunaji road in the first phase and two contractors had been assigned the task. Additionally, the work to lay another pipeline in the contentious Khundidar area, which witnesses large-scale leakage, would also be allotted soon, as tenders had been invited.

The Solan MC is facing an alarming 40 per cent water loss due to a dilapidated supply infrastructure. It is also facing a financial crisis along with mounting water dues. IANS

NEWSBRIEFS

South Korea: Special counsel to announce result of 6-month probe into ex-President Yoon's martial law bid

SEOUL: A special counsel team will announce this week the results of its months-longs investigation into insurrection charges related to former President Yoon Suk Yeol's short-lived imposition of martial law, officials said Sunday. Over the past six months, the team has indicted Yoon and 23 others for their alleged roles in the December 2024 martial law and has worked with military prosecutors to indict three additional military officials. Investigators sought arrest warrants in 11 cases, with courts approving five of them, Yonhap News Agency reported. Special counsel Cho Eun-seok is scheduled to announce the findings on Monday, officials said, marking his first public briefing since the probe was launched on June 18. **IANS**

Indian-origin man among 4 killed in temple collapse in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG: A 52-year-old Indian-origin man is among four people killed as a four-storey Hindu temple under construction collapsed in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province, officials have said. The New Ahobilam Temple of Protection, situated on a steep hill in Redcliffe in north of eThekwini (formerly Durban), was being expanded when a section of the building gave way on Friday while workers were on site.The exact number of workers and temple officials believed to be trapped beneath tonnes of rubble is unknown. **PTI**

Israel's High Court overturns government's attempt to remove Attorney General

TEL AVIV: Israel's Supreme Court on Sunday overturned the government's decision to dismiss Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara, ruling that she will continue to serve in her position. The decision also criticized the government for procedural flaws and a lack of legal foundation in its attempt to remove the country's top legal advisor."The Attorney General continues to serve in her position lawfully; the dismissal decision is void; and any unilateral action that could change her status, powers, or working methods is inconsistent with this ruling," the court said. The expanded panel of seven justices stressed that the rule of law applies to all, including state authorities, and highlighted the "great discomfort" caused by the government's conduct. The controversy centers on the government's dismissal of Baharav-Miara in August. According to the Supreme Court, the procedural changes were applied retrospectively and lacked consultation, alternatives, or a proper factual and legal foundation. **AGENCIES**

Illegal drug recovered, 2 smugglers detained in Western Afghanistan

KABUL: Police in western Afghanistan's Herat province seized 16 kg of opium and detained two alleged smugglers, a provincial police official said on Sunday. According to the official, the suspects had hidden the contraband inside a vehicle's secret compartments and were attempting to transport it out of the province when police intercepted the car on Saturday. **IANS**

Over 4,500 Afghan refugees forcibly repatriated from Pakistan, Iran in single day: Taliban

KABUL, DECEMBER 14



More than 4,500 Afghan refugees were forcibly repatriated from Pakistan and Iran in a single day, a Taliban official said on Sunday, as per local media.

Sharing a report from the High Commission for Addressing Migrants' Issues on X, Taliban deputy spokesman Hamdullah Fitrat stated that 913 families, comprising 4,991 individuals, returned to Afghanistan on Saturday, Pajhwok Afghan News reported.

As per the report, the returnees entered Afghanistan through Spin Boldak in Kandahar, Bahramcha in Helmand, Torkham crossing in Nangarhar, Islam Qala crossing in Herat, and Pul-i-Abresham in Nimroz.

The spokesman further said that 933 families (5,068 people) who returned to Afghanistan were taken to their respective home areas, while 754 families were provided humanitarian assistance. Telecommunication firms provided 771 SIM cards to Afghan refugees who returned to their homes.

> **The spokesman further said that 933 families (5,068 people) who returned to Afghanistan were taken to their respective home areas, while 754 families were provided humanitarian assistance.**

Fitrat stated that 10,043 Afghan refugees were deported from Iran and Pakistan on Thursday.

As the deportation of Afghan refugees from Iran and Pakistan continues, several returnees living in a migrant camp in Kabul have criticised the Pakistani police's mistreatment and mentioned that all their belongings were left behind in that country, Afghanistan's Tolo News reported. Afghan returnees have raised immediate demand for shelter, land, economic assistance, and job opportunities.

Speaking to Tolo News, Jamaluddin, who has been deported from Pakistan, said: "We were forcibly expelled; some of our belongings remained there. Here, we have neither money nor shelter. The problems are overwhelming; it's cold, and winter has arrived."

Another deportee from Pakistan, Gulzar, said: "We were expelled. That country was foreign. Now we've returned to our homeland, and I call on the Islamic Emirate to support us."

Several deported Afghan refugees have said that they have lost all their property and belongings in Pakistan and have urged the Taliban to provide shelter, emergency aid, and employment opportunities.

Jan Mohammad, a returnee from Iran, said: "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan must help these people; they have no place to live. I myself am heading to Jawzjan province and have nowhere to stay."**IANS**

'Russia is dragging out the war,' says Zelenskyy as Russian strikes leave hundreds of thousands without power

KYIV, DECEMBER 14



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Sunday said Russia continues to target Ukraine's energy infrastructure, leaving hundreds of thousands of families without electricity, heating and water, even as Kyiv prepares for crucial diplomatic engagements with the United States and European partners aimed at ending the war.

In a series of posts on social media, Zelenskyy said Ukrainian emergency and utility services have been working continuously since Friday to restore basic services after fresh Russian strikes.

"The situation remains difficult - hundreds of thousands of families are still without electricity in Mykolaiv, Odesa, Kherson, Chernihiv, Donetsk, Sumy, and Dnipro regions," he said, thanking workers involved in repair efforts.

Zelenskyy added that Russian attacks continued overnight, leaving civilians wounded.

"Russia is dragging out the war and seeks to inflict as much harm as possible on our people," he said.

According to the Ukrainian president, Russia carried out an intense wave of attacks over the past week alone.

"In total, the Russians launched more than 1,500 attack drones, nearly 900 guided aerial bombs, and 46 missiles of various types against Ukraine this week. Just one week," Zelenskyy said.

Despite the ongoing strikes, Zelenskyy said Ukraine remains committed to pursuing peace through diplomacy.

"Ukraine needs peace on dignified terms, and we are ready to work as constructively as possible," he said, adding that the coming days would be focused on diplomatic efforts. "It is critically important that it delivers results."

