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## India is trying to ensure Ariha is raised in an Indian environment: Misri

PM Modi raised the issue of baby Ariha Shah with the German Chancellor

Agency, New Delhi

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz is on a visit to India. PM Modi gave Merz a warm welcome in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. 19 agreements were finalized during the meeting between the two heads of state. During this time, PM Modi raised the issue of Baby Ariha Shah with the German Chancellor. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri provided this information. Baby Ariha is an Indian child being raised in German foster care. In a special briefing regarding the German Chancellor's visit to India, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said that India will continue to follow up with the German government on the Baby Ariha case and will remain in touch with the family at every step. He said that India is also trying to ensure that Baby Ariha is



raised as much as possible in an Indian environment, which includes interacting with the Indian community and celebrating Indian festivals. Regarding the Ariha Shah case, Misri said that we have been in discussions with the German government, all German authorities, their embassy in Delhi, the German government in Berlin, and all the agencies involved for quite some time. This case was a legal matter at one point, but we believe that ultimately it should be resolved keeping in mind the humanitarian issues involved. Vikram Misri said

that we cannot say that we understand the family's pain and difficulties because only they can understand them. We are fully aware of the situation, and we are trying our best to help them in every possible way. We are also trying to ensure that Baby Ariha is raised in an Indian environment as much as possible. Misri said that recently we have also made efforts for other things. I don't want to go into details about it right now, but I want to assure you all that we are committed to this issue with the German government at every stage, and PM Modi

also spoke to the Chancellor about this. Baby Ariha Shah was placed in the custody of

### US Congressman Praises PM Modi, Calls Him the Greatest Leader Since Mahatma Gandhi

**Washington:** While US-India relations are strained on one hand, on the other hand, PM Modi's leadership is being appreciated within the US. American lawmakers have described PM Modi as a key leader who is giving a new direction to India's role on the global stage. They say that Washington considers PM Modi's leadership central to the long-term strength of the India-US partnership. Speaking at an event organized by the Center for Strategic and International



Studies in Washington, US House of Representatives member Rich McCormick praised PM Modi's policies and vision. According to media reports, McCormick said that PM Modi's approach is entirely focused on national interest and is in line with India's development goals. He is a nationalist in the best sense of the word. He said that PM Modi takes care of his country in the same way that we take care of ours. He wants to bring productivity, expansion, and new technologies to India.

the German Youth Welfare Office on September 23, 2021.

## Vice President Launches 'Drug-Free Campus Campaign' at Delhi University

A drug-free campus is a commitment to the youth and the future of the country: Dharmendra Pradhan

Agency, New Delhi



Vice President C. P. Radhakrishnan launched the 'Drug-Free Campus Campaign' at Delhi University on Tuesday, emphasizing the need for drug-free campuses across the country. He said that healthy, drug-free, and purposeful youth are the strong foundation for building a developed and self-reliant India. Universities are not merely academic institutions, but centers where values are built, leadership is forged, and the future of the nation is determined. He said that when prestigious institutions like Delhi University take a strong stance against drugs, it sends a powerful message to the entire society. On this occasion, the Vice

President also launched a dedicated e-pledge platform and mobile app under the 'Drug-Free Campus Campaign'. He urged students from universities across the country to actively participate in it and take the pledge for a drug-free campus. He also appealed to Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan to make this campaign an integral part of all central higher education institutions. The Vice President said that India is a young nation, and drug abuse is not just an individual problem, but a serious social challenge, a public health issue, and a threat to the country's demographic potential.

## Brief News

President, Lok Sabha Speaker, and Home Minister, among other leaders, extend greetings on Lohri, Pongal, and Bihu

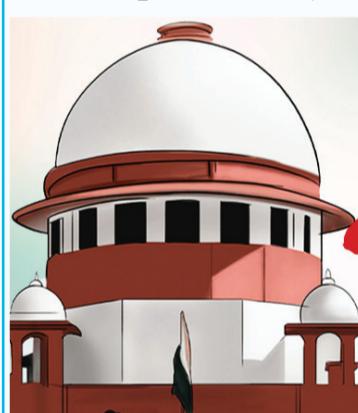


New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, and Home Minister Amit Shah, along with several other leaders, extended their greetings to the people of the country on Lohri, Makar Sankranti, Pongal, and Magh Bihu on the social media platform X. All the leaders wished for happiness, prosperity, and new energy for the people. The leaders said that these festivals have emerged as symbols of rich agricultural traditions, gratitude towards nature, and national unity. President Droupadi Murmu, while extending greetings to Indians living across the world on Lohri, Makar Sankranti, Pongal, and Magh Bihu, said that these festivals are symbols of India's rich agricultural traditions and national unity. On this occasion, we express our gratitude towards nature and thank the farmers who provide us with food.

PM appeals to youth to give global recognition to creativity and heritage at the Viksит Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, addressing the Viksит Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue, called upon the youth, whom he described as the center of the nation's creative power, to promote content, creativity, next-generation reforms, and Indian cultural heritage on the global stage. In a series of posts on X, the Prime Minister said that in the last 11 years, endless opportunities have opened up in every sector of the country. Referring to the content and creativity sector, he said that young people can incorporate the inspiring stories of the Ramayana and Mahabharata into the gaming world. Characters like Hanuman can guide the entire global gaming industry. The Prime Minister said that the series of next-generation reforms that was initiated has now transformed into a "reform express," and the nation's youth power is at its core.

## Supreme Court bench divided over Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, no decision reached



Agency, New Delhi

### Contract workers do not have equal rights as government employees: Supreme Court

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court, in a significant legal ruling, has clarified that employees appointed on contract through an external agency or contractor cannot claim parity with regular employees of government departments or bodies. A bench of Justices Ahsanuddin Amanullah and Vipul M. Pancholi, in its judgment, declared government jobs as public property and stated that regular appointments are made through a transparent selection process, providing equal opportunities to all eligible candidates in the country. The court emphasized that there is a clear legal distinction between manpower hired on contract and those in the regular cadre. According to the bench, hiring through an agency or contractor is entirely at the discretion of the employer, while recruitment to government posts is governed by safeguards and procedures laid down under the Constitution. If this distinction between regular and contract employees is erased, the very foundation of different appointment methods such as permanent, contractual, and ad-hoc would lose its sanctity.

## Despite Operation Sindoos, Pakistan hasn't mended its ways; terrorist camps have resumed operations across the border

Agency, New Delhi

The Army chief acknowledged that the army is on high alert to control terrorist activities operating from across the border



Even after Operation Sindoos, launched after the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Pakistan is not giving up its activities. Eight of the training camps destroyed near the LoC and the international border have become operational again, and it is suspected that 100 to 150 terrorists are present in them. Despite this, the Indian Army is fully vigilant and on high alert to control terrorist activities operating from across the border. Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi acknowledged this at the annual press conference at

### DGCA's investigation report on Indigo flights reaches the ministry, action to follow

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**New Delhi:** The DGCA's confidential investigation report regarding the thousands of Indigo flights that were canceled and delayed in the first week of December last year has reached the Secretary of the Ministry of Civil Aviation. Sources say that the report is 66 pages long, and after reviewing it, an action-taken report will be prepared at the ministry level in addition to the DGCA, so that action can be taken on the problems faced by millions of passengers.

## Shaksgam Valley Dispute: Congress Questions BJP-Chinese Communist Party Meeting

Agency, New Delhi



A new political controversy has erupted in India over China's construction activities in the Shaksgam Valley. The Congress party has accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of sending "mixed signals" to China and showing negligence in matters of national security. The controversy began after reports emerged of a meeting between senior BJP leaders and a delegation from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Delhi. The Congress questioned the timing and nature of the meeting, calling it a compromise of India's sovereignty.

She questioned how China managed to infiltrate this region after Ladakh. Shrinath described the meeting between BJP leaders and the CCP as "building villages in Arunachal and embracing in Delhi," and also accused the media of remaining silent on the issue. The BJP, however, confirmed the meeting, calling it part of inter-party dialogue.

## In four years, the ED has taken major action in 3 states shortly before elections

Agency, New Delhi

Questions have been raised about the increased activity of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in West Bengal ahead of the elections.

West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam, and Puducherry. The ED has started reopening files of old cases in these states as well. In Tamil Nadu, cases related to liquor, real estate, and shell companies have become a source of trouble for the ruling DMK. In Assam, where the BJP is in power, the fear of action against leaders associated with the opposition Congress and AIUDF is affecting the election funding network. In Kerala, the LDF government is embroiled in

gold smuggling and cooperative bank cases. In Puducherry, the agency is keeping a close watch on business and political alliances. It is worth noting that pressure mounted in Jharkhand after the arrest of CM Hemant Soren. In Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal's arrest disrupted the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) structure. In Maharashtra, cases related to Shiv Sena and NCP led to party splits and the fall of governments. Political equations changed several times even before the filing of charge sheets. However, the ED maintains that its work is solely to investigate under the law and has nothing to do with elections.

## BJP has abandoned its "Nation First" ideology and become a party of goons and thieves first: Uddhav Thackeray

**Mumbai:** Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, taking a dig at the BJP, said that the party has abandoned its old "Nation First" ideology and adopted the slogan of "goons and thieves first." Thackeray accused the BJP of initiating the atmosphere on linguistic and religious grounds. Addressing a joint rally with Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray in Thane, Uddhav said that the old BJP, which prioritized national interest, is dead. He emphasized that the next mayors of Mumbai and Thane will only be Maharashtra. Targeting his rival and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde in his home constituency, Uddhav Thackeray said that the BJP will use and then discard Shinde.

## Delhi Airport to remain closed for 6 days from January 21, thousands of passengers to face inconvenience

**New Delhi:** The fog has not yet cleared, and now air travelers at Delhi airport may face difficulties for another six days. Due to security protocols for Republic Day, the closure of airspace over Delhi from January 21 will cause further travel disruptions for passengers. According to media reports, the government issued a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) on Tuesday for a six-day period starting January 21. According to the information, this 2-hour and 25-minute closure will affect thousands of flights and disrupt connections. This will lead to delays and cancellations for passengers and difficulties for airlines. This practice is for the annual dress rehearsal and parade for Republic Day.

