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4-DAY 'WINGS INDIA 2026' TO DISPLAY FUTURE OF GLOBAL AVIATION: GOVT P06

DONALD TRUMP SAYS US RESHAPED GLOBAL DYNAMICS P09

INDIA, NZ HEAD INTO SERIES DECIDER WITH MILESTONES IN MIND P12

Matua voters won't lose rights, CAA will ensure citizenship: Modi in Bengal

KOLKATA, JANUARY 17



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday countered the Trinamool Congress' claims that several voters from the Matua community in West Bengal will lose their voting rights following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise in the state, underlining that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is not only determined to protect the voting rights of the Matuas and other religious refugees in West Bengal but also ensure their long-term development.

"I request the people from the Matua community, as well as people coming to West Bengal from the neighbouring country because of religious oppression, not to be scared. It is my guarantee that their interests will be protected and citizenship will be granted to them under the Citizenship Amendment Act. If a government led by the BJP comes to power in West Bengal, it will work for the social development of the Matuas as well as people from other backward class communities," the Prime Minister said while addressing a public rally in Malda district of West Bengal on Saturday.

Matuas are people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds from neighbouring Bangladesh who come to West Bengal as refugees and settle in different parts of the eastern state, with a concentration in Nadia and North 24 Parganas districts.

Since the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP has been able to develop a stronghold in the Matua-dominated pockets in West Bengal. Speaking on the occasion, he launched a scathing attack against the Trinamool Congress, accusing it of encouraging illegal infiltration from neighbouring Bangladesh.

"The biggest challenge faced by West Bengal is infiltration. The rich countries of the world, where there is no shortage of money, are also expelling infiltrators. Should they not be sent out of West Bengal also? But is it possible by a Trinamool Congress-ruled government, which has been playing the game of infiltrating the voters for so many years? They snatch away the rights of the poor. IANS

Only BJP can end 'politics of violence' in Bengal: PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said that only Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) can bring an end to the "politics of violence" in West Bengal, as it did in other eastern Indian states in the recent past. Addressing a rally in Malda district, PM Modi said, "The BJP has formed a government in Odisha. The people of Tripura and Assam have accepted the BJP. A few days ago, a BJP- led National Democratic Alliance government was formed again in Bihar. Now it is time for good governance in West Bengal. That is why I said after winning the Bihar elections, with the blessings of Mother Ganga, the Ganges of development will now flow in West Bengal. Just as the BJP had ended the politics of violence in other eastern Indian states, so it will end that in West Bengal."

Big relief for Punjab's farmers, path will be cleared for unhindered farming along border: CM Mann

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
New Delhi, January 17



Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Saturday announced a major relief for farmers in Punjab's border belt after the Central government agreed in principle to shift the Border Security Fence closer to the International Border, a move that will clear the way for unhindered cultivation of thousands of acres of farmland currently trapped beyond the fencing.

Calling on Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi, the Chief Minister said farmers have long been forced to cross the fence with identity cards and under BSF escort to reach their own fields, facing daily hardship and uncertainty along the 532 km India Pakistan border where fencing lies deep inside Punjab's territory. He said the Home Minister informed him during the meeting that the issue is under active consideration and that the fencing will be shifted towards the border, bringing Punjab's land back on the accessible side without compromising national security.

Alongside the border issue, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann also raised a series of long pending concerns, including Punjab's objections to the proposed Seeds Bill 2025, the unresolved Sutlej Yamuna Link dispute (SYL), slow movement of foodgrains by the FCI, freezing of Arthia Commission, non payment of Rural Development Fund (RDF) and Mandi Fund, and the dilution of Punjab's role in Chandigarh's administration, seeking prompt and time bound resolution of these matters.

Raising serious objections to the proposed Seeds Bill 2025, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said, "Punjab is an agrarian state and one of the largest grain producing states of the country, yet the draft Seed Bill does not assure representation of the state as per schedule under the relevant section. The zone based system introduced in the Bill does not guarantee Punjab's representation in the Central Seed Committee, unlike the existing system, thereby limiting the state's voice in decisions that directly affect the seed sector."

The Punjab CM added, "The proposed Bill also curtails the existing powers of the State Seed Committee, as there is no role envisaged for the state level committee in seed registration, and the draft is silent on a robust compensation framework for farmers who suffer losses when registered seed fails to perform as claimed."

The Chief Minister further pointed out that seed varieties tested and released in foreign countries have been allowed for import and sale in Punjab and other states without compulsory multi location testing under state specific agro climatic conditions, posing serious risks to farmers. He conveyed that agriculture is Punjab's lifeline, where farmers grow crops, sell part of the produce and retain seeds for the next season, and forcing farmers to depend entirely on companies for seeds is neither practical nor in farmers' interest. He urged that the Bill should not be brought before Parliament in its present form, and was assured by the Union Home Minister that the concerns would be examined.

India, Canada to unlock new opportunities, deepen ties: Piyush Goyal

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday met David Eby, Premier of British Columbia, reaffirming the importance of sustained engagement to unlock new opportunities and deepen ties between India and Canada. In a post on X social media platform, Goyal said he had a productive meeting with Eby.

"Discussions focused on strengthening the India-Canada economic partnership, advancing trade and investment cooperation, and exploring collaboration across sectors such as critical minerals, manufacturing, clean energy, technology, education, defence and innovation," the minister explained.

"We reaffirmed the importance of sustained engagement to unlock new opportunities & deepen the ties between both nations," he added.

Goyal is set to lead a high-level trade and investment delegation to Canada, to advance the trade and commercial engagements between the two countries. According to him, the aim is to launch the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) negotiations with Canada.

India and Canada in November agreed to hold sustained ministerial engagements with the trade and investment community in both countries early next year.

British Columbia is India's largest trade partner in Canada, with bilateral trade touching $2.1 billion in 2024, representing about 25 per cent of Canada's exports to India, according to Kahlon. IANS

India skips South Africa-led naval exercise as it's not 'institutionalised' BRICS activity

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17



India on Saturday said it skipped a South Africa-initiated multilateral naval wargame featuring a number of BRICS countries as the exercise was not an institutional activity under the grouping.

The exercise held in South African waters comprised the navies of China, Russia Iran, Egypt, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) among others.

The week-long military wargame took place amid increasing tensions in Iran over possible military strikes on the country over its crackdown on anti-government protesters.

"We clarify that the exercise in question was entirely a South African initiative in which some BRICS members took part," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

"It was not a regular or institutionalised BRICS activity, nor did all BRICS members take part in it," he said.

Jaiswal was responding to media queries on India's absence from the so-called "BRICS naval exercise".

The MEA spokesperson said India has not participated in previous such activities.

"The regular exercise that India is a part of in this context is the IBSAMAR maritime exercise that brings together the navies of India, Brazil and South Africa," he said. PTI

19 Bills pending in Rajya Sabha, oldest dates back to 1992

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

As many as 19 government Bills remain pending in the Rajya Sabha, with the oldest, pertaining to population control, dating back to 1992.

The Rajya Sabha is a permanent House which is never dissolved, with one-third of its members retiring every two years. While the Bills pending in the Lok Sabha lapse when the House is dissolved, a Bill pending in the Rajya Sabha never lapses.

According to a bulletin of the Upper House, there are 19 pending Bills at present, the oldest being The Constitution (Seventy-ninth Amendment) Bill, 1992.

The Bill proposed to amend the Directive Principles of State Policy to provide that the State shall promote population control and the small family norm, and to include promoting and adopting the small family norm in the Fundamental Duties. It also proposed that an MP or an MLA should be disqualified if they have more than two children.

Also among the pending bills is The Delhi Rent (Amendment) Bill, 1997, which was to amend the Delhi Rent Act, 1995 that aimed to modernise rent control laws, but faced significant pushback from tenant and landlord groups.

While the government is working on bringing The Seed Bill 2025, among the pending Bills is The Seeds Bill, 2004, which aimed to regulate the quality of seeds for sale, import and export and to facilitate the production and supply of quality seeds.

Another Bill that remains pending is The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 2011, which was introduced when Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge was the labour minister. PTI

Al Falah University hired doctors linked to Red Fort area blast without police verification: ED

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17



Faridabad-based Al Falah University had appointed three doctors -- two arrested by the National Investigation Agency and the third an alleged suicide bomber of the November 2025 Red Fort area blast -- apart from other specialists without police verification or scrutiny, the Enforcement Directorate has found.

The agency, as part of its money laundering probe against the promoter of the university, is understood to have furnished statements of various senior executives and faculty of the varsity in this context in a chargesheet filed before a Delhi court on Friday.

Arrested 61-year-old Al Falah Group chairman Jawad Ahmad Siddiqui and the Al Falah Charitable Trust that controls all the educational institutions of the varsity are the two accused named in the complaint filed under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The about 260-page chargesheet seeks prosecution of Siddiqui and his Trust for alleged generation of illicit funds from fees paid by students, while allegedly misrepresenting the accreditation and recognition of his institutions. PTI

J&K: Resolution seeks review of NMC decision on Mata Vaishno Devi College

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 17

Ruling National Conference MLA Tanvir Sadiq has submitted a resolution in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, calling upon the Centre to review the decision to revoke the permission for MBBS course to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Medical College.

The National Medical Commission (NMC) revoked the Letter of Permission to the college, citing non-compliance with minimum standards and extensive deficiencies in faculty strength, clinical material and infrastructure.

According to sources, Sadiq's Private Member's resolution urged the House to call upon the Union government and the National Medical Commission to immediately review and reconsider the withdrawal of the Letter of Permission.

The NMC's decision came amid protests by right-wing outfits against large number of non-Hindu candidates getting admitted to the MBBS course, and the controversy is likely to dominate the initial proceedings of the Budget session of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly which is scheduled to meet next month. PTI

NIA chargesheets five for propagating ideologies of banned terror outfit online

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday chargesheeted five persons, including a woman, in a case relating to online radicalisation of vulnerable youth by terror group Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) in Gujarat. The accused -- identified as Mohammad Fardeen, Kureshi Sefulla, Mohammad Faique, Zeeshan Ali and Shama Parveen -- have been named in the charge sheet filed before a special NIA court in Ahmedabad, officials said. NIA's investigation in the case had revealed that the accused used social media platforms for propagating, supporting and disseminating the anti-India ideologies of the banned AQIS, a statement issued by the probe agency said. They posted provocative posts, including videos, audios and photos, through various social media accounts, it said. NIA further found that, through these posts, the accused had called for armed revolt against the democratically elected Indian government, and for the establishment of the Caliphate based on the Sharia law, the statement alleged. PTI

If God is willing, Shiv Sena (UBT) will have its Mayor in Mumbai: Uddhav Thackeray

MUMBAI, JANUARY 17



A day after the alliance of the BJP and rival Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena won the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday said his party can have its mayor if "God is willing".

The cryptic remark came amid suspense over whether the mayor would be from the BJP or Shinde's party.

The BJP-Sena combine on Friday wrested the control of the civic body which the undivided Shiv Sena led by the Thackerays had ruled for 25 years.

"It's my dream to install a Shiv Sena (UBT) mayor in Mumbai, and if God is willing, this dream will be realised," Thackeray said, interacting with party workers.

The BJP thinks that it has finished off the Sena (UBT) but it was not the case, said the former Maharashtra chief minister whose party won 65 seats in the 227-member civic body, more than the Eknath Shinde-led faction which won 29 seats. PTI

Punjab Police conduct CASO raids at 46 locations in Hoshiarpur: ADGP



DALJEET AJNOHA
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Hoshiarpur, January 17

Punjab Police conducted raids at around 46 locations across Hoshiarpur district as part of the second phase of the ongoing Cordon and Search Operations (CASO).

A heavy contingent of police personnel, led by Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) Internal Security, Shive Kumar Verma, carried out search operations in various areas, including Balvir Colony. Security forces cordoned off the areas before conducting thorough searches.

Addressing the media, ADGP Verma said that nearly 50 per cent recovery has been achieved so far in the district, and the ongoing raids are aimed at sustaining the momentum against criminal activities.

He further informed that under the CASO operations in Hoshiarpur, a total of 1,100 FIRs have been registered, around 1,500 individuals have been taken into custody, properties worth approximately Rs 13 crore have been seized, and 11 illegal structures have been demolished.

The ADGP emphasized that the drive is part of the Punjab Police's broader strategy to curb crime, strengthen law and order, and ensure public safety across the district.

MC seals two shops in Kapurthala for non-payment of property tax

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Kapurthala, January 17

The Municipal Corporation on Friday sealed two commercial establishments for failing to deposit property tax despite repeated notices and multiple opportunities for compliance. The action was carried out by a dedicated enforcement team as part of the corporation's ongoing drive to ensure tax compliance within city limits.

According to municipal officials, the shop owners had not deposited property tax for a considerable period. Prior to sealing the premises, the authorities issued several notices and also provided an opportunity to clear the outstanding dues through the appeal process. However, as the defaulters neither responded satisfactorily nor deposited the pending tax, the corporation proceeded with the sealing action in accordance with prescribed rules. Municipal officials said the enforcement team reached the concerned area and sealed the shops after completing all necessary formalities. Notices regarding the sealing were affixed at the premises to inform the owners about the action taken and the conditions required for reopening the establishments.

The civic body reiterated that property tax is a vital source of revenue for maintaining essential public services and urban infrastructure. Officials also appealed to property owners and commercial establishments to deposit their taxes on time to avoid penal action.

The Municipal Corporation made it clear that similar action will continue against other defaulters in the coming days to ensure transparency, accountability, and financial discipline, while assuring that all enforcement measures are being taken in a fair and lawful manner.

MLA leads anti-drug awareness rally in ward no 51; says making Punjab drug-free is Mann govt's prime goal

GURKIRPAL SINGH
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ludhiana, January 17



Reiterating the Punjab government's firm resolve to eradicate drug abuse from the state, MLA Kulwant Singh Sidhu on Saturday said that making Punjab drug-free is the foremost objective of the government led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann.

The MLA made these remarks while leading an anti-drug awareness rally in Ward No 51 of Ludhiana. As part of the statewide campaign launched by Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann against drugs, MLA Sidhu has been organizing daily awareness rallies in different areas of the Atam Nagar constituency to mobilize public support against the menace.

In continuation of this drive, a foot march was taken out from near Gurdwara Baba Deep Singh, Model Town, close to Tirkoona Park, which concluded at Scooter Market. A large number of local residents, party workers, and volunteers participated in the rally.

Addressing the gathering, MLA Kulwant Singh Sidhu said that steering the youth away from the curse of drugs and motivating them towards sports and positive activities is a key priority of the government. He appealed to the people of Punjab to extend full cooperation in restoring the state's glory and transforming it into a vibrant and prosperous "Rangla Punjab" once again. The MLA also assigned duties to constituency office-bearers and workers to go door-to-door and spread awareness against drug abuse. He stated that the primary objective of these rallies is not only to warn drug peddlers but also to free residents from fear and encourage them to openly oppose the drug trade in their localities.

Prominent leaders and party workers present on the occasion included Zonal Commissioner Gurpal Singh, Kanwaljeet Singh, Monty Sachdeva, Mahinder Pal Singh, Boney R.K., Gurpreet Singh Raja, Manpreet Singh (Trade Wing), Deepak Arora, Ashok Puri, Kamaldeep Kapoor, Gurpreet Singh Eelu, Block Incharge Mahila Wing Sukhpreet Kaur, Sukhwinder Kaur Gill, Seema Grewal, Neelam, Davinder Kaur, Jasvikram Singh, Kamaldeep Singh, Jasveer Singh, and Amarjit Singh Ladi.

The rally concluded with a strong message of unity and collective responsibility, emphasizing that public participation is vital to achieving the goal of a drug-free Punjab.

No sanitation staff deployed in ward no 21, former council president takes up broom in protest

ASHOK KAURA
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Phagwara, January 17



Residents of Ward No 21 in Phagwara are facing persistent sanitation problems due to the alleged failure of the Municipal Corporation to deploy cleaning staff in several lanes of the area. Highlighting the issue, Prem Nagar Sewa Society president Sudhir Sharma and secretary Surinderpal said that no sanitation workers have been posted in parts of the ward for a long time, calling it a clear violation of the Government of India's Swachh Bharat Mission.

They stated that despite repeated oral and written complaints submitted to the Municipal Corporation, the situation has remained unchanged due to what they described as administrative apathy. The prolonged neglect has triggered resentment among local residents, who say the lack of regular cleaning has affected hygiene and quality of life in the area. Taking note of the residents' difficulties, former Phagwara Municipal Council president and husband of ward councillor Parvinder Kaur Ragbotra, Malkiat Singh Ragbotra, personally took up a broom and cleaned the streets along with locals. Speaking on the occasion, Ragbotra said he would not step back from the commitment of public service made during elections. He added that if the Municipal Corporation fails to fulfil its responsibility, he would continue cleanliness drives with the support of residents.

Appealing to the public, Ragbotra urged residents to treat cleanliness of their streets and ward as a collective responsibility, similar to maintaining cleanliness within their homes. He also expressed dissatisfaction over the functioning of the Municipal Corporation, stating that citizens regularly pay taxes and, in return, are entitled to basic civic amenities, including proper sanitation services.

DC inaugurates newly established Weightlifting Training Centre

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ludhiana, January 17

On Saturday marked a proud and inspiring moment for the district as Deputy Commissioner Himanshu Jain, inaugurated the newly established Weightlifting Training Centre at Guru Nanak Stadium, here. The inauguration reflects the district administration's continued commitment to promoting sports, fitness, and nurturing the aspirations of young athletes.

The centre has been developed to provide a dedicated space where aspiring weightlifters can train in a safe, structured, and motivating environment. It aims to support young talent through proper guidance, discipline, and consistent training, enabling athletes to progress from the grassroots level to higher competitive platforms. For many trainees, this facility represents not just a training space, but an opportunity to turn their passion into achievement.

During his interaction with athletes and coaches, the Deputy Commissioner appreciated the dedication and hard work of the young sportspersons. He encouraged them to remain focused, train with perseverance, and believe in their abilities, while highlighting the importance of physical fitness, discipline, and sportsmanship in shaping a successful sporting career.

The event was attended by Ambar Bandopadhyay (CGO), Kuldeep Chugh (DSO), Aditya Kumar Yadav (Governance Associate), along with coaches and enthusiastic trainees. The energy and commitment displayed by the athletes reflected the growing interest in strength sports across the district and added to the vibrant atmosphere of the occasion. The district administration remains committed to strengthening sports infrastructure and creating meaningful opportunities for youth. The inauguration of this Weightlifting Training Centre is a significant step towards building a healthier, stronger, and more confident sporting community.

Bholath Police arrest youth for allegedly abducting minor girl on pretext of marriage

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Bholath, January 17

Bholath Police have arrested a youth for allegedly luring and abducting a minor girl on the pretext of marriage. The action was taken following a complaint filed by the girl's father. The minor has been safely recovered and handed over to her legal guardians.