In an earlier statement, Zelenskyy said Ukraine is preparing for a series of high-level meetings with the United States and European countries in the coming days, with Berlin set to host several key discussions. **AGENCIES**

Curfew imposed in Thailand's Trat Province as border clashes with Cambodia continue

BANGKOK, DECEMBER 14



Thailand's military on Sunday imposed a curfew in parts of Trat Province, citing the ongoing security situation along the border areas, Xinhua reported.

In an official order, the military said a curfew has been enforced with immediate effect in five districts of Trat Province--Khlong Yai, Bo Rai, Laem Ngop, Khao Saming and Mueang Trat. Residents in these areas have been instructed not to leave their homes between 7:00 PM and 05:00 AM the next day.

Thai media reports said the decision followed an incident late Saturday night in which three M79 grenades were fired at the headquarters of the Marine Corps Task Force in Trat Province. The grenades are believed to have been launched from within Thai territory. No casualties were reported as the explosives landed in an uninhabited area.

This is the second Thai province to impose a curfew since the latest round of clashes along the Thailand-Cambodia border began. Earlier, the Thai military had imposed similar restrictions in four border districts of Sa Kaeo Province on Wednesday.

The curfew announcement comes amid continuing hostilities and heightened tensions between Thailand and Cambodia.

Thailand has denied reaching any ceasefire agreement with Cambodia and said its military operations along the disputed border will continue, Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said on Saturday, according to the Bangkok Post.

Speaking as clashes continued, Anutin said Thailand had not agreed to halt fighting and that there were no active ceasefire talks with Cambodia.

His remarks came hours after Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim called on both sides to stop hostilities from 10 pm on Saturday. The appeal followed a statement by US President Donald Trump, who said Thai and Cambodian leaders had agreed to "cease all shooting".

Neither Anutin nor Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet referred to any ceasefire agreement in official statements issued after their separate phone calls with Trump.

More than 20 people have been killed across Thailand and Cambodia in six days of renewed fighting, with nearly 200 wounded, according to reports cited by Al Jazeera. An estimated 600,000 people have been displaced on both sides of the 800-kilometre Thailand-Cambodia border, where tensions are centred on the disputed ownership of centuries-old temples.

Thailand's clarification followed accusations from Cambodia that Thai forces continued air attacks on Cambodian territory, hours after Trump claimed both sides had agreed to stop fighting. **AGENCIES**

Belarus frees 123 political prisoners in sanctions deal with US

VILNIUS, DECEMBER 14



Belarus has released 123 prisoners, including prominent opposition activist Maria Kolesnikova, following an agreement under which the United States agreed to lift certain sanctions imposed on the country.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski is also among those freed after talks held in Minsk with US President Donald Trump's special envoy for Belarus, John Coale.

As part of the arrangement, the US has agreed to lift sanctions on potash, a key ingredient used in fertiliser production and one of Belarus's most important exports.

Belarus is a close ally of Russia, and the easing of restrictions on potash is seen as a significant economic relief for the country.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, however, is not recognised as president by the European Union.

Maria Kolesnikova has been imprisoned since 2020, spending much of that time in isolation.

According to Ukraine's Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Kolesnikova was handed over to Ukraine along with 113 other released prisoners.

In a statement issued on Telegram, Ukrainian authorities said that after receiving the necessary medical assistance, the released prisoners would be transported onward to Poland and Lithuania.

Reacting to the development, exiled Belarusian opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, who was waiting outside the US embassy in Vilnius for other prisoners, expressed gratitude to Ukraine. **IANS**

Drone attack hits UN facility in Sudan, killing six peacekeepers

KHARTOUM, DECEMBER 14



At least six UN peacekeepers were killed and seven others wounded when a United Nations facility in Kadugli, the capital of Sudan's South Kordofan State, was struck in a drone attack, Sudanese authorities said.

The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) accused the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of carrying out the strike, a claim the RSF denied, Xinhua news agency reported.

According to an SAF statement, the drone fired three missiles at the UN headquarters and the Bangladesh Battalion, setting a UN storage facility on fire. All the casualties were members of the Bangladesh Battalion, which is part of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei, a disputed area between Sudan and South Sudan.

In a separate statement, Sudan's Transitional Sovereign Council, which backs the SAF, condemned what it described as an RSF drone attack on UN premises in Kadugli, calling it a serious violation of international humanitarian law and the protections afforded to UN facilities.

"Targeting a protected UN facility represents a dangerous escalation and criminal behavior amounting to an organized terrorist act," the council said, adding that the attack poses a direct threat to humanitarian and international missions. **IANS**

Two US soldiers, translator killed in ISIS attack in Syria; Trump vows 'serious retaliation'

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 14

Two US soldiers and a civilian translator who were a part of the campaign to root out the Islamic State were killed in an attack in Syria by the terrorist group, and President Donald Trump has vowed "very serious retaliation".

Trump said in a Truth Social post that three soldiers were also wounded in the attack on Saturday.

In a tumultuous region infested with terrorist groups and civil strife, the attack on US personnel tests the US cooperation with the Syrian government that took power after President Bashar al-Assad was ousted in December last year.

It also tests the authority of Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa's government as the alleged attacker was a member of the Damascus government forces, according to a government spokesperson, and Trump acknowledged the area was not under full Damascus control. **IANS**

Indian American leaders urge deeper political engagement at Detroit dialogue panel

DETROIT, DECEMBER 14

Indian American community leaders called for deeper political participation, stronger advocacy, and a unified civic voice during the inaugural India Abroad Dialogue, arguing that the community's economic success must translate into sustained political influence.

"Indian Americans are among the richest in this country. We contribute a lot to taxes. We are law-abiding citizens. We follow every rule," said Sunny Reddy, recently elected Vice Chairman of the Michigan Republican Party, the highest-ranking Indian American ever in the GOP's State leadership.

Urging greater representation, Reddy framed political participation as essential rather than optional. "Leadership is not an option. We can achieve. We can be there," he said, addressing younger Indian Americans. "And when Sunny Uncle can do it, why not me?"

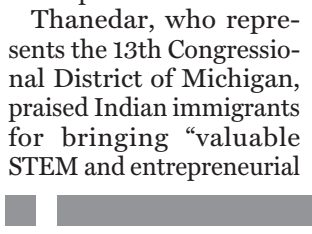
Several panelists echoed the view that Indian Americans had achieved remarkable success in business and professional fields but lagged behind in civic integration.

Avinash Rajmal, chairman and CEO of Lakeshore Global Corporation, praised Reddy's victory as particularly significant given the scale of the contest.