# Joint Briefing Held for Law and Order Management during Banka Mandar Festival-2026

Correspondent,DN

**Banka:** A joint briefing of magistrates, police officers, and police personnel deployed for maintaining law and order during the Banka Mandar Festival - 2026 was held at the Bounsi Fair Ground. The briefing was chaired by District Magistrate Mr. Navdeep Shukla, IAS, Banka. Detailed guidelines were given in the meeting regarding security arrangements, crowd control, traffic management, and handling any unforeseen circumstances during the upcoming fair period. It is noteworthy that the Mandar Festival (Bounsi Fair) is being organized by the Tourism Department at the Bounsi Fair Ground from January 14 to 18, 2026. Considering the potential for a large crowd, a large number of magistrates, police officers, police personnel, lathi-wielding police, and women police personnel have been deployed to ensure that the fair is conducted in a peaceful, safe, and orderly environment. During the briefing, the District Magistrate clearly instructed all deployed officers to maintain constant vigilance in their respective areas and to take any kind of disturbance or undesirable activity seriously and sensitively, ensuring prompt action. Emphasis was also placed on strengthening the intelligence gathering system and taking



necessary steps from time to time. A warning of strict action was also given against officers who show laxity in the discharge of their duties. The Bounsi Fair will be formally inaugurated on January 14, 2026, at 3:15 PM. This year, two control rooms have been established for the fair. One control room will be operational in the fairground and the fair police station premises, and the other in the Papaharani Pond complex. Senior officers, police officers, police personnel, and a fire brigade team have been deployed in both control rooms to deal with any emergency situation immediately. The entire fair area has been divided into five mobile patrol teams, who have been instructed to patrol continuously and inform the fair control room of the situation every two hours. In addition, fifteen teams have been deployed for foot patrolling, who will regularly patrol their respective areas and inform the fair magistrate about the situation. To make

crowd control and surveillance more effective, CCTV cameras are being installed as needed at key locations such as main roads, crowded places, stages, and stalls, under the direction of the Sub-Divisional Officer, Banka and the Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Bounsi, enabling continuous monitoring from the control room. Special security arrangements have been made at the Papaharani pond and the Shri Shri 108 Lakshminarayan Temple complex, considering the possibility of devotees taking baths and performing religious rituals there. Keeping the depth of the pond in mind, clear markings indicating the water depth have been placed, and a team of divers, life jackets, and boats have been deployed to handle any emergency situation. This responsibility has been assigned to the Circle Officer, Bounsi and the Assistant District Disaster Management Officer, Banka. To ensure smooth traffic flow during the fair, the road from Papaharani to Mandar fair

is closed to all types of vehicles except administrative vehicles. The Maharana Hat intersection to Sabalpur-Vikrampur road via Papaharani has been made one-way, while the road from Papaharani to Bounsi fair will remain open for vehicles only to Bansipur via Vikrampur. The fair route from Bounsi via Vikrampur intersection is completely closed. In addition, parking arrangements have been made at the Railway Ground, CND Sports Ground, near Kamdhenu Temple, in front of Mandar Vidyapeeth, Bounsi Forest Area main gate, Kaithatikar intersection, Art and Craft complex, near Bounsi Block office, and in Bansipur village ground, while a VIP parking area has been designated near the agricultural farm house.

To make the traffic management even more effective, the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Traffic, has been given special responsibility. In addition, to prevent overloading, the Station House Officer of Bausi, the Traffic In-charge, and the Motor Vehicle Inspector have been instructed to coordinate with each other and conduct intensive checks at the Bhaljor check post and drop gate to effectively control accidents and traffic congestion caused by overloaded vehicles. To reduce traffic pressure and ensure the safety of pedestrians, several routes have been declared as no-vehicle zones, where only pedestrian movement will be allowed with the installation of barriers and "no entry" signs. Furthermore, robust arrangements have been made for healthcare services during the Mandar Festival-2026. The Civil Surgeon, Banka, has deployed medical teams at both the district control room located at the Bausi fairground and the control room situated at the Papaharani pond complex during the fair period. Ambulances have also been deployed to handle emergency situations. A list of ambulance drivers' names

and mobile numbers will be provided to the senior officer in charge of the control room, and this information will also be displayed on the windshields of the respective ambulances. To ensure the quality of food items sold at the food stalls during the fair, regular sampling and testing of food materials will be conducted to prevent the sale of any substandard or unhygienic items. To effectively handle any emergency situation during the Mandar Festival - 2026, comprehensive and robust arrangements have been made regarding fire safety, electricity, drinking water, and sanitation. A fully equipped fire brigade team, under the District Fire Officer, Banka, has been deployed at the fair control room and near the control room at Papaharani Pond from 9:00 AM on January 12, 2026, until the end of the fair. This team will be on standby to respond quickly to all types of emergencies and contingencies during the fair period to ensure the safety of life and property in case of fire or other disasters. To maintain a safe and uninterrupted power supply, the Executive Engineer, Electricity Supply Division, Banka, has been instructed to conduct a physical verification of the entire fair area and the Papaharani fair area, especially the Mandar Mountain region, before the start of the Mandar Festival. During the inspection,

any dilapidated wires, hanging wires, or weak electric poles found will be repaired immediately. It will also be ensured that there is no loss of life or property due to electric shock under any circumstances. Regarding the drinking water supply, the Executive Engineer, PHED, Barahat, has been instructed to conduct a site inspection of the entire fair area and the Papaharani fair area and take necessary action. The objective is to ensure that the general public and devotees do not face any inconvenience regarding clean drinking water during the fair period. Adequate numbers of temporary toilets are also being arranged as needed. The entire responsibility for sanitation arrangements in the Mandar Mountain area and Bansi Fair Ground (from Bansipur to Mahavir Chowk) has been entrusted to the Executive Officer, Nagar Panchayat, Bansi. The Nagar Panchayat will deploy a sufficient number of workers for continuous cleaning during the fair period and will ensure that no garbage is disposed of openly anywhere in the fair area. This work will be regularly monitored by the Executive Officer himself. The Block Coordinator, Lohia Swachh Bihar Abhiyan, Bausi, and the Block Development Officer, Bausi, also provided necessary support to the Nagar Panchayat as required.

## National Road Safety Month – 2026: "Safety Through Education, Transformation Through Technology"

Correspondent,DN



**Sahibganj:** Under the National Road Safety Month – 2026, a comprehensive awareness campaign on road safety is being conducted in Sahibganj district. As part of this campaign, reflective tapes have been affixed to two-wheelers, three-wheelers, e-rickshaws, autos, and other small and large vehicles in all major areas of the district. The objective of this initiative is to reduce road accidents by ensuring clear visibility of vehicles during nighttime, fog, and haze. The use of reflective tapes makes vehicles visible from a distance in the dark, thereby reducing the likelihood of accidents. District Transport Officer Mr. Mithilesh Kumar Chaudhary stated that a continuous public awareness campaign on road safety will be conducted in

the district from January 1 to January 31, 2026. During this period, people will be made aware of road safety rules through street plays, morning processions, sports competitions, and cultural programs. District Road Safety Manager Neeraj Kumar Sah appealed to all vehicle drivers to compulsorily use helmets and seat belts while driving, follow traffic rules, and contribute to road safety as responsible citizens. Present on this occasion were MVI Kumar Utkarsh and Abhishek Munda, District Road Safety Manager Neeraj Kumar Sah, office clerks, Road Engineer Analyst Anuj Parashar, IT Assistant Rajhans, and other staff members.

## DDC reviews progress of various departments during visit to Sabour block



**Bhagalpur:** Deputy Development Commissioner (DDC) Mr. Pradeep Singh, IAS, visited Sabour block and conducted a detailed review of the progress of various departments at the block office. A comprehensive discussion was held on the current status of the implementation of government development and welfare schemes during the review meeting. The DDC emphasized the effective operation, timely execution, and quality assurance of the schemes. During the meeting, the work of various departments, including health, education, ICDS, agriculture, and rural development, was reviewed department-wise. The DDC obtained progress reports from the concerned officials and inquired

about the reasons for pending cases. He instructed all departments to work in coordination with each other so that the benefits of the schemes reach the general public smoothly. The review of the health department included a detailed discussion on primary health services, immunization programs, institutional deliveries, nutrition campaigns, and the availability of medicines. Under the education department, the review covered school enrollment, student attendance, teaching quality, the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, and the condition of school infrastructure. Special attention was also given to the functioning of Anganwadi centers and nutrition services under ICDS. During the review of the agriculture department, information was gathered on crop

## Road Safety Awareness Campaign: Awareness Drive for Those Without Helmets and Seat Belts



Correspondent,DN

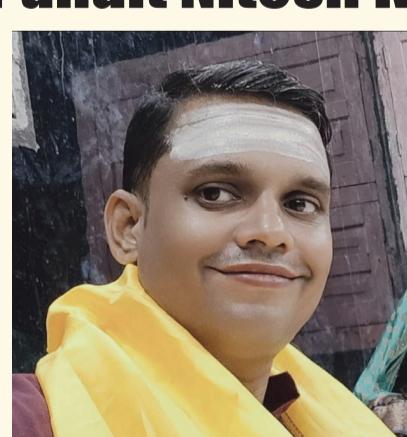
**Dumka:** A road safety awareness campaign was conducted near DC Chowk and Gandhi Maidan as part of Road Safety Month 2026. The objective of this campaign was to educate citizens about traffic rules

and prevent road accidents. During the campaign, the District Transport Officer, Mr. Mrityunjay Kumar, provided helmets to two needy individuals. District Transport Officer Mr. Mrityunjay Kumar said that helmets and seat belts are not only legal requirements

but also life-savers. A little caution can prevent major accidents. Members of the Road Safety Committee, traffic officials, and several social workers were also present at the event, and they appealed to the general public to follow road safety rules.

## Makar Sankranti 2026: Classical Clarification on the Confusion Surrounding the Date — Pandit Nitesh Kumar Mishra

Correspondent,DN



**Godda:** Confusion prevails among devotees across the country regarding Makar Sankranti 2026. Discussions are circulating about celebrating the festival on January 14th in some places and January 15th in others. Inaccurate calculations and incomplete information circulating on social media have left the general public confused. Makar Sankranti is a major solar festival of Sanatan Dharma, determined not by the lunar calendar but by the sun's transit into a new zodiac sign. The actual and scripturally sanctioned moment of this festival is considered to be when the sun enters Capricorn from Sagittarius, marking the beginning of Uttarayana. Clarifying the situation based on the Mithila Panchang, Pandit Nitesh Kumar Mishra stated that in 2026, Makar Sankranti will be celebrated on Wednesday, January 14th. According to Pandit Nitesh Kumar Mishra, this date is considered completely scripturally valid in the Mithila Panchang and most authentic astrological calculations. Pandit Mishra explained that on January 14, 2026, the Sun God will enter Capricorn at 3:13 PM. Since the Sankranti period occurs during the day before sunset, performing bathing, charity, and meritorious deeds on the same

day is considered valid according to the scriptures. As Makar Sankranti is a purely solar festival, its timing is based solely on the movement of the sun. According to the Mithila Panchang, the Uttarayana period begins with Makar Sankranti, which is referred to as the path of the gods in the scriptures. Charity, bathing, and chanting performed during this period bestow inexhaustible merit. The scriptures clearly state: "Uttarayana is the path of the gods, Dakshinayana is the path of the ancestors." Explaining the scriptural rules regarding the auspicious time of Sankranti, Pandit Nitesh Kumar Mishra said that in general Sankrantis, the auspicious period

is considered to be eight ghatis before and eight ghatis after the transit, while Makar Sankranti is considered special because it is an Ayan Sankranti (solstice). In this, the auspicious influence is accepted from forty ghatis (units of time) before, due to which the tradition of bathing and giving charity in the morning is considered in accordance with the scriptures. This year, a rare astrological conjunction is also forming on the day of Makar Sankranti. According to Pandit Mishra, Shatila Ekadashi also falls on this day, which is considered dedicated to Lord Vishnu. This combination of sun worship and devotion to Vishnu is described as extremely meritorious in the scriptures. The scriptures state: "In the month of Magha, when the sun enters Capricorn, the worship of Vishnu is especially auspicious." Makar Sankranti is also a symbol of social harmony and goodwill. The use of sesame seeds and jaggery conveys the message of abandoning mutual bitterness and fostering sweet relationships, which is deeply ingrained in Indian folk tradition. According to the Mithila Panchang and classical calculations, it is clear that celebrating the festival of Makar Sankranti on January 14, Wednesday, in the year 2026 is completely authentic and in accordance with the scriptures.