Station House Officer (SHO) Bholath, Ranjit Singh, said the complainant, Sukhjinder Singh, a resident of Bholath, reported that he is the father of three children and has been living separately from his wife for the past several years. According to the complaint, on September 4, his younger daughter left home stating that she was going to meet a friend but did not return.

Despite repeated attempts, her mobile phone remained switched off, and extensive searches among relatives and acquaintances failed to yield any information about her whereabouts. The complainant stated that his daughter is a minor and suspected that an unknown youth had enticed her away with the intention of marriage. Based on the statement, Bholath Police registered a case against an unidentified person and launched an investigation.

Swadeshi Jagran Manch inspires young innovators on National Startup Day

HARISH MONGA
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ferozepur, January 17

In a bid to bolster the 'Startup India' initiative, a special programme was organised at Usher: The School of Robotics in Ferozepur to commemorate National Startup Day. The event, held under the inspiration of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch, focused on fostering entrepreneurship, innovation, and a "Swadeshi" (indigenous) mindset among young students. As India marks National Startup Day 2026, the focus shifts to the founders and startups redefining how the nation builds, scales, and competes. From solving grassroots challenges to creating globally relevant businesses, India's entrepreneurs are driving transformation through innovation, resilience, and execution-led thinking.

Addressing the gathering, Umesh Bajaj, CEO and Mentor of the school, emphasised that the modern era belongs to innovation and startups. "If children are provided with the right guidance and resources, they can bring about significant change even at a young age," Bajaj stated. He encouraged students to work on fresh ideas, utilise technology positively, and aspire to launch their own ventures in the future. He also made a strong plea for adopting indigenous products to strengthen the national economy.

A remarkable highlight of the centre is that even students from the 4th grade are demonstrating exceptional proficiency in robotics, coding, and innovation. This serves as a testament to the fact that a startup culture can be nurtured early with the right training.

Four arrested in Phagwara sweets shop firing case

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Phagwara, January 17

The police have arrested four persons in connection with firing on a renowned "Sudhir Sweets" of Phagwara. They were also involved in some more criminal activities. The accused have been identified as Roopinder Singh, alias Pinda, of village Miherru, Sukhraj Singh, alias Sukha, of village Bid-Puad near Phagwara, Kamalpreet Singh, alias Peeta, of village Sandhwan near Behram, and Harjit Singh of village Kherra in Phagwara.

The arrests were made by the police under the supervision of SP Madhvi Sharma. The police have also recovered one Hyundai Verna car and one Hyundai Venue car from the possession of the accused. SSP, Kapurthala, Gaurav Toora, accompanied by SP (Detective) Prabhjot Singh Virk and Sharma, while addressing a press conference at the SP office, said during interrogation, the accused confessed to their involvement in one criminal incident each in Mukandpur and Behram.

The SSP added that the accused had also disclosed the names of two more accomplices and further disclosures were expected as the investigation progresses. He expressed his confidence that cops would soon recover the weapons and the scooter used in the crime, besides apprehend the main accused involved in the firing case of Sudhir Sweets. The arrests comes in the backdrop of a firing incident that caused panic in Phagwara earlier on January 12. The assailants opened fire at Sudhir Sweets.

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Workshop on use of AI in classrooms held



PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Mandi Gobindgarh, January 17

Desh Bhagat Global School (DBGS) recently hosted a CBSE Capacity Building Programme on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Classrooms, marking a significant step towards integrating emerging technologies in education. The workshop witnessed enthusiastic participation from educators keen to explore the transformative role of AI in teaching and learning.

The session was led by renowned educators Sonia Victor and Napoliyan Nelson, who shared valuable insights into the fundamentals of Artificial Intelligence and its practical applications in education. The interactive session included hands-on experience with AI tools such as Google Teachable Machine, Magic Tools, Auto Draw, Kahoot, Adobe Firefly, Gamma, Khan Academy, Canva and Lumen 5. Addressing the gathering, School Chairman Dr Zora Singh and General Secretary Dr Tajinder Kaur emphasized DBGS's strong commitment to holistic development and continuous professional growth of educators.

The Principal Indu Sharma, along with the DBGS team, was widely appreciated for successfully organizing the insightful and forward-looking workshop. The programme aimed to equip educators with practical knowledge to effectively integrate AI into classroom teaching.

Blood donation and eye checkup camp to be organised on January 28

RAJESH DEHRA
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Rajpura, January 17

Aryans Group of Colleges, Rajpura will organise a Blood Donation Camp on January 28 at the Aryans Campus with the support of the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education & Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh. Dr Vipin Koushal, Medical Superintendent (MS), PGIMER Chandigarh, will attend the programme as the Special Guest along with PGIMER Team.

Dr Anshu Kataria, Chairman, Aryans Group stated that the initiative aims to promote voluntary blood donation and raise awareness about the importance of blood availability for emergency and critical medical needs. He added that a Free Eye Check-Up Camp will also be organised on the same day with the support of Baba Balwant Singh Dudhadhari Charitable Hospital & Laboratory, Rajpura. He further informed that free lenses will be provided to needy patients on medical recommendations.

All blood donors will be awarded a Certificate of Appreciation from PGIMER Chandigarh in recognition of their valuable contribution. Aryans Group of Colleges continues to undertake various healthcare and social welfare initiatives, reinforcing its commitment towards community health and social responsibility.

Bus terminals in Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Sangrur, Patiala and Bathinda to be upgraded through structured PPP model: Bhullar

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, January 17



The Punjab government under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann has approved a comprehensive plan to modernise major bus terminals across the state, marking a significant step towards improving public transport infrastructure and passenger convenience.

Bus terminals in Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Sangrur, Patiala and Bathinda will be upgraded through a structured Public Private Partnership model, revealed the Transport Minister Laljit Singh Bhullar who also underlined the objective of enhancing efficiency, safety, accessibility and overall service delivery.

These bus terminals serve as vital transport hubs for both rural and urban populations, facilitating daily travel for workers, students, traders, tourists and industrial labourers.

Divulging further, the Minister outlined that the terminals also play a key role in inter-state connectivity, supporting passenger movement to neighbouring states including Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Delhi and Rajasthan.

Besides, the Ludhiana and Jalandhar bus terminals handle between 75,000 to one lakh passengers every day, while Patiala and Bathinda witness footfalls of around 50,000 passengers daily, highlighting the critical importance of these facilities in Punjab's mobility ecosystem.

From Bathinda in the west to Jalandhar in the Doaba region, from Ludhiana to Sangrur and Patiala in Malwa, we are upgrading bus terminals where citizens of Punjab already travel every day, said the Minister

Through the PPP model, these five terminals will get better facilities, safer spaces and modern amenities without disrupting people's daily routines.

Punjab steps up potash exploration to cut India's import dependence

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, January 17



With the objective of fast tracking potash exploration in the state and addressing India's heavy reliance on imported Potash, Punjab government has intensified efforts to strengthen domestic mineral resources critical for agriculture.

The high level review meeting was convened to take stock of progress identify future priorities and firm up timelines for exploration across key potash bearing regions of Punjab.

Punjab Mining and Geology Minister Barinder Kumar Goyal chaired the meeting at the Punjab Civil Secretariat here with senior officers of the Geological Survey of India (GSI) which included Deputy Director General (Punjab Himachal and Haryana) Shrimati Gupta, Directors Sushree Mishra and Smt. Aprajeeta Bhatacharji and officers of the Department of Mines and Geology Punjab Chief Engineer S. Hardeep Singh Mehndiratta and Assistant Geologist Paras Mahajan.

The meeting reviewed the status of completed exploration blocks ongoing drilling activities during Field Season 2025-26 and proposed reconnaissance and preliminary exploration programmes for Field Season 2026-27 with special focus on Fazilka and Sri Muktsar Sahib districts where significant potash potential has been identified.

Briefing the Minister, the GSI informed that G4 stage exploration has been completed in Qabarwala Block and Shergarh-Dalmirkhera Block, with geological memorandums already handed over to the State Government.

Valour and sacrifice of Namdhari sect to be remembered forever: Hardeep Singh Mundian



PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, January 17

The sacrifices of the Namdhari sect for the cause of India's freedom, protection of faith and upholding of human values will remain etched in golden letters in the annals of Indian history, said Punjab Cabinet Minister Hardeep Singh Mundian, while addressing the state level martyrdom function organised at the Namdhari Shaheedi Memorial, Malerkotla, in memory of 66 Namdhari martyrs.

The Cabinet Minister said that the Namdhari sect stands as a living example of simplicity, truthfulness, humility and sacrifice. He said the path shown by Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji gave a new direction to the country's freedom movement. He added that history bears testimony to the fact that the spark of awareness against British rule rose from this sacred land of Malerkotla.

He said, the valour and sacrifice of the 66 Namdhari martyr Singhs were not limited to any one religious sect but formed the foundation of the national struggle for independence. These sacrifices continue to serve as a source of inspiration for the present generation to move forward on the path of truth, integrity and service to the nation.

The Cabinet Minister said that the Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann led Punjab government will fulfil every directive and service entrusted to it with humility and commitment. He urged the sangat to follow the path shown by the Gurus and the Namdhari sect and to contribute meaningfully towards rebuilding a Rangla Punjab.

The function was organised under the patronage of Sri Satguru Uday Singh Ji, during which MLA Amargarh Prof. Jaswant Singh Gajjanmajra and Namdhari Surinder Singh also addressed the gathering. The sangat paid floral tributes to the 66 Namdhari martyrs and took pledge to follow the path shown by them.

Prominent amongst others who were present included MLA Dr. Jameel Ur Rahman, MLA Samrala Jagtar Singh Dialpura, Deputy Commissioner Viraj S. Tirkey, SSP Gagan Ajit Singh, ADC Navreet Kaur Sekhon, SP Satpal Sharma and SDM Gurmeet Kumar Bansal.

Punjab Police's 'Yudh Nashian Virudh' campaign marks 322 days: Over 45k smugglers arrested, 90k persons sent to de-addiction centres

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, January 17

In a relentless pursuit to eradicate the drug menace from Punjab as per the directions of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, Punjab Police on Saturday conducted a statewide Cordon and Search Operation (CASO) at identified drug Hotspots— the points of sale of drugs and psychotropic substances— across the state as part of the Yudh Nashian Virudh, marking the 322nd day of the intensified anti-drug campaign.

The CASO was conducted simultaneously from 11 am to 2 pm in all 28 Police districts of the state on the directions of Director General of Police (DGP) Punjab Gaurav Yadav, and Spl DGP/ADGP/IGP/DIG rank officers from Punjab Police Headquarters, Chandigarh were deputed various districts to personally supervise the operation.

During the daylong operation, police teams have conducted raids at 831 drug hotspots across the state leading to registration of 200 first information reports (FIRs) and arrest of 227 drug smugglers. Police teams have also recovered 745 grams heroin, 1.2 kg opium, 550 grams Ganja, 4935 intoxicant tablets/capsules and Rs 8750 drug money from the possession of arrested drug smugglers.

Special DGP Law and Order Arpit Shukla, who visited Mohali to personally oversee the operation at drug hotspots, said that the 'Yudh Nashian Virudh' campaign launched on March 1, 2025, has resulted in arrest of 45,028 drug smugglers after registration of 31,370 first information reports (FIRs) across the state and led to recovery of 1961 kg heroin, 607 kg opium, 27.5 quintals poppy husk, 47.57 lakh intoxicant tablets/capsules, 28 kg ICE and Rs 15.4 crores drug money from the possession of drug smugglers.

Misleading amounts to challenge to court order: AAP on Oppn stand over Atishi video row

CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 17



The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Punjab, on Saturday, condemned the attempts by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress leaders to mislead the public by casting doubts on a forensic conclusion that has already been recorded by a court in the case related to the doctored video of AAP leader and former Delhi Chief Minister Atishi.

Punjab AAP President Aman Arora, while responding to the query raised by the State BJP President Sunil Jakhar on forensic report of the Punjab Police, said the issue has gone far beyond political disagreement and now amounts to a direct challenge to a judicial order.

Arora clarified that the court, after examining forensic reports submitted by the state Forensic Science Laboratory, explicitly recorded that the viral video was doctored and that the alleged derogatory word was not present in the original audio.

Based on this finding, the court ordered the video to be taken down and blocked across social media platforms.

"Questioning the forensic findings placed before a court is not questioning a political party or a government. It is questioning the conclusion recorded by a court of law," Arora said in a statement.

"Once a court has spoken, denying its findings is not politics, it is contempt for the rule of law."

Responding to misleading claims and selective interpretations being circulated on social media, another Punjab Minister Laljit Singh Bhullar said repeating a false narrative cannot change judicial facts. **IANS**

Mercury goes up slightly in Punjab

CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 17



Temperatures in Punjab have gone up slightly in the past two days, even though the mercury stayed below normal level at many places.

Intense cold has persisted in state, with fog reducing visibility during morning hours.

Chandigarh, the joint capital of Punjab, recorded a low of 6 degrees Celsius, one degree below normal.

In Punjab, Amritsar was the coldest place with a low of 4.4 degrees Celsius. Ludhiana's minimum was 5.8 degrees Celsius while Patiala's lowest temperature recorded in the day was 6.4 degrees Celsius.

Bathinda, Faridkot and Gurdaspur recorded their respective minimums of 5, 5.5 and 5 degrees Celsius. Bathinda's minimum temperature was under 3 degrees on Thursday and Friday. **PTI**

Moga man convicted, sentenced to 5 years' RI for alluring minor girl for marriage

K.G. SHARMA
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Moga/Ludhiana

A court in Ludhiana has convicted a resident of Moga district for alluring a minor girl on the pretext of marriage and sentenced him to rigorous imprisonment.

Additional Sessions Judge Harvinder Singh convicted Veer Singh, a resident of village Budh Singh Wala in district Moga, under Section 366A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The court sentenced him to five years of rigorous imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 5,000.

The court further sentenced the accused to three years of imprisonment along with a fine of Rs 3,000 under another relevant section. In case of non-payment of the fines, the accused will have to undergo additional imprisonment of five months and three months respectively.

According to the prosecution, Hathur police registered a case on February 11, 2023, under Sections 363 and 366A of the IPC on the statement of the complainant, a labourer by profession. The complainant stated that his 15-year-old daughter went missing from their home on February 1, 2023, at around 11:15 pm.

Despite searching for her among relatives and other possible places, the girl could not be traced. The complainant suspected that Veer Singh had allured his minor daughter and taken her away on the pretext of marriage. Acting on the complaint, the police registered a case and arrested the accused.

During the trial, the accused pleaded innocence and claimed that he had been falsely implicated.

Sikh guru remark row: Badal writes to Delhi Assembly Speaker, seeks Atishi's disqualification

CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 17

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Saturday wrote to Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta, seeking the disqualification of Leader of Opposition Atishi as MLA over her alleged blasphemous remarks against Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Badal urged Gupta to recommend the registration of an FIR against Atishi. The AAP leader's remarks "deeply hurt the religious sentiments of the Sikh community", the former deputy chief minister said.

The issue relates to the January 6 sitting of the Delhi Assembly, during which a discussion was held to mark 350 years of the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Badal said in his letter that Atishi's conduct amounted to a grave breach of privilege and contempt of the House, and was unbecoming of a legislator.

A member who publicly insults the faith and religious sentiments of a minority community loses both moral and constitutional legitimacy to remain a legislator, the SAD chief asserted. Badal urged Gupta to recommend the registration of an FIR against Atishi.

Such remarks pose a serious threat to peace and communal harmony. They caused concern among Sikhs worldwide, including Panthic institutions led by the Akal Takht, he said. **PTI**

MC removes encroachments from key city roads amid fog

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Amritsar, January 17

In view of the increasing risk of road accidents during the foggy winter season, the Estate Wing of the Amritsar Municipal Corporation (MC) has launched a special drive to remove encroachments from footpaths and city roads. The initiative aims to ensure smooth traffic movement and reduce the chances of mishaps caused by obstructions during low-visibility conditions.

Estate Officer Sushant Bhatia said that illegal vending, unauthorised stalls, goods displayed outside shops and other encroachments posing hurdles to traffic flow were removed during the drive. He stated that such obstructions not only inconvenience pedestrians but also create serious safety hazards for motorists, particularly during dense fog.

Several teams of the municipal corporation were deployed simultaneously at different locations across the city. Encroachments were removed from Dasoundha Singh Road, Maqbool Road, the stretch from Shivala Bhag Bhaiya to Hussain Pura, the area around Nandan Cinema at Ram Bagh, and from Mooran Wala Chowk to the bus stand.

During the operation, MC teams cleared footpaths occupied by illegal vendors and removed goods placed outside shops that were encroaching onto the roads. Temporary structures and other obstacles narrowing the carriageways were also removed to restore the original width of the roads.

NABARD unveils ₹8,319 cr credit plan for Kapurthala for 2026–27

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Kapurthala, January 17

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has launched the Potential Linked Credit Plan (PLP) for the Kapurthala district for the financial year 2026-27 on 16 January 2026, with projections pegged at Rs 8319.40 crore. The PLP was released by Additional Deputy Commissioner (Development) Varinder Pal Singh Bajwa during the District Consultative Committee (DCC) meeting in Kapurthala. The total credit potential for the priority sector has been estimated at Rs 8319.40 crore for the financial year 2026-27.

ADC stated that based on this PLP, all bank branches operating within the district will be assigned specific credit targets for the upcoming year under the priority sector guidelines.

Jasminder Singh Bindra, District Development Manager, NABARD, provided a detailed item-wise description of the potential scheme/sector. He stated that agriculture continues to be accorded top priority, with credit projections for the sector pegged at Rs 4020.88 crore. Of this amount, Rs 2647.13 crore is designated for crop loans, Rs 804.72 crore projections for the long-term agriculture sector, Rs 296.99 crore potential is for agriculture infrastructure, and Rs 272.02 crore for ancillary activities, as per the PLP.

Furthermore, the plan sets projections for MSME sector is assessed at Rs 2993.61 crore. The projection for export credit is Rs 430.87 crore, Rs 124.77 crore for educational loans, Rs 586.87 crore for housing sector. Additionally, Rs 12.94 crore has been projections is assessed for renewable energy, Rs 49.52 crore for other priority sector and Rs 99.91 crore for Social Infrastructure.

The NABARD PLP, which provides a detailed assessment of credit potential for various sectors in the district, also highlights sector-specific infrastructure gaps and critical interventions that need to be made to realise the full potential. It has identified a few major constraints concerning infrastructure in industrial areas and said there was scope for improvement.

Five people from Gujarat killed in road accident in Bathinda

CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 17

Five Gujarat residents, including a woman constable, were killed when their sports utility vehicle hit a road divider on a national highway near Gurthari village in Bathinda district on Saturday, police said.

The incident occurred when the occupants of the SUV were going from Bathinda to the Dabwali area.

The victims were taken to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Bathinda, where they were declared brought dead, police said.

The deceased, aged between 25 and 30 years, were identified as Satish, Bharat, Arjun, Janak and Amita. A police official said that Amita was working as a constable in the Gujarat police.