Rajmal recounted his own journey after arriving in the United States as a student and founding his company in 1994. "There were so many difficulties and troubles. I did not know where to go, how to seek financing, where the registration, what to do," he said, describing the challenges that led Indian American entrepreneurs to organize support structures such as the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce USA. **IANS**

North Korea completes building 2nd modern regional hospital

SEOUL, DECEMBER 14



North Korea has built its second modern regional hospital as part of leader Kim Jong-un's push to expand medical facilities nationwide to improve public health services, state media reported on Sunday.

Kim attended the inaugural ceremony of the Kusong City Hospital in North Phyongan Province to tour the facility, according to the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

The hospital follows the opening of the Kangdong County Hospital on the outskirts of Pyongyang last month, reports Yonhap news agency, quoting KCNA.

Calling the Kusong facility "another precious creation," Kim said it reflects the ruling party's determination to strengthen regional areas and advance public health across the country. He also described 2025 as "the first year of the public health revolution," the KCNA reported.

At a plenary meeting last week, the Workers' Party of Korea announced plans to build modern hospitals simultaneously in 20 cities and counties starting next year, based on experience gained from this year's pilot projects.

During the ceremony, Kim reaffirmed his commitment to building modern hospitals across the country to lay a solid foundation for North Korea's public health system.

Describing the Kusong hospital as "a model for modernising public health," Kim said it should serve as an example for the development of regional health services through its operation. **IANS**

US Congressman calls for deeper India–US ties, civic engagement

DETROIT, DECEMBER 14

Indian American Congressman Shri Thanedar made a strong case for closer India–United States ties, expanded immigration pathways, and greater civic participation by Indian Americans.

"A strong India-America relationship is beneficial to both countries," Thanedar told a gathering of eminent community leaders in his keynote address at the inaugural India Abroad Dialogue in Detroit, the automobile capital of the world, as he underscored the strategic, economic, and people-to-people foundations of the bilateral partnership.

Thanedar, who represents the 13th Congressional District of Michigan, praised Indian immigrants for bringing "valuable STEM and entrepreneurial skills, which are critical to strengthening our economy," and linked that contribution directly to America's technological and economic competitiveness.



He thanked India Abroad for launching a 10-city national dialogue series, adding, "Give yourselves a round of applause."

A 10-city tour, the India Abroad Dialogue, starting in Detroit, is being held in partnership with the Foundation of India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS) and several other community organizations. The next one scheduled in Chicago would be attended by Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi and top Indian American Dr. Bharat Barai.

Thanedar said events like the dialogue were "critical to building bridges between American policy makers and the Indian-American diaspora, which has often been neglected and is underrepresented in our national political scene."**IANS**

lifestyle



Urvashi shares how 'Kasoor 2' pushed her to her emotional and mental limits

Actress Urvashi Rautela recently opened up about the intense preparation that went into her role in "Kasoor 2."

Speaking on the sidelines of the Red Sea Film Festival, she revealed how the role demanded sleepless nights and pushed her to her absolute limits, both emotionally and mentally. In an exclusive quote shared with IANS, Urvashi shared that the challenging character required deep preparation and resilience, making it one of the most demanding performances of her career.

She stated, ""This will be a never-before-seen avatar for me in a supernatural drama film. Portraying this role in Kasoor 2, presented by Bablu Aziz Barudgar, produced by Asif Shaikh under Practical Production Films, and directed by Glen Barretto, alongside Aftab Shivdasani and Jassie Gill, demanded sleepless nights, pushing me to the absolute limits emotionally and mentally."

Rautela added, "To truly embody the character, I had to surrender completely, diving deep into her intensity and vulnerability. Experiencing this at the Red Sea International Film Festival in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been profoundly transformative and unforgettable."

The 'Sanam Re' actress was invited in Saudi Arabia to promote her upcoming film "Kasoor 2." Produced by Asif Shaikh under Practical Production Films, and directed by Glen Barretto, the film stars Urvashi alongside Aftab Shivdasani and Jassie Gill. The film is a sequel to the 2001 hit Kasoor, which was directed by Vikram Bhatt. It starred Aftab Shivdasani and Lisa Ray in the lead roles.

On his birthday on June 25, Aftab Shivdasani revealed that he would be returning with the sequel to "Kasoor." Sharing photos from 'Kasoor 2' sets, he wrote, "On this special day, as I turn a year older, the only gift i ask for is your love and blessings. Thank you for all the love over the years. I'm very grateful and blessed to be working on this birthday on a very special film that means a lot to me. Love and gratitude. #kasoor (sic)." **IANS**



Kareena meets Lionel Messi with her boys Taimur and Jeh

Bollywood star Kareena Kapoor Khan took her boys, Taimur and Jeh to a special meet and greet with the football legend Lionel Messi. The actress was seen coming out of the Wankhede Stadium after meeting the footballer on Sunday.

Prior to this, the actress took to the Stories section of her Instagram, and shared a picture in which she and her sons can be seen with their backs facing the camera. While Kareena was sharply dressed in formals, her sons were seen wearing football jerseys. Taimur wore the jersey with Messi's name, Jeh wore the jersey with Argentina's name.

Messi landed in Mumbai on Sunday as a part of his India tour. This comes after the embarrassing situation in Kolkata, where the football legend spent only 20 minutes after a promised time of 2 hours.

Messi left early considering the situation at the Salt Lake stadium turned dangerous with political and influential figures hijacked the event irking fans, who didn't get to see the football player despite spending thousands on tickets.

The sporting legend then visited Hyderabad with Mumbai being third in line. Several Bollywood celebrities are said to be attending the meeting at Wankhede Stadium. They are also expected to take part in a 7 vs 7 exhibition football match at the stadium.

Messi's visit to India became a landmark moment for football fans across the country, underlining the sport's growing cultural footprint beyond cricket. The Argentine icon drew massive crowds, with fans gathering in thousands just to catch a glimpse of the World Cup–winning captain. His presence sparked celebrations across cities, social media trends, and renewed conversations about grassroots football development in India.

Messi's visit was not just symbolic fandom, it highlighted India's increasing relevance as a global sports market. From interactions with young players and officials to high-profile public appearances, the trip reinforced football's aspirational pull among Indian youth. **IANS**



Kajol has a special message for all Anjali's out there as 'Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham' turns 24

As one of the most iconic movies in Bollywood, "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham" completed 24 years of release on Sunday, Kajol shared a special message for all the Anjali's out there.

She advised them to hold on tight as Rahul might be a little late, but will be there for sure.

Kajol wrote on her IG, "To all the Anjali's out there , keep being loud and proud! Rahul is out there somewhere but he might be late because of traffic (Folded hands emoji)#KabhiKhushiKabhieGham #24years (sic)."