**Brief News**

**Extortion demanded from Padma Bhushan Kariya Munda by impersonating a police officer; case registered at the cyber police station**

**Khundi:** A sensational case has come to light in which extortion was demanded from Padma Bhushan Kariya Munda, the eight-time MP and former Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha from Khundi, by someone impersonating a police officer. Taking serious note of the matter, Dr. Nirmal Singh, a close associate of Kariya Munda, informed the police and the CMO about the entire incident on X (formerly Twitter). Dr. Nirmal Singh said on Tuesday that several WhatsApp calls were made to Kariya Munda's mobile number 9431108685 from mobile number 8208746581 on Monday, demanding money. The caller, identifying himself as a police officer, was threatening and demanding money. Kariya Munda, who has been unwell for some days, is facing considerable distress due to these calls. Dr. Nirmal Singh has demanded that the police take cognizance of the matter and take appropriate action. A case has been registered in this regard at the Cyber Police Station, Ranchi. The police are investigating the matter.



**Police should immediately arrest the criminals who demanded extortion from Kariya Munda: Anand Kumar**

**Khundi:** A function was organized on Tuesday at the Torpa Nagar Bhawan under the joint auspices of the Torpa and Tapkara mandals to welcome the newly elected BJP District President Anand Kumar. The program was presided over by Torpa Mandal President Subodh Kumar Gupta. On the occasion, District President Anand Kumar said that party workers should forget all differences and work for the BJP. He said that the workers are the backbone of the party. The District President said that there was resentment among the workers due to not receiving due respect. Now every single worker will be given respect and their concerns will be heard. Anand Kumar said that this is not the time for speeches, but for showing results through work. He said that we have to fight the municipal elections together. In the coming time, we will also win the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. The District President strongly condemned the demand for extortion from Padma Bhushan Kariya Munda and demanded the immediate arrest of the criminals involved. Addressing the program, State Executive Committee member Santosh Jaiswal said that the BJP is the world's largest political party today because it is completely democratic. He appealed to the party workers to forget all differences and work in the interest of the party and the country. District General Secretary Nikhil Kandulna said that the BJP is the only party where responsibilities are given based on performance. He said that the appointment of Anand Kumar as the district president has infused new enthusiasm among the workers. He said that the new district president is very experienced, and the BJP will benefit from this. Present on the occasion were Executive Committee member Ramanand Sahu, former District General Secretary Shashank Shekhar Rai, committee member Ramanand Sahu, and others.

**50 New Beds to be Arranged at Apna Ghar Ashram: Sadanand Maharaj**

**Ranchi:** Swami Dr. Sadanand Maharaj, the founder of Pranami Trust, visited Apna Ghar Ashram on Tuesday. On this occasion, Sadanand Maharaj fed the disabled and destitute with his own hands and blessed all the workers engaged in service. He said that the trust will soon arrange 50 additional beds for the complete care of the disabled at the ashram. He said that serving the neglected sections of society is the path to true religion, and God's grace can be attained by following this path. On the occasion, he met the disabled and destitute people and the caregivers residing in the ashram, which has been operating for the past 20 months, and observed their daily routine, care, and treatment arrangements. He expressed satisfaction with the cleanliness, well-organized service, and dedication at the ashram and described it as equivalent to having a direct vision of God. Present on the occasion were the trust's Vice President Rajendra Prasad Agarwal, spokesperson Sanjay Sarraf, and several other office bearers and members.



**House catches fire, woman seriously injured**

**East Singhbhum:** A fire suddenly broke out late Monday night in the house of Mohammad Azeem near Kabiria School on Road Number-10, Zakirnagar, under the Azadnagar police station area of Mango. The fire spread so rapidly that within a short time, valuable items in the house were engulfed in flames. The fire caused panic in the area. An air conditioner (AC), other electronic equipment, furniture, and essential household items were completely destroyed in the fire. A woman present inside the house at the time of the fire was seriously burned. Seeing the flames and smoke, people from the surrounding area immediately rushed to the spot and bravely rescued the woman. She was immediately taken to Tata Memorial Hospital (TMH) for treatment, where she is currently undergoing treatment. Local residents immediately started trying to extinguish the fire using buckets and pipes. After much effort, the fire was brought under control, averting a major accident and preventing the fire from spreading to nearby houses. There was an atmosphere of panic in the area after the incident, but the quick thinking and prompt action of the people brought the situation under control.



# BJP must explain its double standards in Jharkhand and Karnataka: Vinod Pandey

**Ranchi:** JMM General Secretary Vinod Kumar Pandey issued a statement saying that the BJP's statement regarding Chief Minister Hemant Soren's foreign trips is not only baseless but also exposes the BJP's well-known double standards, its discomfort with tribal leadership, and its feudal mindset. First, the BJP should consider the Chief Minister's statement that if the intentions are good, the results are positive. The CGL examination can be seen as an example of this. Now, we will expose the BJP's double standards with evidence. The BJP's hypocrisy reveals its true character and face. When Jharkhand is going to Davos for the first time, the BJP makes baseless allegations against Hemant Soren every day. On the other hand, in Karnataka, the same BJP questions the

Congress government for not going to Davos. The same platform, two different standards – this is the real politics of the BJP. First, it is necessary to clarify that the Chief Minister's foreign trips are not personal pleasure trips, but strategic trips related to the state's long-term industrial, tourism, and investment interests. Attending global forums to attract investment from around the world is a necessity for any progressive state government today. The BJP is mocking the future of Jharkhand by calling it a 'hobby'. The BJP must explain its double standards in Karnataka. Today, the same BJP that is questioning trips to Davos, Sweden, or Spain in Jharkhand, was lamenting the Congress government's non-participation in the World Economic Forum – 2025 in

Karnataka. The Karnataka BJP itself is saying that not going to a platform like Davos is 'playing with the future of the state'. So why this hypocrisy from the BJP in the case of Jharkhand?

The statements of BJP leaders themselves show that states like Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Maharashtra are going to Davos for investment and signing MoUs worth crores of rupees. For Maharashtra, Whenever Hemant Soren

leaders proudly claim investment agreements worth Rs 15.70 lakh crore. If it's right for these states to go to Davos, then how is it wrong for Jharkhand?

**BJP's problem with the tribal Chief Minister-** The real problem for the BJP is that Jharkhand is being led by a tribal Chief Minister who will confidently and strongly represent Jharkhand's interests on international platforms. Whenever Hemant Soren

tries to bring national and global recognition to the state, the BJP's feudal mindset comes to the fore. The BJP forgets that its own Prime Minister, Chief Ministers of its ruled states, and ministers have been constantly traveling abroad. At that time, there was no demand for a white paper, nor were there any sarcastic remarks about "sightseeing."

#### Investment and Ground Realities-

Investment is not a magic wand that a visit today will result in a factory tomorrow. It is a continuous process—linked to MOUs, policies, land, infrastructure, and the development of local resources. The Hemant government is committed to the development, investment, and employment of the state and will not be deterred by any political noise. The BJP should abandon negative politics and play a constructive role in the interest of Jharkhand—this will be better for both democracy and the state.

## Temperature Fluctuations to Continue in Jharkhand Amidst Cold Wave

Agency. Ranchi

Temperature fluctuations will continue across the state amidst the ongoing cold wave. Several districts of the state are still experiencing a cold wave, while some areas are beginning to feel warmer during the day. The districts where a cold wave is expected in the coming days include the northwestern and central districts of the state on Tuesday, while on Wednesday and Thursday, a cold wave is likely in some parts of the central, northwestern, and southern districts of the state. The Meteorological Department issued a yellow alert for these districts on Tuesday. It is noteworthy that for the



past 10 days, most districts of the state have been experiencing a severe cold wave. The minimum temperature had dropped below five degrees in Gumla, Latehar, Lohardaga, Hazaribagh, and Ramgarh. However, the sun has

been quite warm for the past two or three days. Due to this, the minimum temperature has increased by two to three degrees. In the last 24 hours, the maximum temperature in the state was recorded at 28 degrees Celsius in Chaibasa and the lowest at 2.3 degrees Celsius in Gumla. Meanwhile, on Tuesday, the weather in Ranchi and surrounding areas was clear from the morning, but cold winds continued throughout the day. However, the sun felt quite warm. On Tuesday, the maximum and minimum temperatures recorded were: Ranchi 21.6 and 7.5 degrees Celsius, Jamshedpur 26.2 and 10 degrees, Daltonganj 25 and 5.6 degrees, Bokaro 23.1 and 7.1 degrees.

## Murder over a land dispute in Khundi, seven criminals arrested

**Ranchi:** On the evening of January 7, 2026, Edel Sanga Padha Raja Soma Munda was shot dead by unknown assailants near the Jamuwadag pond under Khundi Police Station. In this regard, Khundi Police Station Case No. 03/26 dated January 8, 2026, under Sections 103(1)(61)(2)(3)(5) BNS 2023 and 27 Arms Act was registered. Considering the seriousness of the case, a Special Investigation Team (SIT) was formed under the direction of the Superintendent of Police, Khundi. Taking swift action, the team identified a total of seven (07) accused persons: (1) Baha Munda (2) Deva Pahan (3) Anish Munda alias Sukra (4) Raviya Pahan alias Ravi



number 8208746581 to Kariya Munda's number 9431108685. The caller is identifying himself as a police officer, demanding money, and issuing threats.

(5) Rameshwar Sanga alias Ramesh, all from village Jiyarappa, (6) Pankaj Kumar Sharma alias Pandit from village Bikuwadag, all from Khundi district, and (7) Devbrat Nath Shahdeo, address: Palcot House, Kishore Ganj, Ranchi. Raids were conducted at the residences of all the accused. During interrogation, all the accused confessed to their involvement in the crime, and the mobile phones used in committing the crime were

recovered from them. All of them were then formally arrested. Upon questioning regarding the murder, the arrested accused Devbrat Nath Shahdeo stated that he had instructed the other local accused involved in the case to work on the disputed land in November-December of the previous year. The accused, under the pretext of building a football field, deliberately removed the previously erected boundary stones at the same location. The accused were highly enraged by this incident and the actions of the Padha Raja, Soma Munda. Taking advantage of the opportunity, they murdered Padha Raja Soma Munda. Efforts are underway to identify and arrest the other accused involved in the crime, and continuous raids are being conducted for this purpose.