Police said family members of the deceased have been informed about the incident. The bodies have been sent to the Civil Hospital in Bathinda for post-mortem. **PTI**

Governor conducts on-site inspection of incinerator facility located at Raipur Kalan Gaushala

A.S. PRASHAR
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, January 17



Gulab Chand Kataria, Hon'ble Governor of Punjab and Administrator, Union Territory Chandigarh, on Saturday conducted an on-site inspection of the gaushalas and the incinerator facility located at Raipur Kalan to take stock of the arrangements made for the welfare, care and management of cattle.

During the visit, the Administrator reviewed key aspects of gaushala operations, including the condition of shelters, standards of cleanliness, availability of green and dry fodder, access to safe drinking water, veterinary services, waste disposal mechanisms and overall upkeep of the premises. He held interactions with the officers and staff deployed at the gaushalas and issued clear instructions aimed at strengthening oversight, accountability and transparency in day-to-day functioning.

The Administrator directed MC to ensure all the availability of essential facilities and stated that adequate arrangements will be ensured for the proper living conditions, feeding and hydration of the cattle housed in the gaushalas.

Regarding the incinerator installed at the Raipur Kalan gaushala, the Administrator was briefed that the facility had remained temporarily non-operational due to a technical snag which could not be addressed immediately. He directed the MC that the defect will be rectified and the incinerator will be made functional at the earliest to ensure scientific disposal of dead animals.

To enhance transparency and effective monitoring, the Administrator directed that detailed information regarding manpower deployment at each gaushala, including veterinary doctors, para-veterinary staff and other supporting personnel, along with their daily duty rosters, must be prominently displayed at visible locations. This, he said, would facilitate regular supervision and public accountability.

Emphasizing the importance of security and continuous monitoring, the Administrator reiterated strict compliance with CCTV surveillance norms. He directed that CCTV systems be actively monitored and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure round-the-clock vigilance and maintenance of hygiene within the gaushalas.

Reaffirming the Chandigarh Administration's unwavering commitment to animal welfare, the Administrator underscored that periodic inspections, strict adherence to prescribed standards and timely maintenance of infrastructure would continue to be pursued to ensure humane and efficient functioning of gaushalas across the Union Territory.

The inspection visit was attended by Harpreet Kaur Babla, Mayor, Chandigarh; Amit Kumar, Commissioner, Municipal Corporation Chandigarh; Pardeep Kumar, Secretary, Animal Husbandry-cum -Special Commissioner, MCC, along with other senior officers of the Chandigarh Administration and Municipal Corporation.

DC chairs meeting to review NAKSHA Pilot Project in Chandigarh



PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, January 17

A review meeting of the NAKSHA Pilot Project was held under the chairmanship of Nishant Kumar Yadav, Deputy Commissioner, Chandigarh, to assess the progress of field survey and ground-truthing activities. The meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner, officials from the Survey of India, representatives of NIC, Municipal Corporation Chandigarh (MCC), NPMU Delhi, and MPSEDC, Bhopal (through video conferencing).

During the meeting, it was informed that in Sectors 2 to 17, there are approximately 7,000 properties, including both residential and commercial units. Out of these, around 4,500 properties have already been physically visited by the NAKSHA field teams for ground truthing and verification.

At present, about 20 field teams are deployed daily for the survey work. Despite challenging weather conditions, the teams are making steady progress, and it is expected that the entire exercise will be completed by 31st January 2026.

The Deputy Commissioner appreciated the efforts of all departments and agencies involved and emphasized the importance of timely completion of the pilot project, which is crucial for creating accurate and reliable property records.

The Chandigarh Administration has appealed to all residents and property owners to extend full cooperation to the field survey teams and to provide requisite details related to property ownership and records whenever requested, so that the survey can be completed smoothly and within the stipulated time frame.

The Administration reiterated its commitment to transparent, technology-driven governance and assured citizens that the data collected under the NAKSHA project will be used strictly for official purposes in accordance with established norms.

Mohali Session Court awards 4 years imprisonment, ₹20,000 fine to two Improvement Trust officials in corruption case

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, January 17

Adopting Zero tolerance approach against corruption, Vigilance Bureau had arrested red handed Parveen Kumar Clerk and his co-accused Satish Kumar Junior Engineer posted at Improvement Trust Ropar in a corruption case. After the conclusion of the trial, they were today convicted by a competent court and sentenced to 4 years imprisonment and a fine of Rs 20000/- to both of them .

Disclosing this here today, an official spokesperson of Vigilance Bureau said that accused Junior Engineer and Clerk had demanded a bribe of Rs. 15,000 from the complainant in lieu of getting the sale deed registered of his property. He further said that the complainant paid the bribe in instalments and had approached Vigilance Bureau before the payment of the final instalment of bribe money.

Street play raises awareness on Global Interventional Radiology Day

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, January 17

To mark Global Interventional Radiology (IR) Day, a vibrant and informative street play (Nukkad Natak) was organized by department of radiodiagnosis under aegis of ISVIR, Chandigarh, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh State Branch at sector 17, Chandigarh to create public awareness about the role of Interventional Radiology in modern healthcare.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Harish Bhujade, Secretary ISVIR state branch and Associate professor PGI said, The Global IR Day on January 16 is being celebrated on the occasion of the anniversary of world first angioplasty by Dr. Charles Dotter. Global IR day is an opportunity to bring this life-saving specialty closer to the public.

Prof Ajay Kumar, President ISVIR state branch and Professor PGI told that the street play creatively highlighted how Interventional Radiology offers minimally invasive, image-guided treatments for a wide range of medical conditions, including cancer care, vascular diseases, trauma management, women's health issues, and emergency interventions.

Prof Paramjeet Singh, Head, Department of Radiodiagnosis said that through this street play, we aimed to communicate that many complex conditions can now be treated safely without major surgery.Global Interventional Radiology Day is celebrated worldwide to recognize the contributions of interventional radiologists and to promote awareness of this rapidly evolving medical specialty.

The event attracted significant attention from passersby, students, and local residents, who actively engaged with the performers and healthcare professionals present at the venue. Informational sessions following the play helped address public queries and dispel myths about interventional procedures.

Recruitment drive for new Park Hospital Panchkula draws unprecedented talent response

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, January 17



The recruitment drive at the upcoming Park Super Specialty Hospital, Panchkula witnessed the largest recruitment turnout as job seekers and professionals across Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, and Delhi NCR reached for job interviews for various positions.

For several job roles, participation exceeded expectations by nearly 12 times, with certain profiles seeing close to 20 candidates competing for a single vacancy, reflecting strong confidence in the Park brand as an employer and healthcare institution.

Park Hospital Group is coming up with its 350-bedded in Panchkula with a strategic move that expands the group's footprint in the Tricity region and reinforces its long-term growth vision.

Dr. Ankit Gupta, MD-Park Medi World Limited, said, "The response to the Panchkula recruitment drive is a strong affirmation of the trust healthcare professionals place in our vision of building future-ready institutions grounded in clinical excellence, robust governance, and consistently superior patient outcomes. As we expand our footprint, our focus remains on attracting high-quality medical talent and creating integrated, accessible healthcare platforms that raise standards of care while serving the evolving needs of communities across the region."

Developed as a Centre of Excellence, the 350-bedded hospital will offer comprehensive tertiary and quaternary care across key super specialties including Oncology, Neuro Sciences, Orthopaedics and Joint Replacement, Urology and Transplant Services, Critical Care, Emergency Medicine, and Cardiac Sciences. The facility will be equipped with advanced medical technologies such as high-end CT and MRI systems, robotic surgery platforms, PET-CT, and advanced radiation therapy units, with Kidney and Liver Transplant centres planned in subsequent phases.

PGIMER conducts Immediate Trauma Life Support and Burn Management Training for Haryana Medical Officers

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, January 17



The Centre of Excellence (Trauma & Burns), PGIMER, Chandigarh, conducted one- day Immediate Trauma Life Support and Burn Management Training Course under the National Programme for Prevention and Management of Trauma and Burn Injuries (NPPMTBI) of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

Dr.Atul Parashar,Head of the Department of Plastic Surgery and Nodal Officer, Centre of Excellence (Trauma & Burns), PGIMER and Course Director, emphasized the importance of strengthening early in-hospital trauma and burn care to reduce preventable morbidity and mortality. Dr. Nidhi Bhatia from the Department of Anaesthesia, Course Co-Director, highlighted the critical role of airway management and early resuscitation in trauma care, while Dr.Vishal Kumar from the Department of Orthopaedics emphasized timely stabilization and management of musculoskeletal injuries during the initial phase of trauma care.

The programme was attended by senior dignitaries including Dr. Parveen Garg, Ex- DGHS Haryana and Member, Haryana Medical Council, along with senior officials from the State Institute of Health and Family Welfare (SIHFW), Panchkula. India continues to face a substantial trauma burden, with nearly 5 lakh road traffic accidents and over 1.7 lakh deaths annually, in addition to a significant number of severe burn injuries requiring hospital admission. While Haryana has demonstrated national leadership in pre-hospital emergency response through Emergency Service 112, strengthening in-hospital trauma and burn care is the next critical step in completing the continuum of care.

During the programme, more than 65 medical officers from across the state were trained in early trauma assessment, resuscitation, airway management, haemorrhage control, and initial burn care through focused lectures, interactive sessions, and hands- on skill stations.

Classifieds

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Pushpa Devi, wife of Malkiat Singh, village Talwandi, Kanungo, post office Sham Chaurasi, district Hoshiarpur, that my name is written as Pushpa Rani in my husband's passport, which is wrong, my correct name is Pushpa Devi, my name should be read and written as Pushpa Devi. Please note the following.

I,Santosh Kumari w/o Ashwani Tiwari R/o House Number 1613 St. No. 14 Janakpuri Ludhiana also known as Mamta Tiwari so these both names are mine one and same person. all concern please note it

I Gurcharan Singh S/O Niranjan Singh R/O Village Veela Bajju tehsil Batala district Gurdaspur Punjab declare that have changed my name from Gurcharan Singh to Singh as surname and Gurcharan as given name. Please note.

I Vidhya Wati Cm Mother Of Service No 15243285F Rank Nk Name Kaushal Singh Of Unit 311 Med. Regt. C/O 56 Apo Pin-926311 Permanent Address Pinto Park Morar Gwalior, Gali No. 7, Gayatri Vihar Colony, Post Office Morar, District Gwalior, State Madhya Pradesh-474006 Have Declared That In Army Record Of My Son My Name Is Wrongly Written As Vidhya Wati But My Correct Name Is Vidya Vati. All Concerned May Please Note.

I Balvinder Ram S/o Gurbax Ram Village Nandachaur Distt Hoshiarpur have changed my name from Balvinder Ram to Balwinder Ram. Concerned Note.

I,Dilbag Singh S/O Sewa Singh R/O VPO Chananke Tehsil Baba Bakala Distt. Amritsar,Punjab have changed my name from Dilbag Singh to Dilbag as my Given name and Singh as my Surname. Concerned note.

I Ritik S/o Rajiv Kumar VPO Bham Distt Hoshiarpur have changed my name from Ritik to Ritik Kumar. Concerned Note.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I, Vijay Kumar Sekhri S/O Kishori Lal R/O H.NO.58,Gali No.4,Ram Nagar Colony, Amritsar-143001, Punjab declare that name of my wife has been wrongly written as Sudesh Kumari in my PPO No. 0198090031. The actual name of my wife is Sudesh Sekhri which may be amended accordingly.

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National Startup Day celebrated at GHSC with session on startup building

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, January 17

Government Home Science College, Chandigarh celebrated National Startup Day by organizing an online awareness- session on Startup building-From passion to Profession- under the aegis of the Institution's Innovation Council (IIC). The programme was conducted for undergraduate and postgraduate students with the objective of fostering entrepreneurial thinking and innovation-driven careers.

The session provided insights into the startup ecosystem in India, government startup policies, and the essential stages of startup building including idea generation, problem identification, innovation, funding avenues, incubation support, and mentorship. Students were encouraged to explore startup opportunities aligned with their academic disciplines and societal needs.

The interactive session witnessed enthusiastic participation from over 100 students, who actively engaged through discussions and queries.

The session concluded with an encouraging address by the Principal of the College, Prof. Sudha Katyal. She emphasized that awareness and sensitization programmes on innovation and start-ups are essential for empowering students to explore alternative career opportunities beyond conventional employment. The Principal further remarked that such initiatives help in nurturing creativity, confidence, and leadership skills among students, enabling them to become future-ready, self-reliant, and responsible contributors to society and the nation.

All India Civil Services Table Tennis Tournament 2025–26 concludes



PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, January 17

The final day of the All India Civil Services Table Tennis Tournament 2025–26, organized by the Chandigarh Sports Department, concluded on Saturday at the Table Tennis Hall, Sector 23, Chandigarh, with a prize distribution ceremony and the formal closing of the championship.

The Chief Guest, Prerna Puri, Secretary Sports, Chandigarh Administration, congratulated all the winners and participants for their commendable performances and lauded the spirit of sportsmanship displayed throughout the tournament. She distributed prizes to the winners and officially declared the All India Civil Services Table Tennis Tournament 2025–26 closed.

The tournament witnessed keen competition in both individual and team events. In the Men's Singles, Soumyadeep Sarkar (RSB Indore) clinched the title, while Kushi V (RSB Mumbai) emerged champion in the Women's Singles event. In the Men's Doubles, the pair of Karthikeyan S. & Anirban Roy Chowdhury (RSB Bengaluru) secured first position, whereas Manisha M. &Paulami Das (RSB Kolkata) won the Women's Doubles title. The Mixed Doubles championship was claimed by Balusuri Varun Sanka&Paulami Das (RSB Kolkata).

PU announces schedule for May 2026 examination form submission

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, January 17

Panjab University has announced the schedule for submission of examination forms, with and without late fee, for undergraduate and postgraduate students appearing in the May 2026 examinations.

The schedule applies to all UG and PG Regular, Private, Re-appear and CDOE Reappear candidates enrolled in semester-based programmes, including professional, certificate, diploma and advance diploma courses.

PU's Central Placement Cell launches value added course to boost employability

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, January 17

Panjab University's (PU) Central Placement Cell (CPC) has commenced a 30-hour Value Added Course titled "Career Catalyst: Mastering Soft Skills for the Modern Workplace" aimed at enhancing students' employability and preparing them for contemporary corporate environments. The programme began on January 14, 2026, and witnessed enthusiastic participation from students across the university campus.

The course features an experienced panel including Ms. Kirat Brar, Global Executive Search Consultant at The Blue Tangerine Group, along with corporate trainers Dr. Anuradha Verma, Dr. Manvinder Kaur, and other distinguished industry experts.

Designed to bridge the gap between academic learning and workplace expectations, the curriculum focuses on essential professional competencies such as effective time management, stress management, interview etiquette, group discussions, workplace professionalism and communication skills.

Sanjeev Arora visits Intex Expo 2026; over 250 companies showcase new technologies



YOGESH KAPOOR
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Sahnewal ,(Ludhiana), January 17

Punjab government's Cabinet Minister for Industries, Commerce and Local Government, Sanjeev Arora, on Saturday visited Intex Expo 2026 at Ludhiana Exhibition Centre, Sahnewal, where more than 250 leading companies showcased advanced construction materials, technologies and finished products. The event was jointly organised by the Indian Institute of Architects (IIA) – Punjab Chapter and the Institute of Town Planners, India (ITPI). The Minister, along with Director, Town and Village Planning Department, Punjab, Neeru Katyal Gupta, Pankaj Bawa Chairman Punjab chapter also inaugurated the 'Saanjh 2.0' programme by lighting the ceremonial lamp. The programme was jointly organised by ITPI Punjab and IIA Punjab to strengthen collaboration between planners and architects. Addressing the gathering, Sanjeev Arora said that such exhibitions significantly benefit Punjab's industry by facilitating technology exchange and knowledge sharing. He stated that Punjab is witnessing a strong investment momentum, adding that investment in the State has doubled, and more major investments are expected in the next three months.

He highlighted that Punjab has recently been recognised by the Government of India as a Top Performer in the Startup Ecosystem, and earlier received national recognition for Ease of Doing Business, reflecting the State's robust and investor-friendly industrial environment.

The conference saw participation from senior town planners, district town planners, architects and professionals from across Punjab. Two parallel exhibitions titled "Pachan" and "Amanat" showcased over 250 high-quality professional entries, which were widely appreciated.

Encouraging innovation and excellence, the Hon'ble Minister announced cash awards of Rs 50,000, Rs 30,000 and Rs 20,000 for the best exhibition entries.

Arora emphasised the importance of architects' active cooperation in the successful implementation of the Self-Certification System for Building Plan Approvals.

DC reviews preparations for Republic Day celebrations; Minister Harbhajan Singh to be chief guest

INDERJIT SINGH
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ludhiana, January 17



Deputy Commissioner Himanshu Jain on Saturday chaired a review meeting regarding preparations for the Republic Day function to be held at the Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) grounds. He issued necessary directions to officials to ensure that the national festival is celebrated with full enthusiasm, unity, and patriotic fervour, and that all arrangements are completed well in time by the concerned departments.

The Deputy Commissioner informed that on January 26, the Republic Day ceremony at the PAU sports ground will be graced by Punjab Public Works Minister Harbhajan Singh as the chief guest, who will unfurl the national tricolour. On the occasion, tableaux depicting various flagship programmes and welfare schemes of the Punjab government will also be presented, for which the respective departments have been directed to make adequate preparations.

DC Himanshu Jain briefed the committees constituted for different tasks about their responsibilities and instructed them to ensure smooth and well-coordinated arrangements during the event. He said that a cultural programme will be organized featuring patriotic items as well as folk dances, for which suitable teams will be selected. Rehearsals at the venue will commence from January 19, while the full dress rehearsal will be held on January 23.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner also issued directions to officials of the Police Department, Mandi Board, Health Department, Education Department, Municipal Corporation, Sports Department, Horticulture Department, and other concerned departments to ensure seamless coordination and effective arrangements.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Rakesh Kumar, Assistant Commissioner (General) Payal Goel, Sub-Divisional Magistrate (Ludhiana East) Jasleen Kaur Bhullar, Sub-Divisional Magistrate (Ludhiana West) Dr. Poonamprit Kaur, along with officers from various departments.

'Urban beautification projects to redefine Dhuri's cityscape'

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Dhuri, January 17



With a vision to transform Dhuri into a model city with strengthened civic infrastructure and enhanced urban aesthetics, OSD to the Chief Minister, Sukhvir Singh, today inaugurated major beautification and development projects worth approximately Rs 4 crore. These initiatives aim to provide modern amenities to residents while giving the city a distinct and refreshed visual identity. Chairman of the Market Committee, Dhuri, Rajwant Singh Ghulli, was also present on the occasion.