Her post also included a picture of Kajol as Anjali and another photo of the entire cast of the drama, including Amitabh Bachchan, Jaya Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Hrithik Roshan, and Kareena Kapoor embraced in the hug.

Karan Johar, who is the writer and director of the movie, also shared a video of some glimpses from the movie on social media, and wrote, "All these years and it continues to make everyone feel the power of family, love, lots of khushi and thoda gham! Celebrating #24YearsOfK3G!."

Produced by Yash Johar under the Dharma banner, "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham" revolves around a wealthy Indian family that becomes estranged when their adopted son Rahul (Played by Shah Rukh Khan) is disowned by his father for marrying a woman of lower socio-economic status. Years of separation come to an end after the younger son Rohan (Played by Hrithik Roshan) makes efforts to bring the family back together.

The project has attained cult status with the iconic dialogues and songs from the movie inked in the memory of every movie buff.

Kajol and Shah Rukh Khan have delivered several blockbusters over the years. Another iconic movie of the beloved duo, "Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge" recently marked 3 decades of release.

Commemorating the milestone, Kajol and Shah Rukh Khan unveiled the bronze statue of their iconic characters, Raj and Simran, at London's Leicester Square. **IANS**

Adah shares how she makes a 'sleep-deprived' look flawless



Actress Adah Sharma recently gave a behind-the-scenes glimpse into her latest photoshoot.

She revealed how she managed to look flawless despite a sleep-deprived schedule. Adah expressed gratitude to her team for creating a positive and relaxed atmosphere on set, making the hectic shoot a fun and memorable experience. Sharing a series of her photos, the 'Kerala Story' actress wrote, "Kaunsa look is your favourite from these? Yeh shoot happened in half a day . We were shooting the previous raat ko (for a movie jahan pe mere nails ke andar bhi dirt bhara pada tha) and we all had flights to catch to different places at the end of this day.

"Thank you Abhishek @abhishekkhandelwal08 and team ,firstly for lighting me up sooo wowly . Main sleep deprived koi angle se nahi dikh rahi hu. Thank you for making the atmosphere on set itna positive , not stressing anyone out , and actually making us feel like we shot all these changes araaaaam se. Thank you everyone involved in this shoot and thank you for giving me earrings with patla dandas (my earlobe ka piercing is very small)."

In the images, Adah Sharma is seen flaunting a variety of stylish traditional and western outfits, striking confident poses for the camera. **IANS**

Amaal Mallik says controversies have affected his family more than him



Singer and music composer Amaal Malik recently spoke candidly about dealing with controversies in the public eye. In an exclusive interview with IANS, he shared that their impact has been felt more strongly by his family than by him. When asked how much the controversies around him have affected his life, Amaal stated, "My family gets affected more than me. I've answered everything I needed to over the years. But I reached a point where I wondered—how many people am I going to answer? People can see the truth now. I don't go around tweeting and reacting like I used to. Whatever I am—not hundred percent, but three hundred percent—you have seen on Bigg Boss. This is who I am."

When asked about his parents' reaction to his journey and the feedback they gave, Amaal Malik said they are very happy and have been spending a lot of time at his home. He shared that they gently pointed out moments where he could have managed his aggression better. **IANS**

Centre taking special steps to boost growth of MSMEs

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14



The Centre is taking special steps to boost the growth of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises by easing rules to facilitate the ease of doing business and providing them better access to credit for expanding their business operations, according to an official statement issued on Sunday.

The Centre's Bureau of Indian Standards, which implements Quality Control Orders (QCOs) issued by various ministries, gives special exemptions and relaxations for MSMEs, to ensure that the QCOs do not disrupt domestic production, the statement said.

Some of the key relaxations and exemptions include an additional 3 to 6 months extension in time for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) and an exemption for imports by domestic manufacturers for producing export-oriented products.

Exemption for import of up to 200 units for research & development purposes and provision for clearance of legacy stock (manufactured or imported before implementation) within six months from the effective date are other relaxations that have been provided for MSMEs.

The BIS has also implemented financial and technical relaxations to the MSME sector, which include concessions ranging from 10 to 80 per cent in the annual minimum marking fee with concession. An additional concession of 10 per cent is also provided to enterprises which are either located in the northeast region or women entrepreneur MSME units.

Besides, the requirement of maintaining an in-house laboratory has been made optional for MSME units. MSME units are allowed to utilise the services of outside BIS-recognised laboratories, NABL-accredited labs, or even share resources like cluster-based labs or laboratories of other manufacturing units. The 'Levels of Control' in the Scheme of Inspection and Testing (SIT) are made recommendatory in nature. The manufacturer has the choice to define their own control unit/batch/lot and their own Levels of Control and inform the BIS.

The BIS has also made the product certification process guidelines publicly available on the BIS website and is issuing product-wise manuals as guidance documents for conformity assessment as per various Indian Standards.

With a view to improving monetary policy transmission, banks have been advised by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to link loans to MSMEs to an external benchmark. The reset clause for loans has been reduced to three months under the external benchmark system. Further, to make the benefit of the external benchmark-based interest regime available to the existing borrowers, banks have been advised to provide a switchover option as per mutually agreed terms.

Further, the RBI also took various other measures for improving credit flow to the MSME sector, such as the Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs. IANS

India emerges as world's 3rd most competitive AI power

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14



India has emerged as the world's third most competitive country in artificial intelligence, according to Stanford University's Global AI Vibrancy Tool on Sunday.

The latest ranking highlights how India's fast-growing tech ecosystem and strong talent base are helping the country play a key role in the global AI race.

The Visual Capitalist chart, based on Stanford's data, shows the United States clearly leading the world in AI competitiveness with a vibrancy score of 78.6.

China is placed second with a score of 36.95, while India ranks third with a score of 21.59. This puts India ahead of several advanced economies, including South Korea, the United Kingdom, Singapore, Japan, Canada, Germany and France.

Stanford's AI Vibrancy Tool combines several indicators into a single score to measure how developed and competitive a country's AI ecosystem is.

These indicators include research and development, talent availability, investment and economic impact, infrastructure, public opinion, and policy and governance.

The tool aims to show where innovation and AI talent are growing and how seriously governments are backing artificial intelligence.

The data also shows that income levels play an important role in AI competitiveness. High-income countries dominate the top of the ranking, while upper-middle-income countries such as China and Brazil are steadily closing the gap.

India stands out among lower-middle-income countries, as it is the only one to feature so high on the global list, underlining its unique position in the AI landscape.

In specific areas, different countries lead different metrics. The United States tops categories such as research and development, responsible AI, economy, policy and governance, and infrastructure.