**Union Minister Sanjay Seth visits Paras Hospital to meet father of BJP leader**



**Ranchi:** The father of BJP leader Mahesh Kundu from the Ichagarh assembly constituency was injured in a road accident. Upon receiving the information, Union Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth reached Paras HEC Hospital in Dhurwa on Sunday evening and inquired about his condition. The minister spoke to the doctors at the

## Blankets Distributed in Kotengsera Village of Torpa, Bringing Relief to the Needy

Agency. Khundi

A blanket distribution program was organized on Tuesday in Kotengsera village of Torpa West Panchayat, under Torpa block of Khundi district. The program was organized by Block Chief Rohit Surin, during which warm blankets were distributed among the poor, helpless, and elderly needy people. On this occasion, Block Chief Rohit Surin said that his main objective is to provide assistance to the needy on a priority basis during the harsh winter season. He informed that these blankets will be distributed in all 16



panchayats of Torpa block through the block office. This assistance will reach the needy people listed by the Panchayat Samiti members, Mukhiyas (village heads), and ward members.

## Jharkhand State Bar Council Election: Questions Raised Over Security Deposit Amount

Agency. East Singhbhum

Strong opposition has emerged against the decision to set the security deposit for candidates in the Jharkhand State Bar Council elections at one lakh twenty-five thousand rupees. Calling it illogical, impractical, and against democratic values, senior advocate Sudhir Kumar Pappu, a resident of Jamshedpur, wrote a letter to the Chairman of the Bar Council of India and Rajya Sabha MP, Manan Kumar Mishra, on Tuesday. He also demanded intervention in this decision. The advocate stated that this exorbitant security deposit is an attempt to exclude economically weaker and underprivileged lawyers



from the electoral process. In the letter, the advocate clarified that such a high security deposit is not justified in poor and backward states like Jharkhand and Bihar. He mentioned that when the state government increased government fees by just five to ten rupees, lawyers across Jharkhand protested against

it, calling it an anti-poor decision. Therefore, setting a security deposit of one lakh twenty-five thousand rupees for the Bar Council elections is beyond the reach of ordinary advocates. Through the letter, he stated that the Supreme Court has set a minimum fee of less than one thousand rupees for the enrollment of new advocates, which clearly shows that judicial institutions value economic balance and the principle of equal opportunity. In contrast, this decision of the Jharkhand State Bar Council seems to be against the democratic spirit. Advocate Sudhir Kumar Pappu stated in the letter that the security deposit in the previous Jharkhand State Bar Council election was only ten thousand rupees, which has been directly increased to one lakh twenty-five thousand rupees in the currently proposed election. He termed it unconstitutional, undemocratic, and arbitrary. He also questioned whether the Bar Council had held a general assembly and obtained the consent of its members before making this decision. He alleged that this decision, taken without the approval of the members, is illegal. Copies of this letter have also been sent to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Chief Justice of the Jharkhand High Court, the Chief Minister of Jharkhand, the Advocate General of the state, and the Chairman of the Jharkhand State Bar Council for necessary action.

## Section 17A of Prevention of Corruption Act: SC delivers split verdict; what the two judges said

**New Delhi, Agency:** The Supreme Court on Tuesday pronounced a split verdict on the constitutional validity of Section 17A of Prevention of Corruption Act that barred the agencies from probing corruption charges against government officials without the Centre's permission.

A bench of Justices KV Vishwanathan and BVNagarathna differed on the decision with the former judge observing that the said provision is constitutionally valid and the latter holding it as unconstitutional and should be struck down.

Justice Nagarathna said that no prior sanction should be needed from competent authority to prosecute a public official, claiming that the requirement of prior sanction is contrary to the object of the Act.

"Section 17A is unconstitutional and it ought to be struck down. No prior

approval is required to be taken. This provision is an attempt to resurrect what has been earlier struck down in Vineet Narain and Subramanian Swamy judgments. The requirement of prior sanction is contrary to the object of the Act, and it forecloses inquiry and protects the corrupt rather than seeking to protect the honest and those with integrity who really do not require any protection," Justice Nagarathna observed as quoted by Live Law.

She added that corruption in the country is rampant and pervasive and there is a need to have strong anti-corruption law, claiming that section 17A of Prevention of Corruption Act protects a corrupt official.

Meanwhile, Justice K V Vishwanathan said that the provision is valid but Lokpal/Lokayuta should decide whether a govt official



he added that striking down Section 17A would amount to "throwing the baby out with the bathwater".

"Section 17A is constitutionally valid subject to the condition that the sanction must be decided by the Lok Pal or the Lok Ayukta of the State," Justice Vishwanathan observed.

He added that unless honest and public servants are shielded from frivolous investigations, a "policy paralysis" will set in.

He also emphasised that a fine balance has to be maintained between the need to protect a public servant from mala fide cases and the importance of upholding probity in public offices.

He in his opinion reasoned that object of Section 17A was not to condone illegal acts but to have a screening mechanism.

"Bhagavad Geeta says for a self-respecting man even

death is more preferable than disrepute. In this age of technology and social media the act of parading in court etc. is irreversible even if proven innocent later", the judge said.

The bench thus, ordered referring the matter to the Chief Justice of India. We direct the Registry to refer the matter to the Chief Justice of India to constitute an appropriate bench to hear the matter afresh.

This comes after 'Centre for Public Interest Litigation' filed a plea in the apex court, claiming that introduction of Section 17A in PC Act was nothing but resurrection of the earlier Section 6A of Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, infamously known as 'single directive' which mandated the CBI to take the Centre's sanction before probing joint secretary and above level officers.

Advocate Prashant

Bhushan, representing CPIL, had contended that Section 17A had become a tool to shield corrupt officials and obstruct legitimate inquiries.

What the law says

According to the Section 17A of the act, no police officer shall conduct any enquiry or inquiry or investigation into any offence alleged to have been committed by a public servant under this Act, where the alleged offence is relatable to any recommendation made or decision taken by such public servant in discharge of his official functions or duties, without the previous approval

"Provided further that the concerned authority shall convey its decision under this section within a period of three months, which may, for reasons to be recorded in writing by such authority, be extended by a further period of one month," it adds.

## Ex-Admiral Prakash submits eligibility documents; set to be included in Goa's final roll

**New Delhi, Agency:** Former Indian Navy chief Admiral Arun Prakash (retired) on Monday reportedly submitted all the necessary documents linking him to the electoral roll from last special intensive revision (SIR), paving the way for early resolution of the matter relating to the system-driven notice issued to him after all the fields in his enumeration form (EF) pertaining to linkage with the last SIR roll, were left blank.

"The documents were collected by the competent field officer on Monday and the matter will be settled, perhaps by Tuesday, making the retired Admiral and his wife eligible for inclusion in the final electoral roll of Cortalim assembly constituency (AC) in Goa," an officer aware of the proceedings told media on Monday.

Similarly, a hearing due on Jan 16 on the notice served to Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, an elector in Bolpur AC of West Bengal, after the age of his mother, with whom he was mapped in



the EF filled and submitted by his relative, was reportedly found to be less than Sen's, is expected to sort out the anomaly. A hearing will be held at Sen's registered address at Shanti Niketan, and the relative will have the opportunity to correctly map Sen to the SIR from the last roll, said an officer.

In a clarification issued in Admiral

Prakash's case on Monday, the Cortalim ERO explained that his EF was categorised as "unmapped" after it was observed that the said EF did not contain the mandatory particulars relating to the previous SIR, including the name of the elector, EPIC number, name of the relative, name and number of the AC, part number, and serial number in the electoral roll. "In the absence of these essential identification details, the BLO application was unable to establish an automatic linkage between the submitted EF and the existing electoral roll database," the ERO said. Underlining that the BLO application is designed to automatically map EFs only when the prescribed identification particulars are duly filled in, the Cortalim ERO said the blank fields in Prakash's EF triggered the system to categorise his EF as "unmapped", mandating an auto-generated notice for further verification through a hearing mechanism.

## Maha civic polls: Voter ID cards found in garbage



**Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, Agency:** The discovery of several Aadhaar, PAN, and voter identity cards in a garbage heap at Savarkar Chowk in Jalna city Sunday, barely three days ahead of the municipal corporation elections in Maharashtra, has raised

concerns, reports Mohammed Akhef. Officials said the model code of conduct cell received a complaint, stating that 17 Aadhaar cards, three, PAN cards, and four voter ID cards - 24 in all - were found discarded. An FIR was lodged in the case.

## Gen-Z protests in 3 Asian nations must be examined: Manish Tewari



**New Delhi, Agency:** Congress MP Manish Tewari said there should be a deep study of the Gen-Z protests that brought down govs in three South Asian countries in the last three years to check if they were organic movements arising out of grievances.

Tewari said these movements should be examined for the critical difference between autonomous agitations over grievances, and agitations driven by narratives where grievances may have been weaponised. Though he did not point at any country which could have virtually carried out coups in Asia in the name of youth protests, his remark

suggested that suspicions could not be simply brushed off. Starting with Sri Lanka, protests brought down elected govs in Nepal and Bangladesh — all in the Indian neighbourhood.

The note of caution came as Tewari spoke about the

turbulent contemporary world, from Venezuela to Bangladesh to Greenland to Ukrainian invasion, at the launch of his new book "A World Adrift". The book was released by former foreign minister Yashwant Sinha at IIC, and the gathering included P Chidambaram, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Vivek Tankha, Mukul Wasnik, and a host of foreign delegates, among others.

As he spoke on raging geopolitical issues, Tewari dismissed the belief that "India has lost Bangladesh" after protests toppled the Sheikh Hasina govt that set in motion developments which have increased the friction between India and Bangladesh. He said India invested blood and treasure in creating Bangladesh under the leadership of Indira Gandhi, and "that reality is not lost on the people of Bangladesh".

## Delhi CM distributes Rs 25.25 crore scholarships to 1,709 students



**New Delhi, Agency:** Coinciding with the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Monday distributed scholarships worth Rs 25.25 crore to 1,709 meritorious students from economically weaker sections under the Delhi Higher and Technical Education Assistance Scheme.

Addressing the scholarship distribution programme at Thyagaraj Stadium, Gupta said providing financial assistance to students was the Delhi government's investment in their future and a step towards strengthening the city's youth.

The event was attended by Education Minister Ashish Sood, senior officials of the Education Department, vice chancellors of various universities, educationists and a large number of students, according to a statement.

The chief minister said that scholarship amounts for the academic years 2023-24 and 2024-25

had been transferred directly to the bank accounts of eligible students studying in universities across Delhi. She also informed that a pending scholarship amount of Rs 19 crore from the previous government's tenure had been released by the present government, asserting that no funds earmarked for students

education would remain pending in future.

Marking National Youth Day, Gupta urged students to draw inspiration from the thoughts and philosophy of Swami Vivekananda and to pursue their goals with dedication and discipline.