Inaugurating the beautification work of Sherpur Chowk under the Railway Over Bridge (ROB), being undertaken at a cost of Rs 3.09 crore, OSD Sukhvir Singh described the project as a significant milestone in Dhuri's urban development journey. He informed that the park being developed across an area measuring around 1,500 feet in length and 42 feet in width will emerge as a vibrant recreational hub, promoting leisure, wellness and a healthy lifestyle among residents.

He stated that the project will include facilities such as an open gym, a dedicated children's play area, a well-designed walking track, clean public toilets and adequate parking for vehicles. To further enhance the city's visual appeal, large bridge pillars will be adorned with artistic and aesthetically pleasing paintings, adding a unique character to the urban landscape.

Providing details of another key project, OSD Sukhvir Singh said that a Wild Arena Park will be developed near the ROB on the Sangrur side of Dhuri at a cost of Rs 90.54 lakh. The park, with a total length of 500 feet and width of 42 feet, will feature a walking and exercise track for residents, along with organised parking facilities beneath the bridge.

SSP holds important meeting with Prosecution Cell and court staff



PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Khanna, January 17

In an effort to further strengthen court proceedings and ensure timely and effective follow-up of cases, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Khanna, Dr Darpan Ahluwalia, convened a special meeting with the Prosecution Cell and court staff.

The meeting was attended by SP (D) Pavanjit Chaudhary, DSP (D) Mohit Singla, the In-charge of the Prosecution Cell, all Assistant MHCs, and court Naibs. During the meeting, various aspects related to efficient handling of court cases and coordination between police and judicial staff were discussed in detail.

SSP Dr Darpan Ahluwalia laid special emphasis on the timely and rule-compliant execution of summons. He stated that any negligence in the delivery of summons adversely affects court proceedings and leads to unnecessary delays in cases. He directed all concerned officials to discharge their duties with complete sincerity and accountability. The SSP also instructed officials to maintain accurate and updated records of accused persons declared Proclaimed Offenders (POs). He made it clear that laxity in PO cases would not be tolerated and directed teams to ensure close coordination with field units to facilitate the prompt arrest of such accused.

It was further directed that the Prosecution Cell and court staff must provide all required information to field units without delay. This, he said, would strengthen investigations and ensure effective presentation of cases before the courts.

Namdhari Sect Head Satguru Uday Singh presented religious heritage artwork dedicated to Punjab

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ludhiana, January 17

In a moment marked by deep reverence and spiritual significance, Satguru Uday Singh, the revered Head of the Namdhari Sikh Sect was presented glorious heritage and cultural legacy art work dedicated to state of Punjab by State Information Commissioner, Punjab, Harpreet Sandhu at Bhaini Sahib, Ludhiana.



Satguru Uday Singh acknowledged the meaningful efforts of State Information Commissioner, Punjab Harpreet Sandhu for undertaking this pious initiative on religious heritage and culture, projecting the State of Punjab and remarked the visual documentation to be of immense interest towards creating cultural consciousness, strengthening the bond with heritage, and highlighting Punjab's unique identity at a wider platform.

CP Ludhiana conducts CASO drive under 'War Against Drugs' campaign

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ludhiana, January 17



As part of the Punjab government's flagship anti-drug initiative "Yudh Nashian Virudh" (War Against Drugs), the Commissionerate Police Ludhiana on Friday carried out a large-scale Cordon and Search Operation (CASO) across the city. The state-level operation aimed at curbing the sale of narcotics, dismantling drug supply chains, and arresting individuals involved in drug trafficking.

The operation was executed in a well-planned and professional manner, focusing on 16 identified drug hotspots within the Commissionerate area. Around 500 police personnel were deployed for the drive. The operation was supervised by Special DGP, GRP, Punjab, Shashi Prabha Dwivedi, who also visited three locations to review the effectiveness of the campaign.

Commissioner of Police, Ludhiana, Swapan Sharma, informed that the operation witnessed active participation from 2 DCPs, 8 ADCPs, 16 ACPs, and all SHOs of the Commissionerate. The CASO was conducted between 11:00 am and 2:00 pm with the primary objective of breaking the drug supply network and taking strict action against offenders. During the operation, police apprehended several accused and recovered a substantial quantity of narcotics. A total of 34 FIRs were registered, leading to the arrest of 35 accused. The recoveries included 392 grams of heroin, 775 intoxicant tablets, 600 grams of ganja, and six cartons of liquor. In addition, around 40 individuals were rounded up for verification purposes.

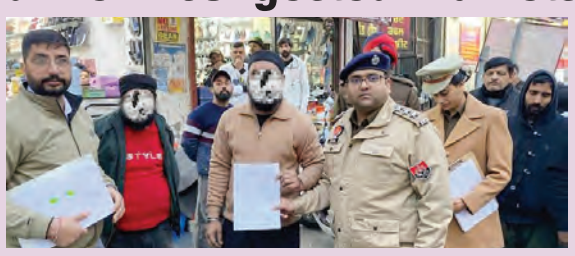
The Commissioner of Police stated that such operations are being conducted in accordance with the directions of Chief Minister Punjab, Bhagwant Singh Mann, and DGP Punjab, Gaurav Yadav, as part of a sustained and determined campaign against drugs. He reiterated that the Ludhiana Police remains committed to eradicating the drug menace from society and that similar intensive operations will continue with full vigor in the coming days.

Girl on scooter hit by truck, injured severely

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Garhshankar, January 17

A shocking road accident at the busy Chandigarh Chowk in Mahilpur on Thursday morning left a young woman critically injured after a gravel-laden truck hit her while she was riding an Activa. The incident occurred around 10 a.m. when the truck hit the Activa, causing the girl to fall and her legs to come under the truck's wheels, resulting in severe injuries to both legs.

Ludhiana Police conduct special anti-encroachment drive in congested markets



PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Ludhiana, January 17

In a bid to ease traffic congestion and ensure smooth movement in the city's busiest areas, the Ludhiana Police, in coordination with the Municipal Corporation, carried out a special joint anti-encroachment drive. During the operation, 18 challans were issued for traffic violations, while 16 warning notices were served to shopkeepers and vendors.

The drive was conducted under the directions of Commissioner of Police, Ludhiana, Swapan Sharma, and under the close supervision of ADCP Traffic, Gurpreet Kaur Purewal. On-ground enforcement was led by ACP Traffic-1, Jatin Bansal, along with traffic police personnel and civic body officials. The enforcement teams focused on major congestion-prone areas, including Fieldganj Road, the Railway Station area, and Mata Rani Chowk. These locations have been identified as frequent bottlenecks due to unauthorized encroachments by shopkeepers and illegal parking. During the drive, pathways blocked by merchandise, temporary structures, and other obstructions were cleared to restore free movement for pedestrians and vehicles.

Speaking on the occasion, ACP Jatin Bansal said that the primary objective of the drive was to ensure public safety and facilitate the smooth passage of emergency vehicles, which often face difficulties in narrow and encroached market areas. He added that such encroachments tend to reappear, prompting the police to conduct regular enforcement drives to instill discipline among commuters and traders.

Massive anti-drug rally held in Doraha; MLA leads from front

PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Payal, January 17



With the objective of creating awareness and taking a firm stand against the menace of drugs, a massive anti-drug rally was organized in Doraha on Saturday. The rally was led by Payal MLA Manwinder Singh Gyaspura and witnessed enthusiastic participation from a large number of residents, including youth and women, reflecting society's united resolve against drug abuse.

The primary aim of the rally was to sensitize young people about the harmful effects of drugs and to promote a drug-free environment in society. Participants were urged to play an active role in preventing the spread of drugs within their homes and neighbourhoods.

Addressing the gathering, MLA Manwinder Singh Gyaspura said that drug abuse poses the biggest threat to the future of Punjab's youth. He emphasized that eradicating drugs from their roots and guiding the younger generation in the right direction remains a top priority of the government.

The MLA further stated that under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, the Punjab government has launched a vigorous campaign against drugs and is taking strict action against those involved in the drug trade. Criticizing previous governments, he remarked that no effective measures were taken during their tenure, which led to the worsening of the drug problem in the state.



Chinese surveillance cameras monitoring Tibetan refugees in Nepal a bigger threat: Report

Driven by Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) investments and deepening bilateral security cooperation, the Nepali government's increasing adoption of Chinese surveillance infrastructure, has created conditions in which Tibetan refugees in the country now face unprecedented levels of monitoring and control, a report has warned.



Researcher Tenzin Dalha writes in online magazine Bitterwinter.org that the "surveillance cameras monitoring Tibetan communities in Kathmandu do not merely endanger one vulnerable population; they signal a broader transnational threat, illustrating how technology can be weaponized to erode freedom, dignity, and sovereignty beyond national borders".

Multiple reports indicate that Chinese-manufactured surveillance cameras have been installed in areas with high concentrations of Tibetan residents, particularly around monasteries, cultural centres, and refugee settlements.

It enables real-time monitoring of Tibetan gatherings, religious ceremonies, and political activities, with credible concerns that this "data flows back to Chinese security agencies either directly or through information-sharing agreements between the two governments".

Dalha argues that the implications extend far beyond the immediate surveillance of Tibetan populations.

"The same cameras and facial-recognition systems installed ostensibly for public security can be — and increasingly are — deployed to monitor political dissent, track the movements of activists and journalists, and create comprehensive databases of citizens' daily activities," he writes.

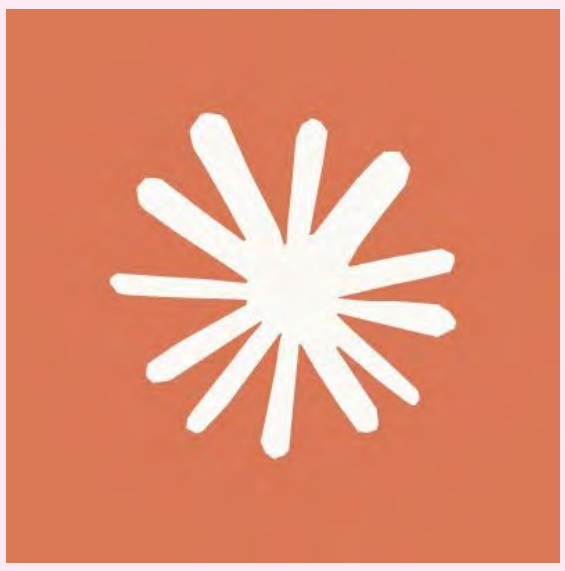
Moreover, the lack of robust data-protection frameworks, transparency requirements, and independent oversight mechanisms in Nepal means that "this surveillance infrastructure operates with minimal accountability or legal constraint".

The truth is that Chinese firms operating in the technology sector lack the independence from state control that characterises companies in democratic systems.

The global response to Chinese surveillance-technology exports has been inconsistent and inadequate.

"While the United States has imposed restrictions on companies like Huawei and encouraged allies including Australia, Great Britain, New Zealand, and Canada to adopt similar measures, many developing nations continue to embrace Chinese technology due to its affordability and the infrastructure financing provided through Belt and Road Initiative projects," the author states. IANS

India ranks second globally in use of Claude.ai, largely for software development



India accounted for the second-highest global use of US AI firm Anthropic's Claude.ai, with most activity concentrated in technical and software development work, a report has said.

The report from Anthropic said that five of the top 10 use cases in India fall within software development and that 45.2 per cent of use cases revolve around computer and mathematical work.

The report highlighted that Indian users are two times overrepresented in the survey conducted on Claude's usage in CSS, HTML, and UI styling tasks and 1.7 times overrepresented in building and debugging web applications.

Other distinct Indian use cases include developing AI systems such as chatbots and workflow automation at 1.5 times representation, and that users also employ Claude for job searching, professional development, academic STEM work, and business planning, the report said.

It noted India's Anthropic AI Usage Index at 0.22, a measure of whether Claude is over- or under-represented relative to the working-age population.

An AUI above 1 indicates that a country uses Claude more intensively than its population alone would predict, while an AUI below 1 indicates lower-than-expected usage.

Globally, Claude usage remains concentrated among certain tasks, most of which are related to coding, it said, adding that the US, India, Japan, the UK, and South Korea lead in overall Claude.ai use.

"Some professionals may see some of their skills elevated, such as radiologists and therapists, as AI takes on some of their time-intensive tasks, potentially offering more time to engage with patients and clients," the report noted on evolving AI trends.

Others may see their roles simplified or see a deskilling effect as AI can take on large portions of their roles, such as data entry workers, IT specialists, and travel agents.

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman had earlier said that India is the AI firm's second-largest market in the world and "it may become our largest."

Due to India's young, tech-savvy population, the country holds a significant advantage in adapting to emerging technologies, especially artificial intelligence (AI).

Indian youth are rapidly integrating advanced tech tools, making India a global hub for innovation and digital skills. IANS

4-day 'Wings India 2026' to display future of global aviation: Govt



The government is set to launch 'Wings India 2026', Asia's largest civil aviation event, at Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad from January 28-31, that will showcase the future of global aviation, it was announced on Saturday.

The event will be formally launched with a grand inaugural ceremony, led by Civil Aviation Minister, Rammohan Naidu, in the presence of high-level dignitaries from India and abroad.

The four-day event will witness ministerial-level foreign delegations and senior government officials from several countries, along with official delegations from more than 20 countries, reinforcing international cooperation and collaboration in the aviation sector.

"'Wings India 2026' will highlight India's rapidly expanding aviation landscape, its growing global footprint, and its vision to emerge as a key hub for manufacturing, services, innovation and sustainable aviation solutions," Civil Aviation Ministry said in a statement.

According to the statement, it will feature an expansive international exhibition, static aircraft displays, flying and aerobatic shows, a high-level international conference, CEO roundtables, B2B and B2G meetings, an aviation job fair, awards ceremony, and vibrant cultural programmes.

Moreover, prominent domestic and international stakeholders from across the aviation value chain will participate, including airlines, aircraft and engine manufacturers, MROs, airport developers, OEMs, technology providers, training institutions and service partners.

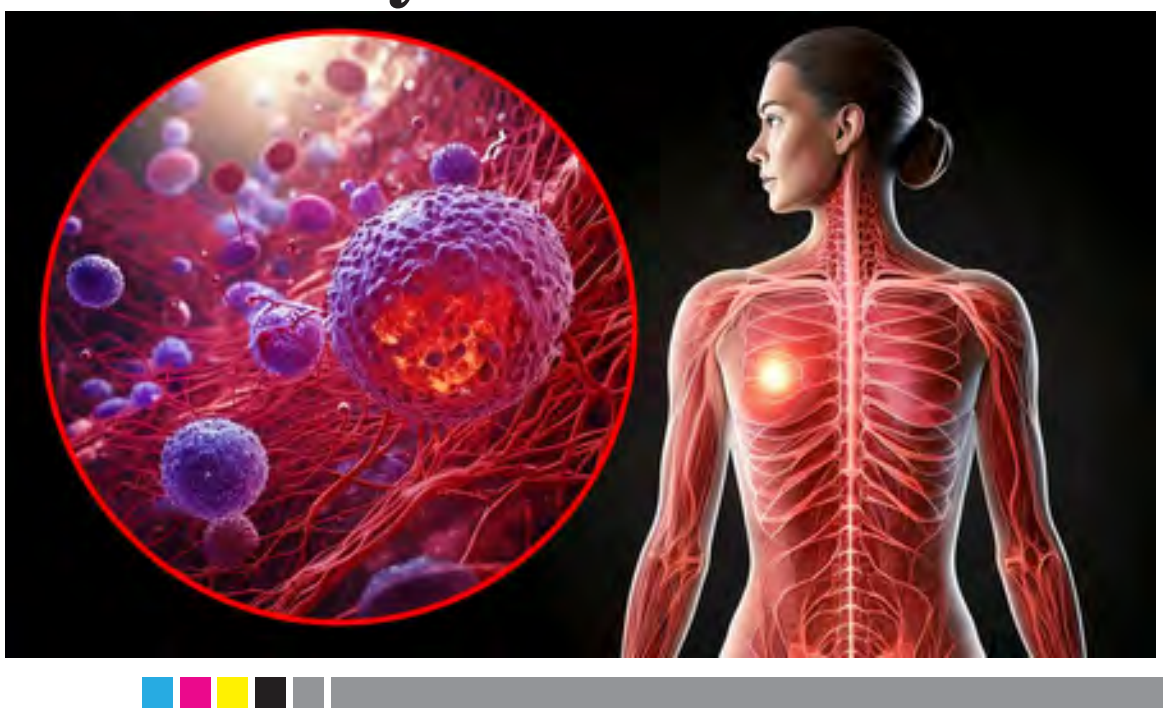
The event will serve as a convergence point for policymakers, industry leaders, innovators and investors to deliberate on emerging trends, opportunities and collaborative pathways shaping the future of civil aviation in India and worldwide. The international conference will feature 13 thematic sessions, in addition to the Global CEOs Forum and Ministerial Plenary.

It will also feature impressive static aircraft displays, flying displays and aerobatic air shows, showcasing a wide range of aircraft.

Highlight attractions include aerial performances by the Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team of the Indian Air Force. The event will provide dedicated platforms for exhibitions, chalets, and B2B/B2G meetings, enabling business networking, partnerships and investment discussions. IANS

> "This research shows that a slightly higher risk of heart-related mortality is likely to occur when heart surgery starts in the late morning. Even small improvements in timing-related outcomes could have significant benefits to patients,"

Physical activity in adolescence may ward off breast cancer risk later: Study



Adolescent girls who actively partake in recreational physical activity can have significant protection against risks of breast cancer, according to a study.

Researchers from the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health in the US showed that recreational physical activity may be associated with breast tissue composition and biomarkers of stress in adolescent girls.

In the study, girls who reported engaging in at least two hours of recreational physical activity in the prior week, compared with none, had lower percent water content in breast tissue -- an indicator of lower breast density and lower concentrations of urinary biomarkers linked to stress.

The findings, published in the journal Breast Cancer Research, shed new light on how physical activity during adolescence -- a critical period of breast development -- may influence biological pathways related to future breast cancer risk.

"The importance and urgency of this research are underscored by the rising incidence of breast cancer in young women and the alarmingly low levels of recreational physical activity observed both in this study and among adolescents globally," said Rebecca Kehm, Assistant Professor of Epidemiology at Columbia Mailman School of Public Health.

> **"Our findings suggest that recreational physical activity is associated with breast tissue composition and stress biomarker changes in adolescent girls, independent of body fat, which could have important implications for breast cancer risk," Kehm added.**

"Our findings suggest that recreational physical activity is associated with breast tissue composition and stress biomarker changes in adolescent girls, independent of body fat, which could have important implications for breast cancer risk," Kehm added.

The study aligns with previous research in adult women showing that higher levels of physical activity are associated with lower mammographic breast density, a key predictor of breast cancer risk.

During adolescence, participants self-reported past-week engagement in recreational physical activity, including both organised and unorganised activities, and completed clinic visits that included blood and urine collection as well as breast tissue assessments.

The average age of girls in the study was 16 years. More than half (51 per cent) reported no recreational physical activity in the past week. Seventy-three per cent reported no participation in organised activities, and 66 per cent reported no participation in unorganised activities.