China performs strongly in talent, economy and infrastructure, while India features among the top three in talent reflecting its large and skilled workforce in technology and engineering.

The report also flags a broader concern. While the link between national income and AI competitiveness is expected, the growing gap between countries could deepen global inequality if access to AI growth remains uneven.

For India, however, the ranking is a major boost. It reflects rising investments in AI, increasing research output, a strong startup ecosystem and a massive pool of engineers and developers. IANS

Number of high net worth individuals in S. Korea grows over 3 pc to nearly 480,000

SEOUL, DECEMBER 14

The number of South Koreans holding more than 1 billion won ($676,818) in financial assets rose more than 3 per cent last year to nearly 480,000, a report showed on Sunday.

According to a wealth report by the research institute of the KB Financial Group, an estimated 476,000 individuals held at least 1 billion won in financial assets as of end-2024, representing 0.92 percent of the total population, reports Yonhap news agency.

The figure marked a 3.2 per cent increase from a year earlier and more than tripled from 130,000 in 2011, when the survey began.

Their combined financial assets totalled 3,066 trillion won, up 8.5 percent from a year earlier, accounting for 60.8 percent of total household financial assets nationwide. IANS

1st-ever investors' meet in Lakshadweep sees ₹519 crore worth investment plans

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14

The first-ever investors' meet in Lakshadweep Islands has seen Rs 519 crore worth of planned investment to unlock fisheries and aquaculture potential, according to the government.

The Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying (MoFAHD), in collaboration with the Union Territory of Lakshadweep, organised the investors' meet. Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh said that the government issued fishing rules for the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), therefore the fishermen operating in EEZ can now legally fish with an authorised "Access Pass," enabling them to export high-value tuna and other fish products to international markets.

As per international law, fishery resources present in India's EEZ will now be recognised as "Indian Origin," which will further facilitate the export of fish products, he said at the event. Singh stated that the government also issued the 'High Seas Fishing Guidelines' granting fishing vessels flying the Indian flag the legal right to operate in these waters. IANS

Rich-poor gap narrowing as rural India drives growth: Piyush Goyal

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14



Union Minister Piyush Goyal on Sunday said that India is witnessing a silent but powerful transformation, where aspirations are rising across villages and small towns under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In a social media post on X, Goyal said that rural India is no longer on the margins of growth and is now playing a key role in driving consumption.

"Aspirational India rising! Under PM Narendra Modi's leadership, the rich-poor divide is narrowing, and rural India is driving consumption on the back of development through empowerment," the Union Minister said.

The minister said that items once seen as symbols of urban comfort, such as bikes, cars, refrigerators, television sets and mobile phones, have now become common in village households.

According to him, this change reflects the impact of development through empowerment, where people in rural areas have greater access to opportunities, income and basic facilities.

"What were once seen as symbols of urban comfort, like bikes, cars, fridges, TV sets, and mobile phones, have become staples in homes in villages," Goyal explained.

Goyal described this shift as a "silent revolution of prosperity" and said it shows how aspirational India is rising.

He added that development initiatives focused on empowerment have helped improve living standards and reduce inequality between urban and rural areas. Earlier, the Union Minister had also spoken about financial empowerment through government initiatives.

In an earlier IANS interview, Goyal said the "Your Money, Your Right" movement is a transformative step towards building a financially inclusive and empowered Bharat.

He had urged citizens to support the campaign and spread awareness so that rightful owners can reclaim their unclaimed money.

Goyal had said that under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, the government is committed to ensuring that citizens receive what is rightfully theirs.

The initiative, launched on October 4, aims to help people recover unclaimed bank deposits, insurance proceeds, dividends, shares, mutual funds and pensions.

Prime Minister Modi had earlier said that thousands of crores of rupees are lying unclaimed in banks, insurance companies and mutual funds. IANS

WPI inflation, India-US trade talks, Rupee movement likely to drive market next week

MUMBAI, DECEMBER 14



After benchmarks ended the week on a strong note, Indian stock markets are expected to take cues next week from a mix of key domestic and global factors, including wholesale price inflation data, developments in India–US trade talks, movements in the rupee, and continued foreign investor activity.

On Friday, the Sensex rose 450 points, or 0.53 per cent, to close at 85,267.66, while the Nifty gained 148 points, or 0.57 per cent, to settle at 26,046.95.

Broader markets outperformed the benchmarks, with the BSE Midcap index jumping 1.14 per cent and the Smallcap index rising 0.65 per cent.

Investor wealth also saw a sharp rise during the session. The total market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies climbed to over Rs 470 lakh crore, up from Rs 466.6 lakh crore in the previous session, adding more than Rs 3 lakh crore in a single day.

Looking ahead, inflation data is expected to be one of the key triggers for the market next week. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry is scheduled to release wholesale price inflation (WPI) data for November on December 15.

Developments on the India-US trade front will also remain in focus. According to multiple reports, India and the United States have agreed to continue constructive and forward-looking engagement after two days of talks between an Indian delegation and a US team led by Deputy US Trade Representative Rick Switzer. IANS

Gold, silver outlook: Bullish trend intact despite profit booking, say experts

MUMBAI, DECEMBER 14



Gold and silver prices remain in focus as experts on Sunday believe the broader bullish outlook for precious metals is still intact despite recent profit booking.

While gold continues to hold firm near key resistance levels, silver has cooled slightly after hitting record highs, with market watchers expecting fresh direction from global cues, interest rate trends and safe-haven demand in the coming sessions.

Experts say gold prices are currently consolidating just below a crucial resistance zone, suggesting that the overall trend remains positive. They note that gold continues to trade in an upward channel, with every dip attracting buyers.

According to them, support for gold is seen around the Rs 1,32,000 to Rs 1,31,000 range.

If prices manage to break above the Rs 1,35,000 mark, gold could move higher toward the Rs 1,37,000 to Rs 1,40,000 levels in the coming sessions, helped by a weak rupee and steady safe-haven demand.

Silver, on the other hand, has witnessed a sharp correction after touching record highs above Rs 2,00,000 per kg earlier.

Experts believe the recent fall reflects profit booking and some cooling of near-term momentum.

However, they point out that the broader bullish trend in silver remains intact as long as prices stay above key support zones. According to market watchers, strong technical support for silver lies in the Rs 1,80,000 to Rs 1,81,000 range, with deeper support placed lower if selling pressure increases. IANS

Bajaj Finance loses over ₹19,000 crore in market valuation this week

MUMBAI, DECEMBER 14

Bajaj Finance emerged as the biggest loser among India's most valued companies last week, as its market capitalisation fell sharply by Rs 19,289.7 crore amid a largely bearish trend in the stock market.