She said the progress of the

nation depended on the advancement of its youth and highlighted the role of young people in achieving the goal of a developed India by 2047.

The chief minister also said that national development was not possible through government policies alone and required the collective responsibility and active participation of citizens.

Speaking on the occasion, Sood said the government was committed to improving the education sector and ensuring that students from disadvantaged backgrounds received adequate support.

He said the government's approach was guided by the principle of Antyodaya, aimed at ensuring that benefits reached those at the lowest rung of society. He said the Narela Education City project, which had remained stalled for several years, was now being implemented.

He added that the project's budg-

et had been increased from Rs 500 crore to Rs 1,300 crore and would include shared university campuses, auditoriums, libraries, digital libraries and ICT laboratories spread across 160 acres.

The Education Minister said the objective of the government was to address challenges in the education sector through policy measures and effective implementation, adding that education would play a key role in shaping leadership for the future.

Meritorious students from economically weaker sections who have passed Class XII from Delhi schools with at least 75 per cent marks and meet the prescribed income criteria are eligible for financial assistance under the Delhi Higher and Technical Education Assistance Scheme, it said.

The scholarship amount is transferred directly to beneficiaries' bank accounts through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system, it added.

## Today's attendance in the past

**'Nirmal Aso'**

The entire nation's suspicion has fallen on the letterbox. If this weren't the case, letters wouldn't have been discredited. The government, through letters, wants to atone for the mistakes of the country's past, to reveal why those old mistakes still linger. We're doing a lot today, but the past refuses to budge. This past shouldn't exist, or it should be chased away

wherever it's found. People in the world who live in the present don't have a past. Delhi also harbors a pollution of the past. It's lurking everywhere. Delhi asks more about the past than the present. Someone said the past sells in Haridwar. When a family member dies, we set out to find the past and bargain for it there. While bargaining, a priest opens the ledger and says, "Your past is greater

than the present. Therefore, mark your attendance in the past today and open your pockets completely." No other part of the world offers such a miracle, but we Indians labor in the present for the past. The entire country often demonstrates its wisdom in laboring over the past. Surprisingly, parliamentary debates reveal so many pages of the past that we're convinced that

this very past is holding back our golden present. Now, even I'm beginning to believe that every shortcoming of the present is due to some ancestor. In this context, I've read the wills of my elders many times, and now it's even come to the point of letters. My grandfather wrote to my father, and then my father wrote to me. Both share similar compulsions, similar language. The

house that my grandfather left to my father, my father gave me the same house to say goodbye to. Now I want to show it to the world. I have lofty dreams, but the house associated with the past is so low that I can't even speak to anyone loudly. In fact, we can curse the past by looking at the present around us. If we were born in America, we would have enjoyed the luxury of the dollar, but Gandhi and

Nehru never considered the past. If at that time, a hundred or two hundred more universities, IITs, IIMs or AIIMS had been opened, then today we would not have to look back. We have to look back because the past only saw the present. This is wrong; the present should always look at the past. That's why the present country has started looking at the country of the past.

**Editorial****Uneasy Panchayat elections**

The government's conscience is at stake in the court's landmark decision, while the world is preoccupied with a list of admonitions. Who is the big man here, and who is Himachal's biggest issue in protecting the law? Clearly, the Honorable High Court has elevated its decision by directing the Himachal government to hold elections for Panchayati Raj institutions before April 30th. This way, will the Election Commission gain the key to unlocking all the locks of the electoral process, or will it be too late to turn this into a one-sided test? The State Election Commissioner can keep a close eye on the preparations, but if the instruments of government remain idle, who will play the harp of the exercise? However, what is being witnessed is not so beautiful or ordinary that an election tent should be set up. Himachal has witnessed the wounded feet of relief on the rough roads of disaster, and has also seen that politics does not begin to share even in the state's best interests. In such a situation, politics will want to write many things on the announced plank of Panchayati Raj elections. The government's response to the court's decision is unsubstantiated, and therefore, further clarity on the legal text will emerge only when administrative action is taken. How Panchayat elections are exempted from the Disaster Management Act, in effect since October, will remain a point of contention. Through its observations, the court identified several unrealistic flaws in the government's intentions.

**It is necessary to find new export markets**

**Hopefully, India's new strategy of exploring new export markets and exporting with FTAs ??will play an effective role in mitigating India's export challenges amid Trump's threat to increase tariffs on January 5th... Although the current 50% tariff imposed by the US on India has led to a decline in Indian exports to the US, now the threat of up to 500% tariffs on India based on Trump's Russia sanctions bill has been looming. Since August 2025, the growth rate of Indian exports to the US for garments, leather, gems and jewelry, and engineering goods has declined.**

**Dr. Jayanti Lal Bhandari**

To compensate for the impact on the US market, India will need to increase exports through free trade agreements (FTAs) in 2026, while also pursuing a strategy to expand exports to 200 markets globally identified by India as alternative markets. It is being highlighted both nationally and internationally that India's FTAs ??are playing a significant role in increasing exports to countries other than the US, even amid Trump's tariff challenges. Meanwhile, with the formation of FTAs ??with several countries in the new year 2026, India's exports will increase rapidly. The various FTAs ??entered into by India, which provide legally binding commitments on professional services such as software engineers, chartered accountants, and architects, will open up global opportunities for Indian professionals and boost professional services exports. It is worth noting that on December 22nd, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon announced the FTA between India and New Zealand.



Prime Minister Modi stated that the India-New Zealand partnership is poised to reach new heights and that this FTA will help double bilateral trade over the next five years. This FTA ensures zero tariffs on 100 percent of Indian exports to New Zealand. New Zealand has also committed to \$20 billion in FDI in India over the next 15 years. India has offered duty reductions on 70 percent of New Zealand's products, representing 95 percent of bilateral trade value. A key strength of this FTA is its ability to increase services exports from India and encourage Indian professionals to pursue opportunities in New Zealand. This FTA provides a strong foundation for Indian talent, startups, and innovation. This FTA offers India key services

that are not covered by any previous FTA. Just four days before the India-New Zealand FTA, on December 18, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and his Omani counterpart, Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousuf, signed the FTA in Muscat in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of Oman. This FTA is officially called the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). It is also significant that under the India-Oman FTA, 98 percent of India's exports will get zero-cost access to the Omani market. This includes more than 99 percent of exports to Oman. This agreement is expected to significantly benefit India's textile, gems and jewelry, phar-

maceuticals, automobiles, agricultural products, and leather industries. Significantly, new data published during the Modi government's tenure regarding the progress of FTAs ??signed with Mauritius, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Australia show that while trade with these countries has grown rapidly, exports to these countries are also increasing. India is receiving more investment from these countries.

The European Free Trade Association (AFTA) between India and four European countries: Iceland, Switzerland, Norway, and Liechtenstein, came into effect on October 1st, and exports to AFTA countries have begun to increase. Similarly, India's FTAs ??with the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Oman will become effective in 2026. Furthermore, 2026 will also see FTAs ??taking shape with other key countries, including the United States, the European Union, Peru, Chile, ASEAN, Mexico, Canada, South Africa, Israel, and the Gulf Countries Council.

**Lohri is a festival that brings happiness**

**Yogesh Kumar Goyal**

**Lohri is a major festival celebrated with great enthusiasm in North India. It brings a moment of peace in the hectic modern world, where people forget all their worries and enjoy the festival with great enthusiasm and joy. In Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, Lohri is celebrated as Makar Sankranti. Sindhi communities also celebrate a festival called 'Lal Lahi' as Lohri, a day before Makar Sankranti. Some folk tales are also prevalent regarding Lohri.**

It is believed that on this day, Kansa sent a demoness named Lohita to kill Lord Krishna, whom Lord Krishna playfully killed, and this festival began to be celebrated in memory of that incident. Another folk tale regarding the lighting of the fire on Lohri is that the fire is lit on this day in memory of the yogic burning of Sati, daughter of Daksha Prajapati. The most popular story related to Lohri is related to a dacoit named Dulla Bhatti, who is known as the 'Punjabi Robin Hood'. Just as is done during Holi, wood is collected and bonfires are lit on Lohri, and the fire is worshipped with sesame seeds. The day of this festival is bitterly cold, with temperatures often hovering between minus five degrees Celsius and dense fog in most parts of North India. Despite the cold, people's enthusiasm for the festival is palpable. On the auspicious occasion of Lohri, people celebrate with great enthusiasm by

lighting bonfires outside their homes. This festival is also believed to be linked to the celebration that bids farewell to winter, invoking the Sun God, who is said to warm the earth with his rays this month so that the cold does not harm anyone and people can easily cope with the winter season. It is believed that the winter begins to subside from this day. People light bonfires outside their homes to protect themselves from the cold and also worship fire, so that, with the blessings of Agnidev, happiness and prosperity may prevail in their homes. In Haryana and Punjab, Lohri holds special significance in families where a new marriage has taken place, a child (boy) has been born, or it is the first wedding anniversary. A festive atmosphere prevails in these families on the occasion of Lohri. Relatives, along with the people living nearby, also participate in this celebration. People gather around a fire lit in the house or in an open space outside the

house, warming themselves by offering peanuts, jaggery, sesame seeds, revari, roasted corn kernels, etc., and entertain themselves and exchange greetings by dancing Bhangra and Giddha all night long.

Lohri has long been associated with a Brahmin girl named Sundari and a notorious bandit named Dulla Bhatti. Dulla Bhatti used to rob the rich and distribute the wealth among the poor. Legend has it that in the Ganjibar region, now in Pakistan, there lived a Brahmin who had a beautiful daughter named Sundari, whose beauty was the talk of the town. When the king of Ganjibar learned of her, he resolved to make Sundari the pride of his harem. He sent a message to Sundari's father, urging him to send his daughter to his harem. He offered the Brahmin various inducements, but he refused to give his daughter to the king. He was at a loss for what to do. When he couldn't think of anything, he remembered Dulla Bhatti, a notorious

bandit who lived in the forest and was always ready to help the poor and oppressed. The distraught Brahmin took his daughter, Sundari, to him that very night and explained everything in detail. Dulla Bhatti consoled the Brahmin after listening to his plight and that very night, he found a suitable Brahmin boy and considering Sundari as his own daughter, he gave her away in marriage with that young man. When the king of Ganjibar learned of this, he was furious. Upon his orders, his army attacked Dulla Bhatti's hideout, but Dulla Bhatti and his companions defeated the king. Celebrating the defeat of the ruler of Ganjibar at Dulla Bhatti's hands, the people of Ganjibar lit bonfires and danced Bhangra, singing songs in praise of Dulla Bhatti. It is said that since then, Sundari and Dulla Bhatti have been particularly remembered in the songs sung on the occasion of Lohri. Before Lohri, children gather together and go from door to door singing Lohri songs, asking for Lohri. Children also

gather several days in advance to collect wood and cow dung cakes for the festival. However, with the passage of time, the tradition of begging for wood from door to door is fading away. In many places, people are now purchasing wood and cow dung cakes instead of having children collect them. On Lohri, preparations for the night's festivities begin early in the morning. At night, people light bonfires outside their homes, circumambulate them, throw sesame seeds, jaggery, revari, chidwa, popcorn, and other items into the fire, and bow their heads. Then, they sit around the bonfire and warm themselves. Then begins the captivating gidda and bhangra dances, which continue late into the night, sometimes even throughout the night.