The team noted that additional longitudinal studies are needed to determine how these adolescent biomarkers may translate into breast cancer risk later in life. IANS

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NEWSBRIEFS

4.1 magnitude tremor hits Gujarat's Kutch days before devastating 2001 quake anniversary

KUTCH: Just days ahead of the anniversary of the devastating 7.6-magnitude 2001 Gujarat earthquake, a 4.1 magnitude tremor struck Khawda in Gujarat's Kutch district early on Saturday, triggering panic among residents in several areas According to officials, the epicentre of the earthquake was located around 55 km from Khawda, and the tremor was recorded at 1:22 a.m. on Saturday. While there were no immediate reports of casualties or damage to property, the sudden shaking forced people to rush out of their homes in some localities. **IANS**

You fought for loyalty, not money: Uddhav Thackeray tells newly elected corporators

MUMBAI: After the high-stakes Brihanmumbai municipal corporation (BMC) poll results, Shiv Sena-UBT President Uddhav Thackeray, on Saturday, asserted that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Eknath Shinde-led Sena faction may have targeted his party on paper but they could never eradicate the Shiv Sena from the ground. In his speech marked by both defiance and emotional appeal to the newly elected Corporators at his residence, 'Matoshree', Thackeray took a swipe at the BJP, saying that there is a fundamental difference between his party and the ruling BJP-Shiv Sena alliance. "They (BJP-Shiv Sena alliance) believe they have finished the Shiv Sena on paper, but they can never finish the Shiv Sena on the ground. This is because they are incapable of living on the ground themselves," he remarked to a cheering crowd of Shiv Sena-UBT supporters. **IANS**

Akhilesh Yadav meets Naveen Patnaik in Odisha; calls for 'anti-BJP' front

BHUBANESWAR, JANUARY 17



Samajwadi Party (SP) President Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday met BJD chief Naveen Patnaik, even as he described the interaction as a casual meeting.

The meeting, however, has sparked speculation about the possibility of shaping a joint strategy to challenge the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) through democratic processes and public support.

Describing the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) chief as a senior and respected leader dedicated to the welfare of the poor, Akhilesh, while talking to reporters in Bhubaneswar on Saturday, said the meeting held on Friday focused on sharing political issues.

"Two former chief ministers met and shared their grievances and decided to unseat the BJP," the SP chief said without elaborating on the details about their meeting.

He outlined a vision for universal healthcare, asserting that "healthy India" should be treated as a national mission rather than a slogan.

The former Chief Minister criticised the Ayushman Bharat insurance scheme, arguing that treatment caps and card-based limits prevent poor families from accessing full care. He demanded that serious illnesses such as cancer, liver, or kidney disease be treated free of cost in government hospitals without budget restrictions.

"Our stand as a socialist party is clear. Any poor person reaching the hospital should get free treatment for all diseases. We are against the card system. No health issue can be solved through the card system," the former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister said.

He also suggested that the government use artificial intelligence and telemedicine to bridge the gap in rural health facilities where medical access remains limited.

The SP leader accused the Union government of misusing central agencies, including the Enforcement Directorate (ED), Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), and the Income Tax Department, to target opposition politicians and independent media.

He also alleged that communal tensions were being exploited for political gain, citing his experiences in Uttar Pradesh regarding violence linked to political motives.

Raising concerns over electoral "transparency", the SP chief claimed that approximately three crore voters were removed from the electoral rolls during the revision in Uttar Pradesh.

He announced intentions to move the Supreme Court to verify the accuracy of the Election Commission's electoral rolls. **PTI**

Two Maoists neutralised in Bijapur encounter

RAIPUR/BIJAPUR, JANUARY 17



Two Maoists, including a key commander, were neutralised in an intense encounter with Maoists in the dense forests of the National Park area in Bijapur district.

According to police sources, the slain militants include Dilip Bedja, identified as the chief of the Naxalites' National Park Area Committee, and another cadre.

Their bodies have been recovered from the site.

Initial reports also suggested the presence of senior Maoist leader Paparao (also referred to as Papa Rao) in the area, with some sources indicating he too may have been neutralised, though official confirmation on this remains awaited.

Officials said the gunfight erupted this morning in the north-western forested and hilly terrain of Bijapur district following specific intelligence inputs about the presence of armed Maoist cadres.

A joint team of District Reserve Guard (DRG) jawans launched a proactive search and cordon operation, leading to the clash.

Intermittent firing has continued since early hours, with the encounter still underway at multiple locations in the region. Bijapur Police officials said that the operation is active, with the entire area surrounded by security personnel.

"DRG jawans acted on credible information, and the operation continues. The number of Naxalites killed may rise as combing and body recovery efforts intensify," they said. **PTI**

NIA files chargesheet against five accused over online radicalisation by Gujarat AQIS module

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) filed a chargesheet against five accused in a Special Court in a case related to the online radicalisation of youth by the Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) terror group in Gujarat, an official said on Saturday.

Mohammad Fardeen, Kureshi Sefulla, Mohammad Faique, Zeeshan Ali and Shama Parveen have been charged under various sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, the BNS and the Arms Act, the official said in a statement.

The NIA's investigation in the case RC-02/2025/NIA/AMD revealed that the accused used social media platforms to propagate, support and disseminate the anti-India ideologies of the banned AQIS. They posted provocative posts, including videos, audio clips and photographs, through various social media accounts, the statement said. The NIA found that through these posts, the accused had called for armed revolt against the democratically elected Indian government, and for the establishment of a Caliphate based on Sharia law.

They also promoted the extremist ideologies of other proscribed terror organisations to radicalise gullible youth, the anti-terror agency said. The NIA, which had taken over the investigation from the ATS Gujarat, said the state agency had seized various incriminating materials in both paper and digital formats, along with weapons like a semi-automatic pistol with cartridges and a sword from two of the five accused in the course of the investigation. **PTI**

Patna NEET aspirant death case: Autopsy report confirms sexual assault

PATNA, JANUARY 17

In the death case of a NEET aspirant in Patna, the post-mortem examination report has made disturbing revelations, including that of sexual assault, signs of resistance and injuries on the girl's private parts.

It also did not rule out the involvement of more than one person in the case.

The findings directly contradict the initial claims made by the Patna Police, which had earlier ruled out sexual assault and suggested suicide.

According to the post-mortem report prepared by a medical board at Patna Medical College Hospital (PMCH), the student resisted her attackers for nearly one-and-a-half to two hours before her death.

The report said that all injuries found on her body were inflicted before death, indicating a prolonged and violent struggle rather than a sudden medical emergency.

Medical findings reveal deep crescent-shaped nail marks around the neck and shoulders, which doctors say are typically caused when a victim struggles intensely to free herself while an assailant attempts to overpower her.

This, doctors noted, clearly establishes that the student was conscious and fighting for her life until the very end. **PTI**

First R-Day Parade after 'Operation Sindoor' to feature 29-aircraft flypast, cutting-edge defence platforms

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17



The first Republic Day Parade to be held after Operation Sindoor last year promises a special display of military might through cutting-edge defence platforms and a grand flypast by 29 aircraft, an official said on Saturday.

The special display of military power in the Parade is expected to be in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's high praise for "Make in India" weapons and drones that proved their mettle during Operation Sindoor in May 2025.

This year's Republic Day Parade will uniquely blend 150 years of 'Vande Mataram', India's military might, including Brahmos and Akash missiles, and rich cultural diversity through 30 vibrant tableaux, according to the Ministry of Defence.

The flypast will showcase Rafale, Su-30, P8i, C-295, Mig-29, Apache, LCH, ALH, Mi-17 in different formations. The Parade will feature cutting-edge defence platforms and a spectacular cultural performance by 2,500 artists, celebrating Vande Mataram and Atmanirbhar Bharat, the Ministry of Defence said.

The Indian Army will be represented by a Mounted Column of 61 Cavalry and Battle Array Formation (for the first time) as well as seven marching contingents.

"HMRV (High Mobility Recce Veh -- BFSR and ATGM) and Dhruv Heptr, T-90, Main Battle Tank Arjun, BMP-II and NAMIS-II Nag Missile System, IOC (Integrated Operational Centre), UGVs, ATV (All Terrain Veh), LSV (Light Strike Veh) with Trailer (Robotic Mules and UGV), Shaktiban, ATAGS and Dhanush, URLS and Brahmos, Akash and MRSAM, Drone Shakti and Glacier ATV will be the main attractions in the mechanised columns," the Ministry of Defence added. **PTI**

DELHI/NCR

Delhi families with ₹1.20 lakh annual income to get ration cards: CM Rekha Gupta

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17



Delhi families with an annual household income of up to Rs 1.20 lakh will now be eligible for a ration card, up from the earlier cap of Rs 1 lakh, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced on Saturday while sharing a recent Delhi Cabinet decision.

She said the decision has been taken to make Delhi's food security system more equitable and focused on the poor. Under the new rules, families will not be eligible if they own property in A to E category colonies in Delhi, pay income tax, own a four-wheeler (excluding one commercial vehicle used for livelihood), have any family member in government service, or have an electricity connection exceeding 2 kilowatts, according to an official statement.

The Chief Minister made it clear that food security is not an act of charity, but a right of the poor. The government's resolve is that no needy person should go hungry merely because of shortcomings in the system, the statement said.

According to official data, due to the absence of clear rules for several years, more than 3,89,883 applications have remained pending in Delhi, and over 11,65,965 people are still waiting for food security benefits. **PTI**

Will also get Punjab govt's FSL investigated by CBI: Delhi Assembly Speaker

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17



Amid the controversy surrounding former Delhi Chief Minister Atishi's video clip, Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta on Saturday said that the Punjab government's Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) would also be investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Addressing a press conference, Gupta reiterated that he would ensure a CBI probe into the functioning and findings of the Punjab government's FSL in connection with the case.

Gupta said, "On January 8, 2026, in the Delhi Assembly, the Opposition demanded an enquiry into the video footage of the Assembly session, as certain questions had been raised regarding its authenticity. Acting on this demand, the recording of that session was sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory. I am presenting this clearly for your information: It is the verbatim record of that day. Both the audio and video were provided to the FSL, keeping all facts, rules, and laws in mind." Referring to the findings of the report, the Speaker added, "With regard to the authenticity and genuineness of the video, we have received the FSL report. The laboratory has clearly stated that there is no alteration or tampering in the video. It has been categorically mentioned that there is no manipulation of any kind."

Gupta further stated that the Delhi Assembly had taken a unanimous decision to conduct a forensic examination of the video. However, while the process was underway, developments took an unexpected turn.

"On January 9, information emerged that the Punjab government had already conducted its own examination, completed its report, and even registered an FIR. However, the matter has now been fully clarified. The detailed forensic report submitted to us clearly establishes that there has been no tampering with the video and absolutely no manipulation," he said. The Speaker went on to say that the report received by the Delhi Assembly had brought the seriousness of the matter to the fore.

"The report proves that, in connection with the respect and honour of the Gurus, a political party has, in some manner, misused government agencies and compromised the dignity of the Gurus. I would like to urge the Leader of the Opposition to come forward and meet me in my chamber. Otherwise, in the coming time, this matter will be viewed very seriously. They should acknowledge their mistake, withdraw their statements, and issue an apology," he said.

Gupta also raised concerns about the manner in which the forensic examination conducted elsewhere was carried out.

"The order does not specify the parameters on which the forensic laboratory conducted its examination. In other words, no detailed information has been provided about the scope or methodology of the investigation. This is a serious issue. There is no explanation regarding the type of manipulation that was examined, nor is there any detailed description of the forensic findings," he added.

Commenting on the conduct of the Opposition, the Assembly Speaker said, "When the Leader of the Opposition was absent from the Assembly, despite the matter being raised in their presence earlier, they should have responded immediately. We gave them an opportunity, but instead, they suddenly left the Assembly and have remained absent since that day." **PTI**

Bigger sin: Kapil Mishra accuses Kejriwal of misusing Punjab Police to protect Atishi

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

As Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta presented the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) report related to the controversial video clip involving Atishi, Delhi Minister Kapil Mishra on Saturday said 'Satyamev Jayate' and claimed that the alleged wrongdoing committed by Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Assembly, had now been verified. He further alleged that AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal had committed a 'bigger sin' by misusing the Punjab Police to protect Atishi, whom he accused of insulting the Gurus.

Kapil Mishra took to social media platform X to react to the development. In his post, he wrote, "Satyamev Jayate. The forensic report received by the Delhi Assembly Speaker is now in public domain. The sin committed by Atishi in the House has now been verified. Kejriwal committed a bigger sin than that, misusing the Punjab Police to protect Atishi, who had insulted the Gurus. Truth never needs proof. Truth will always prevail." **PTI**

R-Day Parade rehearsals: Delhi Traffic Police issue advisory on restrictions on Kartavyapath

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17



The Delhi Traffic Police have issued a traffic advisory announcing temporary restrictions in parts of central Delhi in view of special traffic arrangements for rehearsals for the upcoming Republic Day Parade.

The restrictions that began from Saturday will also be in force on January 19, 20 and 21 to facilitate the smooth and uninterrupted movement of parade contingents along Kartavyapath.

According to the advisory shared by the Delhi Traffic Police on social media platform X, traffic restrictions will be implemented daily from 10:15 am to 12:30 pm during the rehearsal days. Commuters have been advised to plan their journeys in advance and avoid certain stretches in and around Kartavyapath during the specified hours to prevent inconvenience and congestion.

The stretches that will be affected and should be avoided include Kartavyapath at Rafi Marg Crossing, Janpath Crossing, Mansingh Road Crossing, and the C-Hexagon area. These locations are key junctions in Lutyens' Delhi and witness heavy vehicular movement, particularly during office hours, making traffic management crucial during the rehearsal period. In its advisory, the traffic police urged commuters to strictly follow traffic signage and the directions issued by on-ground traffic personnel. **PTI**

Miss Universe India 2025 Manika Vishwakarma charms NCC cadets

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17



Miss Universe India 2025 Manika Vishwakarma, a former National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadet, visited the Corps' Republic Day Camp-2026 and inspired the participants to touch the sky with grit and patriotism, an official said on Saturday.

During her visit, the beauty queen interacted with the cadets and shared her inspiring journey from being an NCC cadet to winning the Miss Universe India title.

"She highlighted how the values and qualities imbibed through NCC training -- such as discipline, confidence, leadership and resilience -- played a pivotal role in shaping her personality and contributed significantly to her success, including earning the prestigious Miss India crown," an NCC official said in a statement.

Meanwhile, foreign cadets from 22 friendly countries have started joining the NCC's Republic Day Camp–2026, the statement said. **PTI**

Classifieds

I, Sonia w/o Tilak Raj Sachdeva R/o H no 138, Sector 56, Palsora, Chandigarh have changed my name to Sonia Sachdeva.

I, Jasveer Singh Son of Saroop Singh R/o House No. 246, Ward No. 2, Bir Sanaur Patiala have changed my name to Jasvir Singh

Saini releases ₹858 crore financial assistance under Haryana govt schemes



CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 17

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Saturday released a sum of Rs 858 crore under his government's various flagship schemes.

Of the Rs 858 crore, Rs 659 crore was released as grants and incentives to farmers under five agriculture-related schemes, he said.Guided by the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, these initiatives reflect a holistic development approach aimed at strengthening social security and improving the quality of life of citizens across the state, Saini said.

The CM said sustained efforts are being made to make agriculture a profitable and future-ready sector so that farmers' children remain connected to farming.

Acting on the principle of supporting farmers at every stage -- from seed to market -- the government today released a total of Rs 659 crore as grants and incentives under five agriculture-related schemes, he said.An amount of Rs 461.75 crore as incentive to 5,54,405 farmers who did not burn crop residue, under the crop residue management scheme while Rs 85.10 crore as subsidy for 9,885 crop residue management machines provided to farmers.An amount of Rs 75.54 crore was released as an incentive to 31,605 farmers adopting direct seeding of rice (DSR), Rs 15.75 crore to 13,500 farmers under the Mera Pani-Meri Virasat scheme for the Kharif season 2025-26, he said, adding that Rs 20 crore as price difference compensation to 4,073 farmers engaged in potato and cauliflower cultivation, under the Bhavantar Bharpai Yojana. PTI

Haryana, British Columbia explore cooperation in clean energy, trade and technology

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Friday held a meeting with a delegation from British Columbia, Canada, led by Premier David Eby, to explore opportunities for cooperation in clean energy, trade, technology and skill development, officials said on Saturday.

Welcoming the delegation, Saini said Haryana attaches great importance to State "Province partnerships, which play a key role in strengthening India-Canada relations and enhancing economic, technological and people-to-people ties.

He said British Columbia is one of Canada's most progressive provinces, with strengths in clean energy, technology, logistics and sustainable development, while Haryana is a leading industrial and investment destination in India with strong presence in automobiles, electronics, IT services, agri-processing, logistics, and renewable energy.The chief minister said the complementary strengths of Haryana and British Columbia offer significant scope for mutually beneficial cooperation.

Hundreds of crores looted from farmers through Crop Insurance Scheme: Hooda

RAJENDRA KHATRY
PUNJAB EXPRESS BUREAU
Chandigarh, January 17



Former Chief Minister and Leader of the Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda alleged today that hundreds of crores of rupees are being looted from farmers through the PM Crop Insurance Scheme. He added that companies have earned Rs. 648 crore from farmers in 7 years. Yet, compensation of Rs. 161 crore to farmers has been pending for 3 years.

Hooda said farmers have not received any compensation for the crops damaged due to floods in July-August during the last Kharif season. Claims for damage to Rabi crops are also pending. Farmers are being made to run around for years. While the crop insurance scheme stipulates that compensation should be paid within 15 to 30 days of the survey.

"This scheme has lost the trust of the farmers. That is why the insurance scheme is now limited to only 12 per cent of the crops," he said. Hooda reacted to the Punjab Kesari incident. He said that the attempts by the Punjab government to intimidate and threaten a prestigious media institution like Punjab Kesari through government agencies are extremely worrying.

"Simultaneous raids, licence cancellation, power supply disconnection, police cordon – all this is not a coincidence, but a direct and dangerous attack on the fourth pillar of democracy under a well-planned conspiracy and an attempt to suppress the voice of the independent media."

He said that organised crime has become a part of people's daily lives in Haryana.

Digital policing making police services more transparent, citizen-friendly in Haryana: ACS Home

CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 17

Adoption of technology-based initiatives have strengthened transparency, efficiency and citizen convenience in policing in Haryana, Dr Sumita Misra, Chief Secretary for Home Department, said on Saturday.

In a statement, she said the Digital Police portal developed by the Ministry of Home Affairs allows citizens to access various police services online, including lodging complaints, reporting cyber crimes, tracking complaint status, obtaining FIR copies, and accessing information on missing persons, stolen or recovered vehicles and wanted criminals.

The portal also facilitates police verification for domestic helps, drivers, tenants and employees, and issuance of Police Clearance Certificates, reducing the need for repeated visits to police stations, she explained.