Overall, eight of the top-10 most valued domestic firms together saw their market valuation erode by Rs 79,129.21 crore during the week.

The weak performance came as the BSE benchmark index slipped by 444.71 points, or 0.51 per cent -- reflecting cautious investor sentiment in equities.

Bajaj Finance's market capitalisation declined to Rs 6,33,106.69 crore, making it the worst-hit stock among the top companies.

ICICI Bank followed closely, with its valuation tumbling by Rs 18,516.31 crore to Rs 9,76,668.15 crore.

Bharti Airtel also faced heavy losses, as its market value dropped by Rs 13,884.63 crore to Rs 11,87,948.11 crore.

State Bank of India saw its valuation fall by Rs 7,846.02 crore, taking its market capitalisation to Rs 8,88,816.17 crore. IT major Infosys lost Rs 7,145.95 crore from its valuation, which stood at Rs 6,64,220.58 crore at the end of the week.

Tata Consultancy Services saw its market capitalisation decline by Rs 6,783.92 crore to Rs 11,65,078.45 crore, while HDFC Bank's valuation dipped by Rs 4,460.93 crore to Rs 15,38,558.71 crore.

Life Insurance Corporation of India was the least impacted among the losers, with its market value eroding by Rs 1,201.75 crore to Rs 5,48,820.05 crore. IANS

Indian economy serves 18 pc of world's population as it aims $5 trillion goal: Prof Ajay Sood

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14



India is supporting nearly 18 per cent of the world's population while moving towards the ambitious goal of becoming a $5 trillion economy, Principal Scientific Advisor to the Indian Government Prof Ajay Kumar Sood has said.

He underlined that development and energy consumption are closely linked, making innovation in the energy sector crucial for India's future growth. "The Indian economy serves nearly 18 per cent of the world's population while pursuing the goal of becoming a $5 trillion economy," Prof Sood said while speaking at the First DV Kapur Foundation Energy Innovation Awards here.

During his address, Prof Sood pointed out that a country's Human Development Index is strongly connected to its energy use.

He said India's average HDI stands at around 0.67, compared to nearly 0.9 in developed nations.

"At present, India consumes about 21 gigajoules of energy per person annually, while bridging the development gap would require nearly 56 gigajoules per person," Prof Sood noted.

He called for urgent action and highlighted how India's innovation ecosystem is evolving, especially in deep-tech research, with the introduction of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation as part of the vision of a Viksit Bharat.

He felicitated innovators who have contributed to technological advancements aimed at meeting India's rising energy needs while supporting long-term sustainability goals. IANS

FIIs sell equity worth ₹15,959 crore in Dec so far, DIIs buy for ₹39,965 crore

MUMBAI, DECEMBER 14



The foreign institutional investor (FII) selling is likely to decline in days to come as the economy is doing well, prospects for earnings growth are improving, and mutual fund SIPs are performing well, analysts said on Saturday.

In December so far, FIIs have sold equity worth Rs 15,959 crore through the exchanges.

This FII sell figure has been completely eclipsed by the domestic institutional investor (DII) buying for Rs 39,965 crore during this period, said market watchers.

"Sustained selling in India when the prospects for growth and earnings look bright is not a sustainable policy," said Dr. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Ltd.

A healthy feature of the investment behaviour of retail investors is the steady inflows into mutual fund SIPs, which have been consistently above Rs 29,000 crore during the last three months.

SIP inflows in November remained almost steady at Rs 29,445 crore, according to data released by the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI).

According to Vijayakumar, this has enabled the DIIs to absorb the sustained selling by FIIs.

"FIIs have been sustained sellers in December, so far, selling on all days. It would be difficult for the FIIs to sell continuously and maintain a high short position in the market in the context of healthy SIP inflows, particularly when the economy is doing well and the prospects for earnings growth are improving," he noted.

According to analysts, it is also important to understand that rupee depreciation, sustained FII selling, delay in the finalisation of US-India trade deal and the ongoing AI trade are all temporary drags on the markets.

In November, both FIIs and DIIs were net buyers (to the tune of $40 million and $8.7 billion, respectively) in the Indian equity market.

Over the last 12 months, the Indian primary markets have seen FII net inflows to the tune of Rs 823 billion ($9.5 billion) while secondary markets have seen FII net outflows of Rs 2,144 billion ($24.5 billion), according to a note by JM Financial.

In November, India's weight in the MSCI Emerging Markets Index was 15.8 per cent against 15.2 per cent in October and 19.9 per cent in November.

According to analysts, the most important factor that will dictate the direction of the market is the earnings growth, and this looks promising for FY27. IANS

S Korea: AI law set to be implemented next month amid biz concerns

SEOUL, DECEMBER 14



South Korea was to implement a new set of artificial intelligence (AI) regulations next month amid concerns among startups and other businesses that the comprehensive rules could stymie industry growth and burden smaller firms, industry sources said on Sunday.

The AI framework act is scheduled to take effect on Jan. 22, 2026, calling for the establishment of a national AI committee, the formulation of a basic three-year AI plan and the imposition of safety and transparency requirements, including disclosure obligations for some AI systems, according to the sources.

If implemented as planned, South Korea would become the world's first country to enforce a comprehensive AI regulatory framework, reports Yonhap news agency.

The European Union was the first to pass AI-related legislation, but it plans to apply most of its rules starting August, with some provisions expected to be delayed until 2027 amid mounting pressure from businesses and intensifying global competition.

"Companies may not have sufficient time to prepare for the new rules, as the enforcement decree is expected to be finalised only shortly before the law takes effect due to procedural requirements," an official from the Korea Internet Corporations Association said. "This will be particularly overwhelming for startups."

A recent survey by Startup Alliance showed that 98 percent of 101 local AI startups said they have not established a response system to comply with the new law. IANS

SPORTS

MIKE HUSSEY
"GET TRAVIS HEAD BACK DOWN TO NUMBER FIVE. I KNOW TRAVIS HEAD PLAYED AN AMAZING INNINGS HERE (AS OPENER IN PERTH IN THE FIRST TEST) – BUT I JUST LIKE HIM AT NUMBER FIVE."

Varun, Arshdeep star as India skittle South Africa for 117 in chilly conditions

DHARAMSHALA, DECEMBER 14





Under chilly climes and dewy conditions, India's seamers and spinners combined to bowl out South Africa for 117 in 20 overs in the third T20I at the HPCA Stadium on Sunday.