The next morning, when the bonfire cools down, the neighborhood takes the ashes home, considering them a gift from God. This festival truly sets a unique example of love and brotherhood in society.

## Inequality top economic concern for youth globally: WEF survey

**New Delhi, Agency:** Growing inequality between the rich and poor is the top-most economic concern for the youth across the world, while a large number of them want to run for political office rather than just critique, a new survey showed on Monday.

The World Economic Forum's Youth Pulse 2026: Insights from the Next Generation for a Changing World 2026 report sought to know how the next generation is interpreting, and responding to, rapid economic, political, technological and environmental change.

The survey, drawing insights from nearly 4,600 young people aged 18–30 in 144 countries and territories, found that 48.2 per cent identify 'growing inequality between the rich and poor' as the top economic trend shaping the future.

Yet in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, entrepreneurship emerged as the most powerful economic force – reflecting growing confidence in innovation and self-determination

as key drivers of opportunity.

More than 57 per cent cited financial concerns among their biggest sources of stress or anxiety.

The study also found that youth priorities are practical and policy-ready. The most-cited empowering measures were creating employment opportunities for youth (57.2 per cent), equal access to affordable, quality education (46.1 per cent), and affordable housing and financial independence (32.2 per cent).

Showing that trust is earned close to home, young people rated community leaders as most effective in driving positive change (60 per cent), reinforcing demand for leadership that is proximate, accountable and delivers tangible results.

Despite concern over geopolitical tensions and democratic erosion, nearly half of respondents highlighted positive political shifts – from innovative governance models and greater civic participation to stronger international cooperation and the inclusion of under-represented groups in policy-making.



It also found that it was a generation ready to govern, not just critique, as 36 per cent said they are likely to run for political office, challenging assumptions of political apathy. Climate remained the defining global concern, even under economic strain, in the survey. More than 56 per cent identified climate change and environmental degradation as the greatest threat to the world; personally, 51 per cent cited inflation and instability as their greatest worry, while 41 per cent identified

climate change as the second most significant threat to their lives.

The report also documented more than 800 youth-led solutions advanced over the past year directly reaching over 2.2 million people worldwide.

A vast majority of 95 per cent said that intentionally designed youth communities provide a critical space for learning, growth, and dialogue.

On technology, two-thirds of respondents believed AI would reduce entry-level job opportunities, underscoring awareness of disruption and the need for adaptive skills and forward-looking policies and systems.

Nearly 60 per cent of young people reported using AI regularly to enhance their skills, with another third experimenting occasionally. Only a small minority was not yet engaged with AI tools.

Regular AI use among young people was found to be high across regions, challenging assumptions that digital innovation is concentrated in a few markets.

## Doubling screen count in 5 years can generate 1.25 lakh jobs, add Rs 950 crore tax for govt: Report

**New Delhi, Agency:** The Indian film exhibition industry can generate 1.25 lakh jobs and contribute an additional tax of Rs 950 crore for the government exchequer by doubling the screen count in the country in the next five years, according to a joint report.

However, the number of cinema screens in India has seen a marginal increase from 9,527 in 2019 to 9,927 in 2024, said a joint report from Multiplex Association of India and E&Y.

Moreover, India's filmed entertainment revenues have fallen 2 per cent from their peak in 2019, decreasing from Rs 19,100 crore to Rs 18,746 crore in 2024.

It had suggested "increasing India's screen count to 20,000" helped by



measures such as tax holidays to new screens set up in 19,000 pin codes where there are currently no screens.

It has recommended deregulating the cinema exhibition industry in terms of ticket pricing, akin to the hospitality sector and grant

the exhibition segment industry status so that electricity, which is a key cost, can be paid at industrial tariffs, rather than higher retail rates.

The report also recommended permitting alternate use of theatres to take advantage of the massive

growth in live events, MICE and experiences and also to permit 24x7 operation of cinema infrastructure to enable increased monetisation.

According to the report, screens per million of the population has fallen from 7.6 in 2018 to 6.8 in 2024. This also compares unfavourably with other large content production economies like the US (109 screens/million), UK (66 screens/million) and China (64 screens/million).

Moreover, the industry is also facing challenges such as shortening of the theatrical window period.

"Theatrical window of 90 days before the release of a film on OTT was a pre-pandemic norm, but has

## RBI has expanded Payment Aggregator Authorization for Innoviti Technologies Pvt. Ltd. to include Physical (in-store) payments



**Bengluru, Agency:** Innoviti Technologies, India's leading payments-centric retail SaaS platform, has been granted a Certificate of Authorization by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a Payment Aggregator under the Payments and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.

The company had earlier received RBI authorization for online payment aggregation in March 2024. With the latest authorization, Innoviti is now permitted to operate as a Payment Aggregator for both online and

physical (in-store) payment transactions. Today's consumers increasingly move fluidly across physical and digital environments, expecting brands to recognise them and serve them consistently—whether they are shopping in-store, ordering remotely, or engaging across multiple touchpoints. For merchants, this shift calls for payment systems that are no longer defined by channels, but by the ability to support seamless, sustainable experiences wherever and whenever customers choose to transact.

**New Delhi, Agency:** Retail inflation rose to a three-month high of 1.33 per cent in December, mainly due to higher prices of food items, but remained below the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) lower tolerance level.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based headline inflation was 0.71 per cent in November and 5.22 per cent in December 2024. The inflation stood at 1.44 per cent in September.

The food inflation in December was (-) 2.71 per cent compared to (-) 3.91 per cent in November, and remained negative for the seventh consecutive month.

"The increase in headline inflation and food inflation during the month of December 2025 is mainly attributed to an increase in inflation of personal care and effects, vegetables, meat and fish, egg, spices and pulses and products," National Statistics Office (NSO) said while releasing the CPI data.

The headline inflation in urban



areas was higher at 2.03 per cent compared to 0.76 per cent in rural India.

The retail inflation remained below RBI's lower tolerance limit for the fourth consecutive month in December.

The government has mandated the central bank to ensure inflation remains at 4 per cent, with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

According to the NSO data, the top five major states with high inflation during December were Kerala (9.49

per cent), Karnataka (2.99 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (2.71 per cent), Tamil Nadu (2.67 per cent), and Jammu and Kashmir (2.26 per cent).

On the other hand, retail inflation was negative in Assam, Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist at Icra, said the retail inflation expected to rise to 1.3 per cent in December 2025 from 0.7 per cent in November, while printing marginally lower than Icra's estimate of 1.4 per cent for the month.

The uptick was driven by narrower deflation in the food and beverages segment, as well as hardening inflation in the miscellaneous items, she said.

"While the December 2025 MPC minutes suggest a possibility of another rate cut in February 2026, Icra believes that a pause is warranted at the current juncture."

## Mysore Saree Udyog Reimagines Its Digital Commerce Experience with Netcore Cloud, Achieving 8X ROI During the Festive Season

**Mumbai, Agency:** Netcore, a global leader in AI-powered customer engagement, and Mysore Saree Udyog (MSU), one of India's most admired ethnic wear labels, today announced the success of their collaboration in reimagining MSU's digital commerce experience. Through Netcore's intelligent, behaviour-led customer journeys, MSU achieved an 8X return on marketing investment, a 2X increase in online transactions, and a 2.5X growth in paying users month-over-month, while preserving the premium, handcrafted appeal that defines the brand.

The Indian ethnic wear brand achieves 2X growth in online transactions and 2.5X increase in paying users through AI-led customer journeys

Mysore Saree Udyog (MSU) is a heritage destination for authentic Indian textiles, renowned for its curated collection of silk sarees, handloom weaves, designer drapes, ethnic wear, and premium fabrics. With around 5-8% of its business now coming from e-commerce, the brand sought to bring the warmth and exclusivity of its showroom experience into the digital world without compromising on authenticity or heritage.

This transition was powered by the perfect blend of Netcore Cloud's AI-powered omnichannel customer engagement platform and consultative expertise. Acting as a strategic growth partner rather than just a technology provider, Netcore co-owned MSU's KPIs and business goals, from boosting conversions to

improving return on marketing investment. Together, the teams designed digital journeys that echoed the warmth of MSU's in-store experience, making every interaction feel personal, intuitive, and memorable.

Key pillars of Netcore's solution included:

- Behaviour-Based Automation: Netcore mapped MSU's customer lifecycle from registration to payment, creating targeted, automated journeys to reduce drop-offs and recover lost revenue. Personalised welcome series introduced shoppers to the brand's heritage, while product-view and wishlist nudges re-engaged browsers with items they had admired.

- Add-to-Cart Recovery: By using live product images, names, and

prices, Netcore's solution halved cart drop-offs and doubled conversions from 1.5% to 3%. WhatsApp nudges were reserved for high-intent users, while casual shoppers were approached via email and SMS to ensure cost efficiency.

- Omnichannel Orchestration: Campaigns were intelligently distributed across WhatsApp, Email, SMS, Web Push, and RCS based on geography, user behaviour, and cost-effectiveness. Each message felt like a personal note from the showroom, timely, elegant, and human.

- Personalised Communication at Scale: Dynamic templates pulled in live customer and product data, recreating the tactile richness of silk and weave patterns digitally. This attention to detail made every message feel as personal as an in-store

**Black Box Names Sameer Batra as Chief Business Officer to accelerate International Markets Growth**

**Mumbai, Agency:** Black Box (BSE: 500463) (NSE: BBOX), a global digital infrastructure solutions provider, today announced the appointment of Sameer Batra as Chief Business Officer for the Global Systems Integration (GSI) business covering India and International Markets.

On technology, two-thirds of respondents believed AI would reduce entry-level job opportunities, underscoring awareness of disruption and the need for adaptive skills and forward-looking policies and systems.

Nearly 60 per cent of young people reported using AI regularly to enhance their skills, with another third experimenting occasionally.

Only a small minority was not yet engaged with AI tools.

Regular AI use among young people was found to be high across regions, challenging assumptions that digital innovation is concentrated in a few markets.

## Tredence Unveils Agentic Commerce Solution Accelerators

# TREDENCE

Beyond Possible

**NEW YORK, Agency:** Tredence, a global data science and AI solutions provider, today announced the launch of its Agentic Commerce accelerators.

These enterprise-grade accelerators serve as configurable starting points to design, build and scale agent-driven shopping experiences speeding time to value by 60%.

**The Shift to Mission-Based Shopping:** As consumer expectations evolve, retailers are being challenged to move beyond optimizing isolated touchpoints and instead orchestrate a personalized shopping journey across omnichannel touchpoints.