Highlighting citizen-centric services, Misra said facilities such as missing person search, vehicle NOC (no objection certificate) generation, locating nearby police stations and access to proclaimed offender information have made services faster and more accessible.

She added that the facility to block lost or stolen mobile phones through the CEIR (central equipment identity register) system has helped prevent misuse of devices.

Misra said digital platforms such as Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems, Inter-operable Criminal Justice System, cyber training modules and crime analytics tools are strengthening investigations, data-driven policing and coordination among agencies. PTI

Haryana Congress announces expansion of its district executive committees

CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 17

The Haryana Congress on Saturday announced the expansion of district executive committees in several districts as part of its drive to strengthen the organisation and empower it at the grassroots level.

The decision was taken under the guidance of the party's Haryana in-charge B K Hariprasad and the leadership of state Congress president Rao Narendra Singh, the party said in a statement here.Sharing the details during the ongoing Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan in Kurukshetra, state Congress president Rao Narendra Singh said that appointments of district presidents had already been completed as per the directions of the Congress high command.He said a training camp for district presidents and office-bearers of Haryana and Uttarakhand is being organised in Kurukshetra from January 13-22 to ensure effective organisational functioning. Out of 33 District Congress Committees (DCCs) in Haryana, appointments for the expansion of executive committees have been completed in 20 districts, he said, adding that the remaining 13 DCCs will be finalised and announced shortly. Singh said the organisational expansion is being carried out under the Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan to strengthen democracy, protect the Constitution and ensure its effective implementation.He said the party is committed to the progress of the country and the state and aims to counter forces that promote divisive and communal sentiments. PTI

Drive against objectionable content on social media: Over 1, 000 links, profiles reported in state

CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 17

A total of 1,018 links and profiles have been reported so far under an ongoing campaign against objectionable content on social media, Haryana Police said on Saturday, adding that out of these, 583 have already been removed or blocked.

The state police had launched a digital campaign against increasing illegal and objectionable activities on social media and this initiative is being carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

"Objectionable, anti-national, anti-religion and misleading content inciting tension and confusion was being frequently posted on social media, making a well-coordinated action necessary. With this objective, the Cyber Haryana team started continuous monitoring of social media platforms about a month ago, and the drive is still ongoing," the police said in a statement.

"Under this campaign, a total of 1,018 objectionable links and profiles have been reported so far, out of which 583 have already been removed or blocked by social media companies. The remaining 435 are in various stages of review and will be taken down soon," it said.

During the campaign, the cyber team is identifying posts, videos, links and profiles that contain misinformation, provocative language, or material disturbing public peace."As soon as such content is detected, a notice is issued to the concerned social media platform under Section 79(3)(b) of the IT Act, directing immediate removal. No leniency is being shown at any stage of this process," it said. Haryana Director General of Police Ajay Singhal stated that in view of the rising cases of digital fraud, the police initiated another major campaign.

To control the growing operations of suspicious trading and investment apps and channels across the country, Cyber Haryana launched a special and well-organised drive on 12 January.

Under this initiative, 28 such apps and channels have been identified so far. Out of these, 14 have been removed from digital platforms, while the remaining 14 are undergoing final review and takedown procedures by social media intermediaries.

Singhal emphasised that the police is extremely strict against those spreading false or inflammatory information on social media. He also said that if anyone comes across a suspicious post, link, or app, they must report it immediately to the police or the cyber helpline, so that timely action can be taken. PTI

HIMACHAL/J&K

J&K BJP holds meeting in Jammu ahead of national president election

JAMMU, JANUARY 17

Jammu and Kashmir unit of BJP on Saturday held a meeting here to deliberate on the upcoming voting process for the election of party's national president, a party spokesperson said.

The meeting, attended by national council members and state council members, took place at Trikuta Nagar party headquarters here and was part of the ongoing organisational elections being conducted across the country under the banner of "Sangathan Parv", the spokesperson said.

The BJP on Friday released the schedule for the election of the party's national president, saying nominations for the post will be filed on January 19, and the name of the new party chief will be announced the next day.

Addressing the gathering, JK BJP president Sat Sharma said the election of the national president is not a symbolic exercise but a well-defined, transparent, and participatory process in which party workers from the grassroots to the national level play an active role.

"The entire organisational election process has been carried out systematically, beginning from the primary membership drive, reflecting the party's commitment to discipline, inclusiveness, and democratic values," he said. PTI

Sports should be kept away from politics: J&K LG

JAMMU, JANUARY 17



Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday stressed that sports must be insulated from politics to ensure fair opportunities for talented youth.

Inaugurating the two-day 'National Level Sports Conference - SRIJAN' here, he asserted that it will identify the actionable strategies to further strengthen sports systems in the Union Territory. The conference, organised by Department of Youth Services and Sports, was attended by senior government officials, representatives of Sports Authority of India, eminent sports personalities, experts and a large number of youth.

"Sporting talent can only be nurtured in a peaceful environment. In order to make India a true sporting powerhouse, we must keep sports and politics strictly separate," he said, addressing the gathering."We must move forward and create a system where there is no room for doubt on the selection process," he said.Recently, the J&K government initiated an inquiry into the "biased" selection of the UT football squad for Santosh Trophy, as only one player from Jammu was selected.The selection process triggered a huge row with many political parties alleging discrimination against the Jammu players. At the event, the L-G also reiterated the administration's resolve to extend requisite support to the sportspersons and develop state-of-the-art sports infrastructure at the grassroots level."The conference will identify the actionable strategies to further strengthen sports systems in J&K, prepare a roadmap for effective implementation of the National Sports Policy 2025 and J&K Sports Policy 2022 and highlight measures for shaping a resilient and future-ready generation," Sinha said. PTI

Seven injured in bus accident in Mandi district

SHIMLA, JANUARY 17

At least seven people were injured after a Himachal Pradesh road transport bus enroute to Sarkaghat veered away from the road on Saturday morning, police said.

According to them, the accident occurred near Tapoun village when the driver lost control of the vehicle.A police team from Sarkaghat reached the spot, rescued the injured and admitted them to the local civil hospital.

The injured have been identified as bus driver Dinesh Kumar, Khadku Ram, Kaushalya Devi, Brahmi Devi, Kunta Devi, Kaushalya and Neema Devi, all residents of Mandi district.Superintendent of Police, Mandi, Sakshi Verma, said a case has been registered in the matter, and further investigation is underway. PTI

War memorial set up in Rajouri to honour fallen heroes of Op Sindoor

RAJOURI/JAMMU, JANUARY 17

In a tribute to fallen heroes, including a senior government official, who lost their lives during Operation Sindoor in May last year, the army in coordination with Jammu and Kashmir government has established a war memorial in the border district of Jammu, officials said on Saturday.

The memorial has been erected at Gujjar Mandi Chowk, the same location that witnessed intense Pakistani shelling on civilian areas in retaliation to Operation Sindoor, which was launched by the Indian Armed Forces across the border on May 7 to hit terror infrastructure in Pakistan to avenge killing of 26 people by terrorists in Pahalgam attack.

Among those who lost their lives in Pakistani shelling was Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Rajouri, Raj Kumar Thappa. The officer was killed when an artillery shell struck his official residence in the area on May 10.

The memorial features murals of Thappa, Subedar Major Pawan Kumar of the Krishna Ghati Brigade, and three other Army personnel who lost their lives in the line of duty, the officials said.

They said a separate statue depicting an Army soldier alongside a local nomad with his child and a goat has also been installed at the site, symbolising the strong bond between the armed forces and the civilian population in the border region. The officials said the memorial serves not only as a site of remembrance but also as a reminder of the shared sacrifices of soldiers and civilians during times of conflict. PTI

Higher reaches record light snowfall, Valley plains again miss rain, snow

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 17



While higher reaches of Jammu and Kashmir received light snowfall, the plains of the Valley missed the season's first snowfall on Saturday.

Weather officials have forecast moderate to heavy snowfall in the Valley between January 22 and 24.

According to Meteorological Department officials, light to moderate snowfall occurred in the higher reaches of Jammu and Kashmir during the last 12 hours, while the plains did not record any, much to the disappointment of residents waiting for this season's first snowfall.

Due to a Western Disturbance becoming active over Jammu and Kashmir from the afternoon of January 22 to January 24, widespread rain/snow is expected.

"Valley, including the plains, will receive moderate to heavy snowfall during this period," the Meteorological Department officials said. IANS

Higher reaches of Himachal Pradesh see light snowfall

SHIMLA, JANUARY 17

The higher reaches of Himachal Pradesh witnessed light snowfall on Saturday.

Light snowfall was witnessed in Hansa, Keylong, Kukumseri and Gondhla areas in the tribal district of Lahaul and Spiti, even as the weather remained dry in most parts of the state, according to the meteorological office in Shimla.The Met office has predicted light snow and rain in the higher reaches till January 21.

"Two western disturbances in quick succession are likely to affect northwest India from January 19 and 21 night, leading to heavy snowfall and rain in Himachal Pradesh from January 22 and January 23," according to the Met forecast.It has also issued a yellow alert, predicting heavy snowfall in isolated places in the higher hills, on January 23. PTI

Woman booked for violating VPN ban in Udhampur

JAMMU, JANUARY 17

A woman has been booked for allegedly not complying with orders prohibiting the use of Virtual Private Network (VPN) services on mobile phones for security reasons in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district, police said on Saturday.Meena Sharma, wife of Mohan Lal, has been booked under the relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at the Majalta police station for allegedly violating the order of the district magistrate, issued on January 3, prohibiting the use of VPN services within the district, a police spokesperson said.

He said Sharma is a resident of Palnoo village in Majalta and her mobile phone number was found to be using VPN services.Further investigation in the matter is on, the police spokesperson said, urging the public to refrain from using VPN and other prohibited apps on mobile phones. PTI

NEWSBRIEFS

Two separate road accidents leave 23 dead across Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: At least 23 people were killed and dozens more injured in two separate road accidents reported from Balochistan and Punjab on Saturday, highlighting ongoing concerns over road safety, speeding, and poor visibility conditions across Pakistan. In the first incident, nine people lost their lives, and 36 others sustained injuries when a passenger coach overturned on the Makran Coastal Highway near Gwadar in Balochistan, as per local media reports. According to police, the accident occurred near the Hudd Goth area of Ormara when a Karachi-bound coach, travelling from Jiwani, lost control and overturned. The vehicle belonged to a private transport company, Al Usman. Coastal Highway police said preliminary investigations indicated overspeeding as the main cause of the crash. Superintendent of Police Aslam Bangulzai stated that the driver failed to control the vehicle due to excessive speed, resulting in the deadly accident. Rescue teams rushed to the scene soon after the incident and shifted the injured and deceased to Ormara Tehsil Hospital. Hospital authorities confirmed that several injured passengers were in critical condition, raising fears that the death toll could rise. **IANS**

Aircraft loses contact in Indonesia's South Sulawesi, search underway

JAKARTA: An ATR 400 aircraft flying from Yogyakarta to Makassar lost contact on Saturday around Maros Regency in South Sulawesi, Indonesian local media reported. The aircraft, operated by Indonesia Air Transport, was scheduled to land at Sultan Hasanuddin International Airport in Makassar. It reportedly lost contact at around 1:17 p.m. local time while flying over the Maros area. According to local media, Indonesia's Search and Rescue Agency (Basarnas) in Makassar said search teams had been dispatched to the suspected location after receiving coordinate data from Indonesia's air navigation service provider, AirNav Indonesia. **IANS**

Donald Trump says US reshaped global dynamics

WASHINGTON, JANUARY 17



President Donald Trump said that his administration had reshaped global dynamics through assertive diplomacy and military action, laying out an expansive account of US foreign policy and economic gains during remarks at a Florida event.

Trump said US actions abroad had produced swift and decisive outcomes. "We have peace in the Middle East. Nobody thought that was going to be possible," he said, pointing to what he described as multiple agreements reached within a year.

He also claimed "US intervention" helped avert conflict between two nuclear nations -- India and Pakistan, and said the effort saved "many millions of people."

Trump said Iran's nuclear ambitions had been dismantled, declaring that the United States had "obliterated Iran's nuclear enrichment capacity with Operation Midnight Hammer." He also cited operations against militant leaders, including the founder of ISIS and Iranian General Qassem Soleimani, arguing that decisive military action had strengthened US security and deterrence.

Trump said the United States had apprehended Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, describing him as an "outlaw" and asserting that "no other nation in the world could have done" what the United States achieved. He said the move was part of a broader effort to reset relations and relieve regional pressures.

The president said the United States had attracted unprecedented levels of foreign investment. "We have $18 trillion being invested," he said, adding that the total could rise further.

He credited tax cuts, regulatory rollbacks and tariffs for driving growth and said manufacturing activity was expanding at historic levels. "We're building more factories in the United States now than at any time in our history," he said, citing both automotive and advanced technology sectors.

Trump said tariffs played a central role in pushing companies to shift production to the United States. "They don't want to pay the tariffs," he said, calling it a "pretty simple formula." He also pointed to stock market performance and retirement savings, saying 401(k) accounts were "doing better than they've ever done before."

On immigration, Trump said his administration had fully secured the southern border, describing illegal crossings as an "invasion" that had been halted. He said enforcement efforts focused on violent criminals and gangs, while legal immigration continued through established processes. **IANS**

Yoon's lawyers blast court for being politically charged in sentencing ex-president in Sourh Korea

SEOUL, JANUARY 17



Legal representatives for former South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on Saturday accused a Seoul court of being politically motivated in its sentencing of their client the previous day.

On Friday, the Seoul Central District Court handed down a five-year prison term on Yoon on charges that included the obstruction of investigators' attempt to detain him last year. It was the first ruling on charges stemming from Yoon's short-lived imposition of martial law in December 2024.

In particular, Yoon was charged with ordering the Presidential Security Service to block investigators from executing a warrant to detain him at the presidential residence in January 2025, reports Yonhap news agency.Yoon's legal team released a statement Saturday saying the court's ruling was "purely based on political reasoning," while also lamenting the "disappearance of legal principles and collapse of constitutionalism."

"A judge must recognise the impact his ruling can have on society, but at the same time, that recognition alone must not be the reason to alter standards for his decision," the lawyers said. "A trial must be concluded based on evidence and law, not on political and social climate. The judiciary can maintain its independence and credibility, and its rulings can be accepted only when this principle is honoured. "Yoon's lawyers repeated many of the same claims that they had made during the trial, arguing, for instance, that investigators had unlawfully entered a place that had not been specified in the detention warrant for Yoon.

The legal team said the Seoul Central District Court did not meet the criteria for impartiality by rejecting these claims. The lawyers had said on Friday they would immediately appeal the court's decision, which they described as "unacceptable." **IANS**

Syrian government forces enter northern towns after Kurdish fighters withdraw

DEIR HAFER (SYRIA), JANUARY 17



Syrian government forces entered two northern towns Saturday morning after the command of Kurdish-led fighters said it would evacuate the area in an apparent move to avoid conflict.

Two soldiers were killed and others wounded in the latest clash, state media reported. The town of Deir Hafer changed hands after deadly fighting erupted earlier this month between government troops and the US-backed and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces in the city of Aleppo, Syria's largest. It ended with the evacuation of Kurdish fighters from three neighbourhoods taken over by government forces.

An Associated Press reporter on Saturday saw government tanks, armoured personnel carriers and other vehicles, including pickup trucks with heavy machine guns mounted on top, entering Deir Hafer after bulldozers removed barriers. There was no SDF presence on the edge of the town.

The Syrian military said its forces were in full control of Deir Hafer, captured the Jarrah air base to the east, and were in the process of clearing mines and explosives. It added that troops would move toward the nearby town of Maskana, where an AP reporter saw a military convoy rolling in hours later.

The SDF said in a statement that, according to an agreement, Syrian forces were supposed to enter Deir Hafer and Maskana after the Kurdish-led force ended their withdrawal. "Damascus violated the terms of the agreement and entered the towns before our fighters had fully withdrawn, creating a highly dangerous situation with potentially serious repercussions," the SDF said.

State news agency SANA reported that SDF fighters "violated the agreement" by targeting an army patrol near Maskana, leaving two soldiers dead and others wounded. SANA added that government forces kept moving east, reaching two villages in the northern province of Raqqa.

Over the past two days, more than 11,000 people fled Deir Hafer and Maskana using side roads to reach government-controlled areas, after the government announced an offensive to take the towns.

On Friday night, after government forces started pounding SDF positions in Deir Hafer, the Kurdish-led fighters' top commander, Mazloum Abdi, posted on X that his group would withdraw from contested areas in northern Syria. Abdi said SDF fighters would relocate east of the Euphrates River starting 7 a.m. (0400 gmt) Saturday.

The easing of tension came after US military officials visited Deir Hafer on Friday and held talks with SDF officials in the area. **IANS**

Rights body urges Pakistan to end judicial harassment of human rights lawyers

ISLAMABAD, JANUARY 17

A leading human rights organisation called on Pakistani authorities to end judicial harassment of human rights lawyers Imaan Mazari-Hazir and Hadi Ali Chatta in what it described as a "bogus case" relating to "anti-state" tweets.

The remarks followed an order by the Islamabad district and sessions court on Friday instructing Pakistani law enforcement authorities to arrest lawyer and activist Imaan and her husband, Hadi, "within 24 hours", warning that non-compliance would amount to contempt of court. The court also cancelled their interim bail a day earlier after the accused failed to appear before the court despite repeated summons, local media reported.Responding to the cancellation of bail of lawyers and human rights defenders, Imaan and Hadi and an order to immediately arrest them, Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director for South Asia, Babu Ram Pant, said, "This baseless trial of Imaan Mazari-Hazir and Hadi Ali Chattha is a blatant abuse of the justice system. Pakistani authorities must end the judicial harassment and coercive tactics used to silence dissent and intimidate those who defend human rights."

"The 'cyber terrorism' and other trumped-up charges under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act against Imaan and Hadi are politically motivated and amount to criminalising the right to freedom of expression. **IANS**

Ukrainian delegation arrives in US for peace talks as Russia hammers energy sites

KYIV, JANUARY 17



A Ukrainian delegation arrived in the United States for talks Saturday on a US-led diplomatic push to end the nearly 4-year-old war as Russian attacks again took aim at Ukraine's power grid, cutting electricity and heating in freezing temperatures.

Kyrylo Budanov, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's chief of staff, said he arrived in the US to discuss "the details of the peace agreement."

Writing on the Telegram messaging app, Budanov said he, together with Ukrainian negotiators Rustem Umerov and Davyd Arakhamia, would meet with US envoy Steve Witkoff, President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and US Army Secretary Dan Driscoll. Zelenskyy said Friday that the delegation would try to finalise with US officials documents for a proposed peace settlement that relate to postwar security guarantees and economic recovery. If American officials approve the proposals, the US and Ukraine could sign the documents next week at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Zelenskyy said at a Kyiv news conference with Czech President Petr Pavel.

Trump plans to be in Davos, according to organisers.