Arshdeep Singh, Harshit Rana, Varun Chakravarthy and Kuldeep Yadav picked two wickets apiece, while Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube chipped in with a scalp each, as the visitors never recovered from being 30/4 inside seven overs in seam-bowling friendly conditions.

Captain Aiden Markram fought hard with a fluent 61 off 46 balls, but found little support as only Donovon Ferreira (20) and Anrich Nortje (12) reached double figures, as India's attack remained relentless despite the absence of Jasprit Bumrah and Axar Patel.

Having gone for runs in the previous outing, Arshdeep struck early to give India the perfect start. The left-arm pacer found movement to beat the outside edge of Reeza Hendricks twice, before nipping one back to trap the opener lbw, with the DRS also confirming the same.

India struck again when Quinton de Kock missed a full straight delivery from Rana while playing across the line, and was trapped lbw. In his next over, Rana struck again when Dewald Brevis went for a cover drive, but chopped onto his stumps.

Pandya joined the 100-wicket club in T20Is – and the third bowler from India to reach the landmark - as Tristan Stubbs attempted to guide a back-of-length delivery pitched outside off stump towards third man, but only managed to nick behind to wicketkeeper Jitesh Sharma.

India's seamers continued to dominate under lights when Dube got one to cut back in sharply and flatten Corbin Bosch's leg-stump. Amidst the carnage, Markram timed his drives, punches and flicks well, while Ferreira briefly fought back with a towering no-look six off Kuldeep Yadav and a pulled four through mid-wicket against Dube, though he was also given a reprieve when Arshdeep dropped him at long-on.

But Ferreira's aggressive approach ended when a googly from Chakaravarthy beat him comprehensively and rattled the stumps. In his next over, Chakaravarthy castled Marco Jansen through the gate with another lethal googly. Markram marched forward to pick a four off Dube, thanks to misfielding in the deep, before slicing, swinging, and lofting Rana for a four and two sixes, which also brought up his fifty in 41 balls.

But his innings soon ended in an anticlimactic fashion as he nicked behind off Arshdeep to Jitesh while going for an expansive drive. Birthday boy Kuldeep rounded off the innings by dismissing Anrich Nortje and Ottniel Baartman in the final over to keep South Africa three runs short of 120. **IANS**

George, Deepesh, and Chouhan star in India's 90-run win over Pakistan

DUBAI, DECEMBER 14



Aaron George top-scored with 85, while a disciplined bowling display, led by all-rounder Kanishk Chouhan and pacer Deepesh Devendran picking three-fers each, helped India secure a commanding 90-run victory over Pakistan in their second U19 Men's Asia Cup league stage clash at the ICC Academy Ground on Sunday.

The win also ensured that India qualified for the semi-finals of the competition. Put in to bat first, India were bowled out for 240 in 46.1 overs, with George anchoring the innings through a fluent 85 coming off 88 balls, laced with 12 fours and a six.

Captain Ayush Mhatre struck a brisk 38 off 25 balls while Chouhan added a run-a-ball 46, including hitting two fours and three sixes, as they lifted India to a competitive total. For Pakistan, Mohammad Sayyam and Abdul Subhan picked up three wickets apiece, while Niqab Shafiq claimed two scalps.

Pakistan's chase never recovered from early jolts. An incisive new-ball spell from pacer Devendran reduced them to 30/4, and although Huzaifa Ahsan fought with a valiant 70 off 83 balls, he found little support from the rest of the batters. Chouhan also got into the wicket-takers list with three scalps as Pakistan were bowled out for 150 in 41.2 overs.

BRIEF SCORES:
INDIA U-19: 240 all out in 46.1 overs (Aaron George 85, Kanishk Chouhan 46; Mohammad Sayyam 3/67, Abdul Subhan 3/42).
PAKISTAN U-19: 150 all out in 41.2 overs (Huzaifa Ahsan 70; Kanishk Chouhan 3/33, Deepesh Devendran 3/16).

Captain Ayush Mhatre struck a brisk 38 off 25 balls while Chouhan added a run-a-ball 46, including hitting two fours and three sixes, as they lifted India to a competitive total.

The contest also saw the continuation of the 'no-handshake' protocol, with captains and players from both sides refraining from handshakes at the toss and after the match ended, echoing the stance taken by the India senior men's and women's teams in various international games this year. **IANS**

Miller will likely be among the three most expensive players, opines Bangar

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14



Former India batting coach Sanjay Bangar has identified several marquee players who are expected to attract intense bidding from franchises looking to address key gaps in their squads, as the build-up to the IPL 2026 auction gathers pace. Among them, South African veteran David Miller has emerged as one of the most sought-after names, with Bangar predicting a fierce contest between franchises.

Miller's reputation as a proven finisher continues to make him a valuable asset in the shortest format, particularly for teams struggling to close out innings in the death overs. Highlighting the growing demand for experience in high-pressure situations, Bangar believes the left-hander could be among the costliest buys at the auction.

Speaking on JioHotstar, Bangar said, "David Miller will likely be among the top three most expensive players in this auction. Several teams need a player with his finishing ability Gujarat Titans, for instance, would benefit from his experience, while Kolkata Knight Riders could target him too, especially with Andre Russell's retirement and a healthy purse at their disposal."

In addition to Miller, Bangar also drew attention to England's Jonny Bairstow, whose versatility and availability could significantly enhance his market value. Bairstow's ability to contribute both as a top-order batter and as a wicketkeeper makes him an attractive option for franchises seeking balance and depth in their line-ups.

"Jonny Bairstow offers dual value as a wicketkeeper and a top-order batter. He has a proven pedigree and, since he's currently focused solely on T20 cricket, his full availability makes him an even stronger prospect. Teams like Delhi Capitals and Kolkata Knight Riders could be in the mix Delhi need a top-order option after releasing Jake Fraser-McGurk, while KKR might also look at him given their limited choices beyond Quinton de Kock and Rahmanullah Gurbaz." he added. **IANS**

Bring Khawaja back at top, Travis down to No 5 in Adelaide: Hussey

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14



Former Australia Test star Mike Hussey believes veteran batter Usman Khawaja should be recalled as opener and Travis Head should move down to the No. 5 spot for the third Ashes Test, starting on Wednesday in Adelaide.

Khawaja, who missed the second Test victory in Brisbane due to back spasms, was unable to open in Australia's first innings after spending prolonged time off the field with a back injury during England's batting in the series opener in Perth.