Tredence's Agentic Commerce accelerators provide a 'System of Agents' that understands shopper's intent and orchestrates personalized experiences across the end-to-end shopping journey.

**Cosmos Customer Intelligence Agent:** Builds advanced customer intelligence by understanding behaviors, predicting customer actions, and modeling shopper preferences to enable real-time personalization.

**Personalized Content Generation Agent:** Generates on-brand, multi-modal personalized content (text, product description, image, video) in real-time.

On the other hand, retail inflation was negative in Assam, Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist at Icra, said the retail inflation expected to rise to 1.3 per cent in December 2025 from 0.7 per cent in November, while printing marginally lower than Icra's estimate of 1.4 per cent for the month.

The uptick was driven by narrower deflation in the food and beverages segment, as well as hardening inflation in the miscellaneous items, she said.

"While the December 2025 MPC minutes suggest a possibility of another rate cut in February 2026, Icra believes that a pause is warranted at the current juncture."

interaction.

**Rapid, Collaborative Implementation:** Within just one week, the Netcore and MSU teams took the strategy from whiteboard to live journeys. Campaigns were continuously optimised using real-time insights to ensure every iteration delivered stronger results.

**Channel Discipline:** Initially, MSU's marketing spends were fragmented across Email, SMS, WhatsApp, and RCS, making it difficult to measure performance or returns. Netcore implemented an intent-led orchestration model that aligned spends with user behaviour, improving engagement efficiency and driving measurable ROI across every channel.

## Australian captain Alyssa Healy to retire from all forms of cricket after India series



**Melbourne, Agency:** Australia women's cricket team captain and legendary wicketkeeper-batsman Alyssa Healy has announced that she will retire from all forms of international cricket after the upcoming home multi-format series (February-March) against India. Although she will not take part in the T20 matches of this series, she will be seen captaining Australia in the ODIs and the only day-night test match to be held in Perth.

Keeping in mind the preparations for the T20 World Cup 2026, Healy has decided to stay away from T20 Internationals. Alyssa Healy, niece of former Australian legendary wicket-keeper Ian Healy, made her international debut against New Zealand in 2010 at the age of 19. By the end of her

career, she will have played 162 T20Is, 6 ODIs, and 11 Test matches for Australia. She holds a record 6 dismissals in T20I cricket.

Alyssa Healy assumed the full-time captaincy of Australia in 2023 after Meg Lanning's retirement. Her biggest achievement as captain was the historic 16-0 Ashes clean sweep against England. Under her leadership, Australia reached the semi-finals of the 2024 Women's T20 World Cup and the 2025 Women's ODI World Cup.

Alyssa Healy, one of the most explosive batsmen and best wicket-keepers in women's cricket, has been part of eight ICC World Cup-winning campaigns (six T20Is and two ODIs). She holds several records, including the highest individual score in a

Bash League, scoring over 3,000 runs and winning two titles. She also played two seasons in the Women's Premier League and captained the Uttar Pradesh Warriors.

Announcing her retirement, Alyssa Healy said in an official statement, "It is with mixed emotions that I announce that the upcoming series against India will be my last for Australia. I still love playing for my country, but the competitive edge that has driven me for so many years is no longer the same. I feel this is the right time." She added, "I will not be part of this year's T20 World Cup and, given the team's limited preparation, I will not play in the T20 matches against India. But it will be special for me to end my career captaining the ODI and Test teams on home soil."

## Real Madrid terminates Xabi Alonso's contract, appoints Alvaro Arbeloa as new head coach

**Madrid, Agency:** Spanish football giant Real Madrid has announced the separation of its head coach Xabi Alonso by mutual consent. The club gave this information on Monday. In place of Alonso, the club has appointed its Castilla (B team) coach Alvaro Arbeloa as the new head coach of the first team. This decision was taken after the 2-3 defeat against arch-rivals Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final played on Sunday. Currently, Real Madrid is four points behind Barcelona, which is at the top of the La Liga points table. Xabi Alonso took charge of Real Madrid on June 1, 2025. He previously had a stellar stint with German club Bayer Leverkusen, where he won the domestic double (league and cup) in the 2023-24 season and led the team to the Europa League final. Alonso's start with Real Madrid was also impressive. After leading the team to the semi-finals of the Club World Cup, he won 13 of the next 14 matches. The only major defeat during this period came in a derby against Atletico Madrid. However, after the Champions League defeat against Liverpool on November 4, the team's performance declined. Real Madrid subsequently recorded just two wins in eight matches.

## After early success, Nand says much more to come



**New Delhi, Agency:** The young Chandigarh pacer had claimed a five-wicket haul, including the first hat-trick of the Women's Premier League (WPL) season, in Delhi Capitals' game against Gujarat Giants in Navi Mumbai on Sunday.

Sharma, who was drafted by DC for Rs 20 lakh, made her debut in the tournament against Mumbai Indians and took two wickets. However, it was against GG that she recorded the biggest moment of her career by claiming a five-wicket haul, including a hat-trick. She took four wickets in the last over. She accounted for Kha Ahuja, Rajeshwari Gayakwad and Renuka Singh to achieve the feat. In her four-over spell, she took 5/33.

Brought up with an aim of playing for the nation, Sharma termed the success an early phase of her career. "I am getting all the sup-

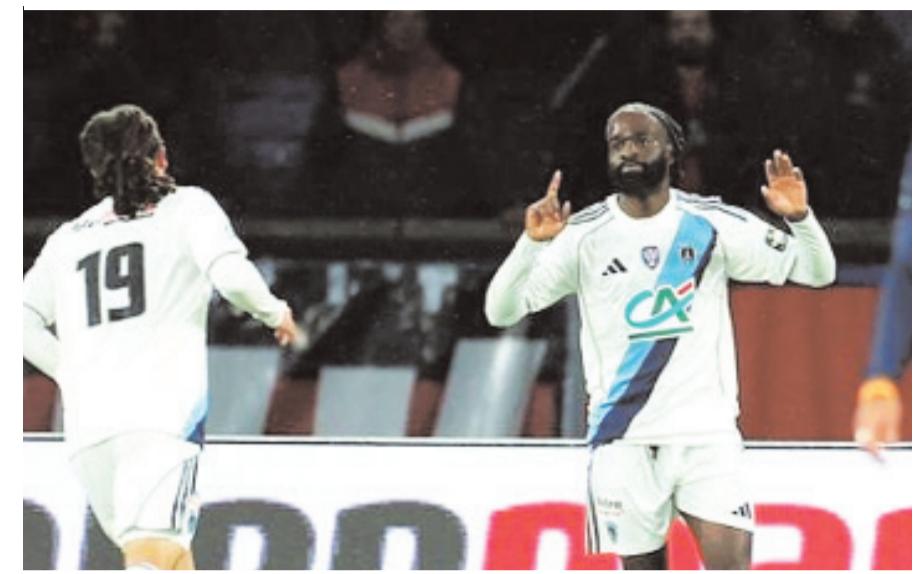
port. The team really backed me, and whatever happened against Gujarat Giants, I dedicate it to the team," she said.

"My life's motive is to never give up. There will be phases, when injuries would occur, sometimes performance would be an issue, and sometimes fatigue would take over. But I like to keep going with the same smiling face," she said.

While talking about her WPL debut, she said: "It's really challenging to bowl to super- or players."

I am learning a lot, and this platform is really an eye opener for me. It's literally like my dream has come true. To see people watching me, talking about me, it's a very big thing for me. I feel very proud. I am just keeping my fingers crossed, as I really want to take the best from this opportunity."

## Paris FC pull off a major upset, knocking defending champions PSG out of the French Cup



**Paris, Agency:** The French Football Cup witnessed a major upset as Paris FC defeated defending champion and record 16-time winner Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) 1-0 to enter the last-16 of the tournament. The match was played at the Parc des Princes stadium on Monday night. The hero of the match was former PSG academy player Jonathan Ikonen, who stunned his former team by scoring the winning goal in the last 20 minutes after coming on as a substitute. With this defeat, PSG suffered their first home defeat in the French Cup since 2022, while it was their first defeat in the last-32 stage since 2014. After scoring, Ikonen told France Television, "We are very happy. We defended brilliantly. I am extremely pleased with my goal. It is a happy moment for me and I hope it will not be my last."

Before the match, former PSG captain Mamadou Sako announced his retirement on the field. Sako began his career at the Paris FC academy and later joined PSG. The two teams also faced each other earlier this month in the Paris Derby, the first in the top division since 1990. Goals from Desire Doué and Ousmane Dembele helped PSG win 2-1. PSG then won the French Champions Trophy by defeating Marseille in a penalty shootout in Kuwait.

Newly promoted Paris FC, backed by luxury brands LVMH and Red Bull, currently sit 15th in the Ligue 1 table and are two

points above the relegation play-off spot.

Speaking of the match, PSG dominated the first half. Georgia's Khvicha Kvaratskhelia created several chances but couldn't convert. Alimamy Gori, who was replaced by Ikonen five minutes before halftime, had the best chance for Paris FC in the opening period.

In the 10th minute of the second half, poor passing by Paris FC center-back Mustapha Mbo gave PSG a big chance, but goalkeeper Obé Nkambadio punched out a brilliant shot from Gonçalo Ramos.

In the final 15 minutes of the game, as PSG continued to press, Paris FC launched a counter-attack, and Ikonen capitalized on the opportunity. Seven minutes into injury time, Desire Doué's header came close to equalizing, while Nkambadio made a brilliant save from Vitinha's long-range shot to secure victory for his team.

Marseille will play against sixth-division team Bayo in the final match of this round.

The match will take place in front of a packed house at the Stade Michel-Dornano in Caen, Normandy. Bayeux, famous for its centuries-old tapestries, is the lowest-ranked team remaining in the tournament. The round of 16 draw will be held before the match.

On Saturday, former Wolves coach Gary O'Neill began his tenure as Strasbourg's new coach with a thumping 6-0 win over fourth-division Avranches.



## HIL GC beat Accord Tamil Nadu Dragons 4-2 in Men's Hockey India League

**Ranchi, Agency:** HIL GC defeated Accord Tamil Nadu Dragons 4-2 in the Men's Hockey India League 2025-26 at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Astro Turf Hockey Stadium in Ranchi on Monday.