Russia would still need to be consulted on the proposals.Russia struck energy infrastructure in Ukraine's Kyiv and Odesa regions overnight into Saturday, the Ministry of Energy said. **IANS**

Pakistani grooming gangs in UK linked to longstanding child abuse

LONDON, JANUARY 17

Pakistani grooming gangs in the United Kingdom are widely known for their organised operations and repeated targetting of minority communities, particularly Sikh and Hindu girls, with activists labelling the serial abuse as "the biggest peacetime crime — and cover-up — in British history", a report has highlighted.

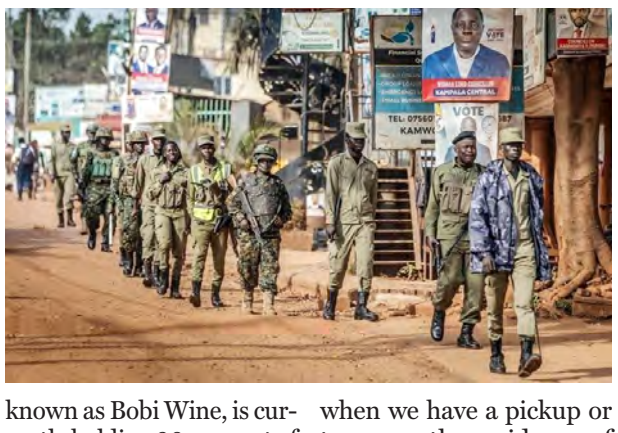
It detailed that these grooming gangs have been associated with organised Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) for decades.

According to a report in New Delhi-based 'The Sunday Guardian' (TSG), these gangs often target vulnerable girls aged 11–16, luring them with promises of love, gifts, and friendship, before isolating the victims and subjecting them to blackmail, threats, and trafficking for profit.

"A disturbing incident unfolded in Hounslow, West London, where a 15-year-old Sikh girl was abducted and gang-raped by men of Pakistani origin. Reports confirm that the girl was held captive in a flat owned by a 34-year-old man and subjected to repeated abuse. **IANS**

Ugandan police deny arrest of opposition leader as country awaits final election results

KAMPALA, JANUARY 17



Police in Uganda on Saturday denied reports that the main opposition candidate in this week's tense election had been arrested, terming the reports as "deceitful and inciteful." They urged citizens to remain peaceful as the country awaits the results in the presidential vote.

Uganda held a general election on Thursday amid an internet shutdown that has been in place for four days, with the military heavily deployed across the country and pockets of violence erupting as people protested parliamentary election results in various parts of the country.President Yoweri Museveni, 81, is seeking a seventh term in office and is leading in the provisional results with more than 70 per cent support. His main challenger, musician-turned-politician Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, better known as Bobi Wine, is currently holding 20 per cent of the vote. Wine dismissed the announced results as "fake," and asked his supporters to ignore them.

Police on Saturday said that Wine was "not under arrest," as claimed by his National Unity Platform party. Police spokesperson Kituuma Rusoke said Wine was free to leave his house, but there was "controlled access" for others trying to go into the property, to prevent people from using the premises to incite violence.

"It should not surprise you when we have a pickup or two near the residence of Kyagulanyi," Rusoke said.

Ugandan electoral officials are set to announce the final presidential results on Saturday, as constitutionally required. The chairperson of the national electoral commission said Friday that everything was on course to announce the final result by the end of the day Saturday.

The voting was marred by delays due to the late delivery of materials to polling stations after opening time and the failure of some biometric machines. **IANS**

Woman killed by falling tree as powerful storms hit Sydney

SYDNEY, JANUARY 17

A woman has died after her car was struck by a falling tree south of Sydney as strong winds and intense rainfall hit Australia's east coast on Saturday.

Emergency services were called to reports that a tree branch had fallen onto a vehicle around 90 km south of central Sydney shortly before 4 p.m. local time on Saturday.

The female driver of the vehicle died at the scene, while a male passenger in the front seat suffered minor injuries. Two rear-seat passengers were not injured, reports Xinhua news agency.

The east coast state of New South Wales was hit by severe thunderstorms on Saturday, causing flash flooding in northern Sydney and flight delays at Sydney Airport.

The State Emergency Service said it had received hundreds of calls for assistance across the state and that authorities had rescued four people from floodwaters.

The emergency service's Superintendent Matt Kirby told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation that the severe weather would not ease until Sunday, with heavy rain expected to persist around Sydney and neighbouring regions to the north and south.

"We remind people not to drive through floodwaters and also be wary of where you park your vehicles, as trees can fall at any time," he said. **IANS**

Facing uncertainties in ties with US, Canada enters into strategic partnership with China

OTTAWA, JANUARY 17



Facing uncertainties in relations with the US, Canada is entering into a strategic partnership with China right in President Donald Trump's front yard. Announcing the partnership in Beijing on Friday, Prime Minister Mark Carney and President Xi Jinping said they were "renewing the relationship between Canada and China in the face of a changing global economy and international security challenges".The partnership, they said in a joint statement, would include "public safety and security", an area where they have had major issues.

"I believe the progress that we have made and the partnership sets us up well for the new world order", Carney said.Without naming Trump, Xi made an implied reference to his policies, saying the Canada-China partnership will "help improve the multilateral system, a system that in recent years has come under great strain". **IANS**

lifestyle

Kriti
sheds 'happy tears' after listening to sister Nupur's wedding song 'Suna Suna'



Actress Kriti Sanon was unable to hold back her emotions after listening to her kid sister Nupur Sanon's wedding song "Suna Suna". Posting the track on social media, Kriti wrote the caption, "Happy Tears (Holding back tears emojis) Nups.. this song in your voice with those beautiful lyrics you've added is pure LOVE.. (love-eyed and red heart emoji) This video has my heart! (red heart emoji) (sic)."

Crooned by Nupur herself, the song also enjoys some additional lyrics provided by her.

On Friday, sharing the track on her official Instagram handle, Nupur penned, "Wrote & Sang this song and lived with it for the last few months...the most special one to me...a surprise for the love of my life. @stebinben." Previously, Kriti revealed that Nupur and Stebin dated for five years before tying the knot.

Celebrating her sister Nupur's wedding to singer Stebin Bin, Kriti penned an emotional note on her IG that read, "Words can never be enough to explain what I'm feeling.. still hasn't sunk in..My little one is married! From holding you in my arms for the first time when I was 5, to now holding your chaadar and seeing you all dressed up as the prettiest bride I've ever seen." "My heart is so full seeing you so happy, in love and beginning the next and the most beautiful chapter of your life with the Best life partner we could ever ask for you," she added.

Kriti claimed that by welcoming Stebin into the family, she has not just gained a brother-in-law but also a friend for life.

"@stebinben you've been a part of our family for more than 5yrs now and our bond has strengthened with each passing year.. I love you Stebu and I know I've gained a brother and a friend for life who's always gonna be there for me..," she went on to write. Nupur and Stebin tied the knot on January 10 in Udaipur as per both Hindu and Christian rituals. **IANS**



Rasha
marks one year of 'Azaad': Through magic, madness

Rasha Thadani is feeling nostalgic as her film 'Azaad' completed one year since its release. Marking the milestone, the actress shared a heartfelt note reflecting on the memories, friendships, and experiences she gained during the film's journey. Rasha took to Instagram to share a series of behind-the-scenes pictures from the sets of Azaad, where she is seen dressed as her character, Janaki.

"1 year of Azaad heart so full, memories can never forget, friends made for life @pragyakapoor_@mohitmalik1113. Through the magic and the madness, partner in crime @aamandevgan (sic)," she wrote as the caption.

The actress added: "Forever grateful for everything and more @gattukapoor , you are the coolest person we all know. Thankyou all for the support and kindness. Love, Janaki (sic)."

Directed by Abhishek Kapoor, the period drama stars Ajay Devgn and Diana Penty alongside debutants Aaman Devgan and Rasha.The film is set in 1920s India, where a young stable boy forms a bond with a spirited horse. Amid rebellion and tyranny, his quest to ride the majestic animal becomes a journey of courage, awakening him to the country's fight for freedom.

She will next be seen in the Bollywood romantic drama Laikey Laikaa. The film also stars Abhay Verma of Munjya fame. The poster of the film was unveiled on the occasion of Makar Sankranti with the tagline "Love. Pain. Trust."

Talking about Abhay, he will also be seen in Siddharth Anand's highly anticipated 'King' starring Shah Rukh Khan, Suhana Khan, Deepika Padukone, Abhishek Bachchan, Jaideep Ahlawat and Anil Kapoor.

The 26-year-old actor first gained recognition for his supporting role on the second season of the thriller series The Family Man and had his first lead role in the independent film Safed. He had his breakthrough with the comedy horror film Munjya in 2024. **IANS**

Katrina
teases sister Isabelle as she revisits her 2016 journey in viral trend



Actress Isabelle Kaif joined the ongoing trend of revisiting old social media moments as she looked back at her 2016 phase, drawing a cheeky response from her Bollywood superstar sister Katrina Kaif, who playfully corrected her, pointing out that it was skiing and not snowboarding. Isabelle took to Instagram, where she shared a string of images of herself from ten years back and captioned: "Am I actually catching an IG Trend 2016 was the year of blue hair, the duck face, over reacting in Disneyland, snowboarding, fencing, but mainly way too much duck face (sic)."

However, it was Katrina Kaif's comment that caught eyes of many social media users. The actress humorously corrected her sister, writing in the comment section, "Umm skiing." Katrina's brother-in-law Sunny Kaushal too dropped a comment, saying: "You look the sameeeee". To which, Isabelle replied: "@sunsunnykhez I'll take the blantant lies thank you very much." Isabelle is the younger sister of Katrina, who made her acting debut in the 2021 film Time to Dance alongside Sooraj Pancholi. The film follows an injured ballroom dancer who gets her hopes up when she meets the perfect dance partner. Overcoming her painful past, she strives to succeed without losing her heart to her new teammate.

Talking about Katrina, she and her actor-husband Vicky Kaushal on January 7 announced that they have named their first bundle of joy Vihaan Kaushal. Revealing the name in a joint post, they shared an adorable picture of little Vihaan's hand on Katrina and Vicky's hands.

Announcing the name on social media, they wrote, "Our Ray of Light... Vihaan Kaushal...Prayers are answered...Life is beautiful...Our world is changed in a instant...Gratitude beyond words (sic)." Katrina was last seen on screen in Merry Christmas. It also stars Vijay Sethupathi, Ashwini Kalsekar, Luke Kenny, and Pari Maheshwari Sharma. The basic plot of the film was based on Frederic Dard's French novel Le Montecharge. **IANS**

Nia Sharma holds Shakira responsible for this unexpected reason

Actress Nia Sharma playfully held international pop star Shakira responsible for her unique style choices. Nia Sharma took to her Instagram stories, sharing a video of the "Queen of Latin Music" Shakira performing her 2001 hit "Whenever, Wherever".

"Blame this song for how I dress," Nia, who is known for her Gothic glam, captioned the post.

She also shared a screenshot of herself on MTV India's Splitsvilla, calling it her "childhood dream" to be part of the channel.

Sharing her excitement about being on MTV India's Splitsvilla, Nia wrote, "Is it a crime to trip on yourself coz no one else will. Love you @mtvindia @mtvsplitssvilla — being on MTV was lowkey my childhood dream (sic)."

Talking about the actress, Nia was last seen on screen in "Laughter Chefs Fun Unlimited", which also stars Krushna Abhishek, Rahul Vaidya, Karan Kundrra, Ankita Lokhande, Vicky Jain, Reem Shaikh, Sudesh Lehri, Elvish Yadav, Rubina Dilaik, Aly Goni, Kashmera Shah. It is hosted by Bharti Singh, and judged by chef Harpal Singh Sokhi.

She was also seen in "Suhagan Chudail", where she played the role of a witch named Nishigandha. The fantasy-thriller-romance show featured Zayn Ibad Khan, and Debchandrima Singha Roy in the lead roles.

She is also known for her roles in 'Behenein', 'Ek Hazaaron Mein Meri Behna Hai'.'Meri Durga', 'Kaali - Ek Agnipariksha'. In 2020, she participated in 'Khatron Ke Khiladi: Made in India' and emerged as the winner. Nia has also worked in web series like 'Twisted', and 'Jamai 2.0'.

Talking about the show, MTV Splitsvilla is a dating reality show that airs on MTV India. Since January 2026, the sixteenth season has been hosted by Sunny Leone and Karan Kundrra.

The show revolves around young men and women trying to secure a place in Splitsvilla, a villa where they are detached from the real world. Participants compete in tasks to remain in the competition and mingle with their fellow contestants to find love. In the end, a pair are crowned the winners of Splitsvilla. **IANS**

Ram Charan says he's fired up and working in silence!



Disclosing that he was fired up and that he was working in silence, actor Ram Charan, who is now working on director Buchi Babu Sana's eagerly awaited rural action drama 'Peddi', has said that was ready for the next challenge.

Posting pictures of himself at the gymnasium on his Instagram page, Ram Charan on Saturday wrote, "Fired up. Working in silence!!! Ready for the next challenge @peddimovie."The rural action drama has triggered huge excitement among fans and is among the most eagerly awaited films this year.

It may be recalled that the unit of 'Peddi' had, in the last week of December last year, wrapped up its Delhi schedule.

Ace cinematographer Rathnavelu, who is the cameraman for the film, had taken to his Instagram page to post pictures from the sets of Delhi. He had also dropped an update saying that the unit had wrapped up the Delhi schedule in style!Rathnavelu wrote, "Delhi schedule wrapped in style! Immersive, poetic visuals. Ram Charan bro at his incredible best!"

It may be recalled that sources close to the unit had told at the beginning of that schedule that several pivotal sequences were to be canned in Delhi. The entire talkie portion of the movie is expected to be wrapped up by the end of January this year. Sources have said that all aspects of production were progressing smoothly, with post-production work moving ahead at a good pace.

It may be recalled that the makers had recently brought Sham Kaushal on board specifically for a fight sequence that sources claim will surely be considered as one of the film's highlights. The crucial and high-intensity fight sequence, featuring Ram Charan alongside fighters, was shot on a massive set erected by production designer Avinash Kolla at the Aluminium Factory in Hyderabad.

The film has already been garnering a lot of attention for its first-look posters and glimpse. Produced by Venkata Satish Kilaru under Vriddhi Cinemas, and prestigiously presented by Mythri Movie Makers and Sukumar Writings, 'Peddi' is being mounted on a massive scale with a high budget. **IANS**

NEWSBRIEFS

Rukam Capital unveils its latest research report

CHANDIGARH: India's consumption-led growth is entering a decisive new phase, one that is no longer centred on its largest metropolitan markets. Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, emerging urban clusters, and small towns are now driving incremental demand, entrepreneurship, and long-term economic momentum. Reflecting this structural shift, Rukam Capital, a venture capital firm backing early-stage consumer brands, unveils how non-metro consumers discover brands, build trust, and make purchasing decisions, in its latest research report- Beyond Metros: The Real Story of Bharat's Next 500 Million. **BPE**

TDI Infratech reinforces 'Sadak Suraksha Jeevan Raksha' in Rajpura

RAJPURA: TDI Infratech hosted "Pathways to Safety" a community-driven road safety awareness initiative at Fountain Chowk, Rajpura. The initiative aligned with the Government of India's National Road Safety Month themed "Sadak Suraksha Jeevan Raksha." The initiative focuses on safety through enforcement and transformation through technology. TDI Infratech partnered with the Punjab Police to promote responsible road behavior. With active participation from local authorities and residents, the programme underscored road safety as a shared civic responsibility, highlighting how individual actions can drive collective change towards safer roads. **BPE**

AU Small Finance Bank & ICSI sign MoU for exclusive banking solutions for Company Secretaries

CHANDIGARH: AU Small Finance Bank (AU SFB), India's largest small finance bank and the first in a decade to receive in-principle approval for transitioning into a Universal Bank, today, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) to offer an exclusive suite of banking and credit card solutions tailored for Company Secretaries (CS) across the country. The core purpose of this MoU will be two-fold, i.e. to provide comprehensive banking services to the members of the ICSI and to also provide employment opportunities for Company Secretaries within the Bank. **BPE**

L&T Finance Ltd records highest ever core PAT of ₹760 cr

CHANDIGARH: L&T Finance Ltd., formerly known as L&T Finance Holdings Ltd. (LTF), one of the leading Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) in India, has recorded its highest ever core Profit After Tax (PAT) of Rs. 760 Crore (before one-time impact of New Labour Code provision), up 21% YoY (Year-on-Year) in the third quarter ended December 31, 2025 (Q3FY26). PAT after one-time impact of New Labour Code stands at Rs. 739 Crore, up 18% in Q3FY26. Commenting on the financial results, Sudipta Roy, Managing Director & CEO, LTF, said, "Q3FY26 for the financial services sector has been defined by a powerful convergence of favourable macro-tailwinds. **BPE**

Croma unveils Blockbuster Republic Day sale with unbeatable deals on Apple, Samsung and more

CHANDIGARH: Croma, India's most trusted omnichannel electronics retailer, has announced its highly anticipated Republic Day Sale, bringing a wide range of blockbuster deals across smartphones, laptops, televisions, large appliances and audio products, with offers available across leading brands. The sale is now live across all Croma stores and continues until January 26. "Republic Day presents a key shopping moment for Indian households as customers look to invest in meaningful upgrades for their homes and personal use. With our Republic Day Sale, we have curated some of our strongest offers across categories, supported by best deals and benefits, so that customers can shop with confidence and value backed by expert in-store guidance for a fulfilling experience," said a spokesperson from Infiniti Retail Ltd. **BPE**

Nissan appoints Gagan Mangal as head of communications for India

CHANDIGARH: Nissan Motor India Pvt. Ltd. (NMIPL) has appointed Gagan Mangal as Head of Communications, effective 12 January 2026. Based in Gurugram, Mangal will lead communications for NMIPL, reporting to Katherine Zachary, Vice President – International Communications, and working closely with Saurabh Vatsa, Managing Director, NMIPL. **BPE**

Ease of doing biz, FTAs boost India's self-reliant and globally trusted economy: Piyush Goyal

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17



India's key policy reforms such as Ease of Doing Business, free trade agreements (FTAs) and growing public confidence are helping the country emerge as a self-reliant, competitive and globally trusted economy, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Saturday.

In a post on social media platform X, Goyal said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, decisive reforms carried out in 2025 have infused fresh energy into startups, MSMEs, exports and investments.

He said these policy measures are shaping India's future and strengthening its position in the global economy.

"Shaping India's future. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the decisive reforms of 2025 have infused new energy into Startups, MSMEs, exports and investment," Goyal mentioned.

"Key policy steps such as Ease of Doing Business, FTAs and public confidence are making India a self-reliant, competitive and globally trusted economy, leading to a surge in opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs.Speaking at the 'Startup Pe Charcha' interaction at Bharat Mandapam in the national capital on Friday, Goyal said India's recent FTAs are opening up new markets for Indian goods and services while providing certainty and confidence to investors."These agreements offer significant opportunities for startups and entrepreneurs to scale up globally," he said.