In Khawaja's absence, Travis Head delivered a standout performance and scored a match-winning Ashes century for the ages. However, Khawaja is now fit again and has been selected in the 15-man squad for the Adelaide Test. "I'd bring him straight back in and I'd move Travis Head back down to number five," Hussey said on Fox Cricket. "I just think Usman Khawaja's basically had one innings here in Perth with back spasms. Coming into the series, Usman Khawaja was our number one guy opening the batting – we weren't sure who the other guy would be!

"What's changed after one innings? He's recovered from his back injury now. Get him back in there at the top of the order," he added. Hussey believes that Head returning to his position in the middle order could be more damaging against England, who are trailing 0-2 in the series.

"Get Travis Head back down to number five. I know Travis Head played an amazing innings here (as opener in Perth in the First Test) – but I just like him at number five. Opening the batting consistently at Test cricket is difficult, very difficult. I just feel like Travis Head can be more consistent in the middle order," said Hussey.

Should Khawaja return, it would come at the expense of Josh Inglis, who batted at No. 7 at the Gabba where he scored an uncertain 23, a view supported by the former Aussie great Adam Gilchrist. **IANS**

Pathan believes KKR will target Green in auction as a 'like-for-like replacement' of Russell

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 14



Former India cricketer Irfan Pathan said that Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) will go big for Cameron Green at the Indian Premier League (IPL) auction to fill in the void in the team created by Andre Russell, who announced his retirement, calling the Aussie all-rounder a 'like-for-like' replacement for the Caribbean batter.

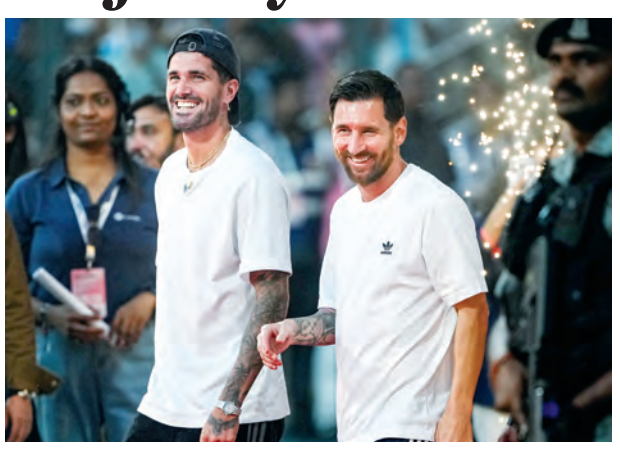
The IPL 2026 mini auction is set for December 16, and franchise planning has gathered momentum as teams weigh their options ahead of what promises to be a fiercely competitive bidding war. Among the most talked-about players is Green, whose all-round skill set continues to attract attention despite shifting team combinations around the league.

Pathan believes Green could emerge as a priority signing for franchises looking to rebuild balance in their squads, as he said on Jiostar, "Cameron Green is a top-quality all-rounder, and with KKR entering the auction with a sizeable purse, they'll surely target him. With Andre Russell retired, Green offers a like-for-like replacement someone who can contribute with both bat and ball, though he'll probably bat a bit higher in the order. I expect CSK to show interest too."

Pathan also highlighted the sustained value of New Zealand batter Daryl Mitchell, particularly for teams playing on spin-friendly surfaces. Mitchell's previous success in Indian conditions and his adaptability against spin remain key selling points. **IANS**

Messi leaves fans, celebrities mesmerised; gets signed India jersey from Tendulkar

MUMBAI, DECEMBER 14





He came, he saw, and he conquered hearts -- all in one hour. In one Messi-merising hour spent at the iconic Wankhede Stadium as part of his GOAT India Tour 2025, Lionel Messi interacted with cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, some current India and former football players, film stars, celebrities and politicians.

By the time he left, exactly one hour after making a grand entry into the stadium at 5.30 pm, the crowd was satisfied, unlike his 20-odd-minute appearance in Kolkata, which left ardent fans fuming and led to chaotic scenes, including rioting by some angry fans and forced the West Bengal government to initiate a judicial inquiry.

Mumbai was the third stop on his GOAT India Tour 2025, and the Argentine World Cup winner spent the most time with the fans after making a brief appearance at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata and a slightly longer stay at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Uppal.

He spent some time talking to Tendulkar with the help of his translator. Tendulkar presented his signed India jersey and was seen pointing to the No 10 on the back, a number he shared with the Argentine great. Tendulkar also addressed the gathering, talking to them initially in Marathi and then switching to English, telling them that his meeting with Messi would be among the memorable moments he spent at the Wankhede.

In an iconic moment, the crowd chanted for Messi's name alongside that of Tendulkar and Luis Suarez, who, along with Rodrigo, are accompanying Messi on this GOAT India Tour 2025. Through Messi, the crowd also tried to send a message to FC Barcelona for a visit to Mumbai, chanting 'Barca, Barca'.

On the occasion, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis officially launched the Project Maha-deva, of which Bollywood star Tiger Shroff is a mentor and brand ambassador. Project Maha-deva plans to provide transformative support for school-going boys and girls players from the state and help them realise their football dreams. The Chief Minister, in his address, informed Messi & Co, the details of the project and hoped that one day players from this project would rule the football world just like the Argentine legend has done. The Maharashtra government has picked 16 players as an initial intake in the Maha-deva project.

Messi reached the Wankhede at around 5.30 pm, around 30 minutes later than what was scheduled. But he looked more relaxed and ready to mingle, at times pointing out to the security personnel and officials the areas of the ground he would like to go to. **IANS**

Minerva Academy FC thrash Himachal FC 5–0 in dominant away display at AIFF Elite Youth League (U-18)

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, December 14



Minerva Academy Football Club produced a commanding performance in their second away fixture of the AIFF Elite Youth League (Under-18), overpowering Himachal FC with a thumping 5–0 victory that perfectly captured the academy's warrior spirit and attacking identity.

The opening half saw Minerva in complete control of proceedings. The boys in blue dictated tempo, pressed high, and created several goal-scoring opportunities, but luck and last-ditch defending kept the scoreline level at the break. Despite the lack of goals, Minerva's intent was clear dominance was only a matter of time.

The deadlock was finally broken in emphatic fashion in the 56th minute, when Lunkim took matters into his own hands. Showcasing outstanding individual brilliance, he went on a dazzling dribbling run, slicing through the defence before calmly finishing to give Minerva a deserved lead. The goal lifted the tempo further, and from that moment on, there was no stopping Minerva Academy.

Just minutes later, Azlansha doubled the advantage with a moment of sheer power and precision. Cutting past the left-back, he unleashed a rock-solid shot, driving the ball goalwards with conviction to make it 2–0, firmly shifting the match beyond Himachal FC's reach.

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