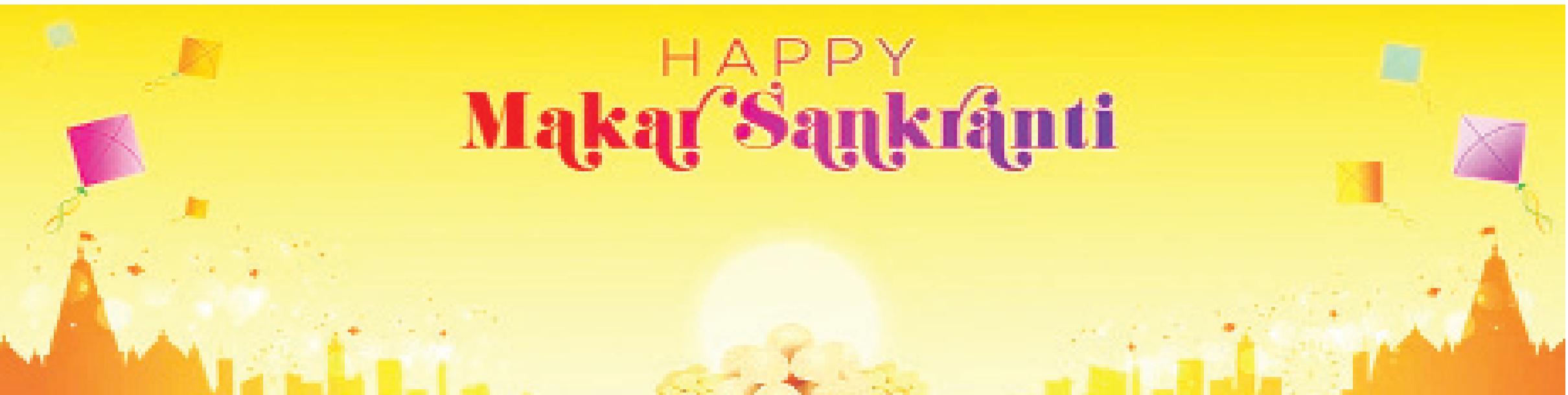
Kane Russell (14', 33', 47'), and Sam Ward (23') scored the goals for HIL GC, while Blake Govers (32') and Uttam Singh (56') were the goalscorers for Accord Tamil Nadu Dragons, as per a press release from HIL.

Accord Tamil Nadu Dragons started the first quarter strong as Tom Craig unleashed a powerful back-handed shot in the second minute, but it was met with a strong save by HIL GC's goalkeeper James Mazarello. Despite the strong start by the Dragons, it was HIL GC that dictated the play for the remaining quarter. In the 6th minute, Prasant Barla was through on goal, but his close-range shot was saved by Accord Tamil Nadu Dragons goalkeeper David Harte.

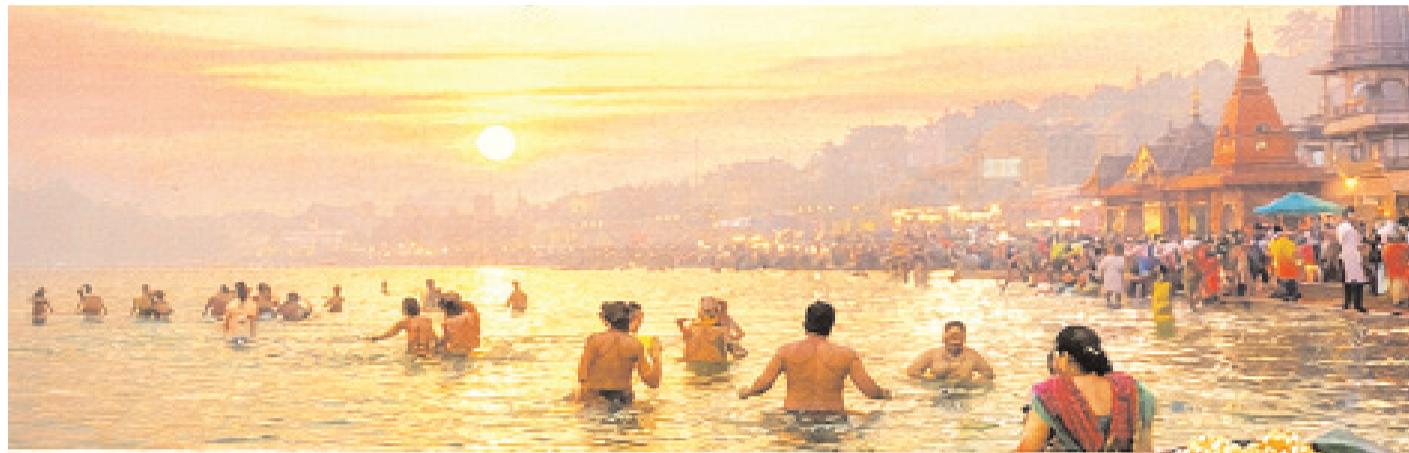
In the 10th minute, HIL GC were awarded back-to-back penalty corners, but Kane Russell and Manmeet Singh's attempts on goal couldn't reach the target. Two minutes later, HIL GC won yet another penalty corner, and this time, the current leading goalscorer of Hero HIL, Kane Russell (14') did what he does best as he powered the ball into the net past everyone to score his seventh goal of the season and claim the lead.

HIL GC continued to maintain their high line and pressed the Accord Tamil Nadu Dragons in their own half. The intense pressure paid off as Lalit Kumar Upadhyay demonstrated dribbling skills to beat his marker and carry the ball along the baseline as he eventually played the perfect pass to Sam Ward (23') in front of goal, who dove in and tapped the ball into the net to increase HIL GC's advantage.

# HAPPY Makar Sankranti



## Makar Sankranti—The Festival That Marks the Sun's Northward Journey



Makar Sankranti is one of India's most ancient and scientifically significant festivals, celebrated every year around January 14. Unlike most Indian festivals that follow the lunar calendar, Makar Sankranti is based on the solar calendar. It marks the day when the Sun enters the zodiac sign of Capricorn (Makar), beginning its northward movement, known as Uttarayan. This celestial transition is believed to bring longer days, warmer weather,

and renewed energy to nature and human life alike.

The festival symbolizes hope, positivity, and fresh beginnings. For centuries, Indian traditions have regarded the northward journey of the Sun as highly auspicious.

Ancient scriptures mention that this period brings clarity of mind, spiritual awakening, and good health. It is believed that holy dips taken in rivers such as the Ganga, Yamuna, and Godavari on this day cleanse sins and help attain spiritual merit.

Makar Sankranti is deeply connected with agriculture. Falling at the end of the winter solstice, it coincides with the harvesting season in many

parts of India. Farmers celebrate the fruits of their hard work and express gratitude to nature, the Sun God, and the Earth for sustaining life. The festival thus becomes a celebration of abundance, prosperity, and harmony between humans and nature.

One of the most visible traditions of Makar Sankranti is kite flying.

From Gujarat to Delhi, the sky turns colorful as thousands of kites soar high.

The activity symbolizes freedom, joy, and the act of letting go of negativity. rooftops become gathering spaces where families and communities come together, strengthening social bonds.

Food plays an important role in the festival. Til (sesame seeds) and jaggery

are widely used because they provide warmth and energy during winter.

Dishes made from these ingredients are shared among friends and neighbors, spreading sweetness and goodwill.

The practice of exchanging sweets carries a deeper message—"forget differences and speak sweetly."

Makar Sankranti stands out as a festival that unites science, spirituality, and social values.

It reminds people to move towards light, warmth, and positivity, just as the Sun begins its journey northward. Even in modern times, the festival continues to inspire optimism, gratitude, and togetherness.

## Til and Jaggery

The Health and Cultural Significance of Makar Sankranti Foods



Makar Sankranti is unique in its diversity, celebrated across India under different names and customs while carrying the same underlying spirit. The festival reflects the cultural richness of

the country, showing how a single astronomical event is interpreted through regional traditions and beliefs.

In Punjab and Haryana, the festival is celebrated as Lohri,

## A Festival of Many Names

### How India Celebrates Makar Sankranti

marking the end of winter. Bonfires are lit, folk songs are sung, and people gather to celebrate the harvest. In Tamil Nadu, Makar Sankranti becomes Pongal, a four-day festival dedicated to farmers, cattle, and the Sun God. The cooking of sweet rice in clay pots symbolizes prosperity and abundance.

In Assam, the festival is known as Magh Bihu. It marks the end of the harvesting season, and people celebrate with community feasts, traditional games, and cultural performances. In Gujarat, Uttarayan is synonymous with large-scale kite flying festivals, attracting tourists from around the world. Maharashtra celebrates the festival by exchanging til-gud sweets and greeting each other with the words, "Til-gud ghyah, god

god bola."

In West Bengal, Makar Sankranti coincides with the Ganga Sagar Mela, one of the largest religious gatherings in the country. Devotees take holy dips at the confluence of the Ganga and the Bay of Bengal, seeking spiritual purification. In Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, families decorate cattle, prepare special dishes, and pray for prosperity.

Despite the diversity in rituals, the essence of Makar Sankranti remains the same everywhere—gratitude, renewal, and harmony. The festival highlights India's unity in diversity, where regional expressions come together to celebrate nature, agriculture, and the cosmic rhythm of life.

Food is central to Makar Sankranti celebrations, and the widespread use of sesame seeds (til) and jaggery is both symbolic and scientific. These ingredients are chosen not only for their taste but also for their health benefits during the cold winter season.

Sesame seeds are rich in calcium, iron, and healthy fats. They help keep the body warm, strengthen bones, and boost immunity. Jaggery, made from sugarcane juice, is a natural sweetener packed with minerals like iron and magnesium. Together, til and jaggery provide energy and help improve digestion, which tends to slow down during winter.

Across India, these ingredients appear in various forms—til laddoos, chikki, pongal, pitha, and sweets cooked with rice and milk. Sharing these dishes is a ritual that promotes bonding and goodwill. The traditional saying about speaking sweetly after eating til and jaggery reflects the deeper social message of kindness and harmony.

The practice of seasonal eating, deeply rooted in Indian culture, is evident during Makar Sankranti. Long before modern nutrition science, communities understood the importance of aligning food habits with nature's cycles. The festival thus becomes an example of how traditional wisdom supports physical and emotional well-being.

In today's fast-paced lifestyle, Makar Sankranti reminds people to return to simple, nourishing foods and mindful eating. It reinforces the idea that festivals are not just celebrations but also opportunities to maintain balance between health, culture, and community life.

## Makar Sankranti and Its Message of Renewal in Modern Times

In a rapidly changing world, Makar Sankranti continues to hold relevance as a festival of renewal and positive transformation. At its core, the festival encourages people to move away from darkness—both literal and symbolic—and embrace light, growth, and clarity.

The northward movement of the Sun is often interpreted as a metaphor for progress and self-improvement. Many people choose this day to begin new habits, set goals, or engage in acts of charity. Donations of food, clothes, and essentials to the needy are considered especially auspicious, reinforcing the festival's message of compassion.

In urban settings, the festival has adapted to modern lifestyles while preserving its essence. Kite festivals are organized in public spaces, cultural programs are held, and traditional foods are shared within communities. Social media has also become a platform to spread festive greetings, keeping traditions alive among younger generations.

Environmental awareness has become an important part of con-

temporary celebrations. Eco-friendly kites, natural colors, and responsible festivities are increasingly encouraged. These changes reflect the festival's deeper philosophy of living in harmony with nature.

Makar Sankranti is more than

a date on the calendar—it is a reminder to rise above negativity,

embrace discipline, and look forward with optimism. As the Sun begins its northward journey, the festival inspires individuals and communities to move towards a brighter, more balanced future.