Goyal encouraged Indian startups to explore startup-to-startup collaborations with foreign partners, especially in sectors such as services, mobility, digital payments, sustainability, renewable energy and advanced technologies.

> "Key policy steps such as Ease of Doing Business, FTAs and public confidence are making India a self-reliant, competitive and globally trusted economy,"

"One of the biggest changes in a new and resurgent India is the rising self-confidence among the youth," he said.

"Young Indians are now more willing to take risks, start their own ventures and experiment with new ideas, marking a clear shift from earlier mindsets that favoured safer career options," Goyal mentioned. **IANS**

India has world's lowest data costs, highest data usage: Scindia

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17



Union Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Saturday said that India now has world's lowest data costs and highest data usage, driven by robust digital infrastructure.

There are more than 120 crore mobile users in the country and the 4G network is expected to reach every village by June this year.

"World's lowest data costs, world's leading data usage India's digital revolution led by PM Narendra Modi is truly built for its people," the minister posted on X social media platform.BSNL has installed a total of 97,068 4G sites, and 93,511 sites are 'On-Air' (till October 31, 2025). The state-run telecom operation aims to upgrade all 4G towers to 5G within the next few months.

Meanwhile, the 5G services have been rolled out in all states and union territories (UTs) across the country and presently, these are available in 99.9 per cent of the districts. As on October 31, telecom service providers (TSPs) have installed 5.08 lakh 5G Base Transceiver Stations (BTSs) across rural and urban area of the country.More than 31 lakh Base Transceiver Stations (BTSs) have been installed across the country. To reduce call drops and improve internet connectivity in underserved areas, the government has taken several initiatives, like BharatNet project for providing broadband connectivity in Gram Panchayats (GPs) and villages, scheme for providing mobile services in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas and in Aspirational Districts, 4G Saturation scheme to provide 4G mobile coverage in all uncovered villages and launch of GatiShakti Sanchar portal and RoW (Right of Way) Rules.

Meanwhile, the telecom infrastructure is being deployed by private TSPs as well as state-led service providers.According to Scindia, technology, spectrum, devices, applications and sustainability verticals must align seamlessly for innovations to mature and scale. **IANS**

AI to be a defining force in India's digital transformation journey: Govt official

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17



As India moves from connectivity to an era of intelligence, Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be a defining force, according to a senior government official.

India is approaching AI with a clear conviction and innovation must be aligned with responsibility, transparency and public trust, said Amit Agrawal, Secretary, Department of Telecommunications,.

Addressing the annual forum of telecom and digital ministers from the 11 ASEAN Member States, he reaffirmed India's strong commitment to ASEAN-India digital cooperation.

Agrawal said they have collectively worked to narrow digital divides, strengthen infrastructure and ensure that digital transformation serves as a force for inclusion, resilience, and economic growth.

The government official stressed upon India's rapid digital transformation, including 4G coverage, the world's fastest 5G rollout, expanded rural broadband connectivity through BharatNet and India's emergence as a major manufacturing hub.

He also highlighted Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) such as Aadhaar, UPI, and DigiLocker as platforms for inclusive growth and efficient service delivery.

The Sanchar Saathi initiative for telecom user protection and fraud prevention solutions were also shared with ASEAN partners.

The country also emphasised the role of AI, outlining the IndiaAI Mission, with a strong focus on safe and trusted technology.

India also expressed readiness to collaborate with ASEAN on AI capacity building, standards development, and practical use cases.

The meeting deliberated on key issues aimed at strengthening regional digital cooperation, with a focus on digital inclusion and integration.

It also acknowledged the adoption of the ASEAN–India Joint Statement on Advancing Digital Transformation at the 21st ASEAN-India Summit, aimed at strengthening cooperation on Digital Public Infrastructure, Financial Technology, Cybersecurity, AI, Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing, and Sustainable Financing and Investment.

The member countries also noted the progress made in implementing the cooperation activities in the ASEAN-India 2025 Digital Work Plan through capacity-building programmes. **IANS**

Maruti Suzuki India to invest ₹35,000 crore to develop new plant in Gujarat

GANDHINAGAR, JANUARY 17



Maruti Suzuki India Limited (MSIL) will invest Rs 35,000 crore to development a new plant in Khoraj, Gujarat which will have a total annual production capacity of 10 lakh vehicles, it was announced here on Saturday.

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel said in a post on X that the project will generate employment opportunities for over 12,000 people and catalyse the growth of ancillary units and MSMEs in the state -- creating a robust auto manufacturing cluster.

Maruti Suzuki MD Shriyut Hitachi Takeuchi handed over the investment letter to Chief Minister during a ceremony held in Gandhinagar."Glad to witness the Investment Letter Handover by Maruti Suzuki India Limited to the Government of Gujarat for setting up a mega car manufacturing facility at Khoraj, with an investment of Rs 35,000 crore," Patel said in the post.

Guided by the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his 'Make in India, Make for the World' vision, Gujarat continues to strengthen India's manufacturing ecosystem, Chief Minister added. **IANS**

US will seek 'separate' semiconductor tariff pacts for countries: Official

WASHINGTON, JANUARY 17



US President Donald Trump's administration will seek "separate" semiconductor tariff agreements for "separate countries," a U.S. official said, after the United States and Taiwan reached a deal on the chip levies this week. "Separate agreements for separate countries," a U.S. official said, responding to a question from Yonhap News Agency regarding whether the deal with Taiwan would set a standard for chip tariffs or the U.S. would conduct separate negotiations with other countries for the sectoral tariffs.The official's remarks came a day after the U.S. Commerce Department released a fact sheet about a trade and investment deal between the United States and Taiwan, which outlined a bilateral agreement on semiconductor tariffs.According to the fact sheet, Taiwanese companies building new U.S. semiconductor capacity may import up to 2.5 times that planned capacity without paying sectoral duties during the approved construction period. Taiwanese companies that have completed new chip production projects in the U.S. will still be able to import 1.5 times their new U.S. production capacity without paying sectoral duties.**IANS**

Centre likely to roll out collateral free loans for gig workers, domestic helpers soon

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

The government reportedly plans to launch a microcredit programme in April 2026, offering collateral free loans of up to Rs 10,000 per annum to gig workers, domestic helpers, and other vulnerable groups.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs is apparently designing the scheme on the lines of the PM Street Vendors Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi), which provides street vendors with small working capital loans, according to reports.

Under PM SVANidhi, vendors receive initial loans starting at Rs 10,000, and on timely repayment, they become eligible for subsequent tranches of Rs 20,000 and Rs 50,000, along with a 7 per cent interest subsidy and additional incentives for adopting digital payments.

The new scheme aims to help gig and platform workers -- many of whom lack formal credit histories to buy two wheelers and other assets needed for their work.Eligibility is expected to mirror PM SVANidhi's verification approach, where beneficiaries will include workers registered on the government's e Shram portal who hold government issued identity cards and a Universal Account Number.PM-SVANidhi needs vendors to hold a licence and be included in urban local body surveys.As of November 2025, more than 313.8 million unorganised workers and over 5.09 lakh gig and platform workers were registered on the e-Shram, and those verified on the portal will be first in line for the new loans, the reports said. **IANS**

DEA strengthens economic fundamentals, positions India for sustained future growth

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17



The Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), through policies across macroeconomics, capital markets, infrastructure, digital finance and investor protection and empowerment, has strengthened economic fundamentals and positioned India for sustained future growth, according to the government.

For example, DEA guided India's economic management, fiscal strategy, and financial sector coordination, while implementing reforms to support growth, stability, investment, and global engagement in 2025.

According to a Ministry of Finance statement, the 16th Finance Commission submitted its Report for the award period from 2026-27 to 2030-31 to the President of India on November 17.

In 2025, a new sub-sector, "Large Ships," was added under the transport and logistics category of the Harmonised Master List.

Also, funds raised through Sovereign Green Bonds amounted to Rs 21,697.40 crore in FY 2024–25, with proceeds allocated to eligible green projects across ministries."Capital expenditure monitoring by DEA enabled infrastructure ministries to achieve expenditure of Rs 10.46 lakh crore during FY 2024–25, exceeding revised estimates, while IEBR expenditure also surpassed targets," said the statement.

Several measures were implemented to enhance market integrity and strengthen the regulatory framework.

For example, the public issue framework for SMEs was tightened with eligibility criteria, caps on offer-for-sale and General Corporate Purpose funds, and restrictions on using IPO proceeds for loan repayment. Trading and risk monitoring in equity derivatives were improved. Measures were introduced to curb expiry-day volatility."To mitigate risk of securities misuse by stock broker, securities for payout are now credited directly to client demat accounts by Clearing Corporations. Framework for safer participation of retail investors in algorithmic trading has been introduced," it added.

Moreover, to deepen and diversify India's securities markets, focused measures were undertaken to improve efficiency and participation.

Financial inclusion initiatives included the rollout of "Chhoti SIP" — SIP of Rs 250, aimed at encouraging first-time investors.

Digital public infrastructure was leveraged to enable retrieval and storage of mutual fund and demat statements through DigiLocker.

To prevent accumulation of unclaimed assets, nomination norms for demat accounts and mutual fund folios were revised.A new UPI address structure for all SEBI registered intermediaries who collect funds from investors with effect from October 01, 2025 has been mandated. To empower investors, a new tool "SEBI Check" has been rolled out, which will allow investors to verify the authenticity of UPI IDs and confirm the bank details such as bank account number and IFSC of a registered intermediary. **IANS**

SPORTS

SANJAY BANGAR

"HE (ABHISHEK SHARMA) IS A REALLY VERSATILE PLAYER. OFTEN, WE HAVE SEEN THAT TOP-ORDER BATTERS ARE DOMINANT ON THE LEG SIDE."

India, NZ head into series decider with milestones in mind

INDORE, JANUARY 17



Rajkot witnessed the class of KL Rahul, but improved bowling and the might of Daryl Mitchell gave New Zealand the last laugh as the visitors outclassed India to clinch a seven-wicket win and level the series 1-1. All eyes now turn to Indore, as India and New Zealand battle it out in the series decider.

Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli will be in international action for one final time until the next ODI assignment in July. The opening batter is 17 runs away from becoming the 7th opener with 16000 international runs.

Meanwhile, Kohli reclaimed the top spot in the ICC men's ODI rankings and has scored at least one 50+ in 24 different Indian venues in the format. But Indore remains one of four venues where he's yet to hit a fifty.

Rahul came to India's rescue with another outstanding performance, scoring an exhilarating 112 not out off 92 balls to help his team reach a respectable total as the rest struggled. His performance against the Kiwis continues to improve, with 469 runs in 10 innings at an average of 93.8, including a half-century and two centuries. He will aim to make another significant contribution when the teams face off on Sunday.

Run-machine Daryl Mitchell keeps challenging the Men in Blue. He has scored three centuries in his last four ODI innings against India in India, reaching over 130 runs each time. The 34-year-old aims to fire up his performance again to help secure a notable series victory.

India have an undefeated record at Indore, winning all seven ODIs played there. In their most recent matches in 2023, they scored 399/5 versus Australia and 385/9 against New Zealand.

Moreover, skipper Shubman Gill is 70 runs away from reaching 3000 ODI runs. He's scored centuries in both matches he has played at Indore's Holkar Stadium and will be looking to maintain that form.

India's premier spinner, Kuldeep Yadav, had a poor outing in the previous game, conceding 82 runs in his 10-over spell while taking only one wicket, and will look to bounce back in the deciding game.

As for New Zealand, Devon Conway crafted a classy 138 off 100 against India when the two sides last met at this venue in January 2023, and he'll be among the Kiwi players to watch out for.

There's plenty at stake in the upcoming series finale. Gill has one more chance to win his first home ODI series as India's captain. As for New Zealand, they are one win away from a first-ever ODI bilateral series win in India. **IANS**

Squads:

- **INDIA:** Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill (c), Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul (wk), Nitish Kumar Reddy, Harshit Rana, Kuldeep Yadav, Arshdeep Singh, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Rishabh Pant, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Ravindra Jadeja, Ayush Badoni
- **NEW ZEALAND:** Devon Conway (wk), Will Young, Henry Nicholls, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Michael Bracewell (c), Zakary Foulkes, Nick Kelly, Josh Clarkson, Michael Rae, Kyle Jamieson, Mitchell Hay, Adithya Ashok, Kristian Clarke, Jayden Lennox

Abhishek defines the way this Indian team wants to play T20 cricket, says Bangar

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17



India's left-handed opener Abhishek Sharma represents the fearless brand of cricket the side wishes to play at next month's T20 World Cup, said former batting coach Sanjay Bangar

India will defend their ICC Men's T20 World Cup title when their campaign gets underway against the USA at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on February 7. Abhishek, 25, has emerged as a key component in India playing an ultra-aggressive brand of T20 cricket.

In 2025, he became the top-ranked batter in the format as per the ICC rankings by amassing 859 runs. "Abhishek Sharma defines the way this Indian team wants to play in the T20 format. A fearless and aggressive brand of cricket is only possible with a player like Abhishek Sharma," said Bangar on JioStar.

Former India batting all-rounder Suresh Raina highlighted that the flamboyant Abhishek's range of shots makes him a standout batter in the line-up. "I think his bat swing, the way he hits sixes off spinners while staying in his crease, the way he plays through the covers, and the drives he hits off full balls all stand out. He uses his feet really well and is a strong hitter straight down the ground," he said.

Ex-India Test batter Cheteshwar Pujara feels Abhishek's versatility sets him apart from other traditional top-order players who rely heavily on leg-side scoring. "He is a really versatile player. Often, we have seen that top-order batters are dominant on the leg side.

"But Abhishek plays equally well on the off side as well and shows intent from the first ball itself, trying to hit a four or a six. He picks the length really well and has a huge variety of shots," he said. **IANS**

Olympic medallist Vijender Singh appointed member of Asian Boxing Council



NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

Indian boxing icon Vijender Singh has been named a member of the Asian Boxing Council, representing another important milestone in his transition from top athlete to global sports administrator.

Vijender, India's first Olympic boxing medallist, has nearly twenty years of experience at the top level, spanning amateur and professional boxing. His role in the Asian Boxing Council highlights his profound knowledge of the sport and his ongoing dedication to its development throughout the continent.

Speaking on the development, Vijender Singh said, "I am honoured to be appointed as a member of the Asian Boxing Council. I would like to thank the Boxing Federation of India and its leadership for entrusting me with this responsibility. I hope to fulfil this role to the best of my ability at the international level. Just as we created history in Beijing, I am committed to working for the growth of Asian boxing, with a strong focus on Indian boxers, and helping our athletes achieve even greater success in the future. I'm hoping our boxers will do will at the international stage too."

The Asian Boxing Council is integral in developing the sport's competition and growth strategies throughout the region. Vijender's involvement is anticipated to bring an athlete-focused viewpoint to policymaking, governance, and strategic planning.

Vijender Singh continues to be one of India's most well-known athletes, after earning a historic bronze at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and securing several medals at the Commonwealth and Asian Games. Following his amateur career, he smoothly moved into professional boxing, boosting his international reputation.

His appointment is regarded as a proud milestone for Indian boxing and highlights the increasing participation of Indian athletes in international sports governance.

In July of last year, Vijender, who wanted to give back to the sport that has brought him so much joy, took on the role of 'mentor' for the Indian boxing team, which competed at the World Championships in Liverpool, UK, in September. **IANS**

Rahane pulls out of remaining Ranji Trophy matches: Reports

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17



Veteran batter Ajinkya Rahane will not take part in Mumbai's remaining two Ranji Trophy matches. Mumbai will play against Hyderabad from January 22 to 25, before their final league-phase match against Delhi at the MCA-BKC ground from January 29 to February 1.

Rahane reportedly informed the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) that he won't be taking part in the remainder of the red-ball season due to "personal reasons".

"We will be picking the Mumbai team for their second stage of league game, Rahane won't be taking part as he has informed MCA that he won't be available for the remaining two red ball games," a source was quoted in an Indian Express report.

Ahead of the 2025-26 domestic season, Rahane relinquished the Mumbai captaincy, saying, "I believe it's the right time to groom a new leader." MCA then appointed India all-rounder Shardul Thakur as the new captain of the 42-time Ranji champions.

Under Rahane's captaincy, Mumbai won the Ranji Trophy in the 2023-24 season, ending a seven-year drought for the championship. They also reached the Ranji Trophy semifinals last season, where they lost to Vidharbha by 90 runs. Under his leadership, Mumbai also won the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy last season, with Rahane as the tournament's highest run-scorer, and clinched the Irani Trophy in 2024-25.

Rahane is second on the all-time run-scorers list for Mumbai in first-class cricket, with 6141 runs in 80 matches at an average of 57.18 between 2007 and 2025, only behind former India opener Wasim Jaffer (8,178 runs from 1997-2015). He has also scored 19 centuries for Mumbai in first-class cricket, second only to Jaffer's 29. **IANS**

Federer, Agassi light up opening ceremony at Melbourne Park

MELBOURNE, JANUARY 17



On Saturday night at the Australian Open, Roger Federer, Andre Agassi, Lleyton Hewitt, Patrick Rafter, and Ashleigh Barty entertained the crowd with a lively exhibition doubles match during the opening ceremony, sharing laughs throughout.

Federer arrived in Melbourne on Thursday morning and received a warm welcome from fans. The tennis icon later spoke about the Alcaraz and Sinner rivalry that has etched itself into the tennis landscape in a similar manner to Federer vs. Rafael Nadal. The six-time Australian Open champion participated in the Grand Slam's inaugural ceremony in a special 'Battle of the World No. 1s' game on Saturday.

As the lights illuminated Rod Laver Arena, the crowd fell quiet as the four ATP No. 1 Club members walked out together, then rose once more when Rod Laver stepped in for the coin toss.

Six-time Australian Open champion Federer immediately set the tone for the evening, taking the microphone and greeting the crowd as though he had never left. "I have missed you and it is great to be back. It's just where we left off, so many memories and nice to dive back into it," ATP reported.

Hewitt was already bouncing on his toes, Rafter appeared relaxed, and Agassi calmly scanned the arena before the match started. Hewitt started the match serving, and the crowd quickly erupted in cheers. Federer hit a forehand lob that, despite being framed, surprisingly landed as a winner over Rafter, causing all four players to laugh and Hewitt to shake his head. As the match progressed, the contrasting styles became evident. Agassi joked about remaining behind the baseline, while Rafter tried to avoid hitting forehands at all costs. In a first-to-four format, the first two sets went by quickly, with the score at 4-2, 2-4, and the Australians taking the first set.

With a third set remaining to determine the winner, Barty stepped onto the court to replace Agassi. The former World No. 1, who won the Australian Open in 2022 before retiring, was greeted with loud cheers upon her return. Barty swiftly settled into her rhythm from the baseline, and alongside Federer, secured a 4-2 victory in the third set, in front of a record-time crowd of 10 champion Novak Djokovic, who watched from courtside. **IANS**



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