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# The Researchers'

## NEWS BOX

### US Brothers Charged In Luxury Real Estate Sex- Trafficking Scheme

**New York, United States.** Three brothers were charged by US authorities with sex trafficking on Wednesday, in a lurid case that alleges they used their high-profile connections in the luxury real estate world to assault women for years.

Oren and Tal Alexander are the founders of real estate firm Official, which has offices in Miami and New York. Alon Alexander -- Oren's twin -- worked at the family's private security firm, according to US media.

The brothers are alleged to have used "deception, fraud and coercion" -- including the promise of luxury travel accommodation -- to engage in sex trafficking as well as drugging, sexually assaulting and raping dozens of women. They used "their wealth and prominent positions in real estate to create and facilitate opportunities" to do so, the US Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York said in a statement. The assaults date from at least 2010 to at least 2021, prosecutors said. Just two years ago, Tal, 38, and Oren, 37, were the subject of a New York Times profile detailing their successful ventures as real-estate high rollers, including the sale of a 24,000 square foot (2,230 square meter) Manhattan penthouse for \$234 million.

Tal Alexander flaunted a "no days off" lifestyle of constantly showing glamorous residences to wealthy clients. Prosecutors painted a grim picture of all three brothers luring women to events and parties, then drugging them with cocaine, mushrooms and GHB, and assaulting them. The Alexanders and those in their circle used "social media, dating applications, in-person encounters... and party promoters who would recruit women for these events," prosecutors said.

Susan Necheles, an attorney for Oren Alexander, said in a statement that her client was innocent and "the evidence will show that neither he nor his brothers ever committed a crime." Alon, 37, Oren and Tal are charged with engaging in sex trafficking conspiracy and sex trafficking by force, fraud or coercion, which both carry a maximum sentence of life in prison.

### Plane Crashes Into Vehicles On Texas Highway, Splits In Half; 4 Injured

**Texas, US.** At least four people were injured after a small plane landed on a South Texas highway on Wednesday before crashing into three cars. After the crash, the twin-engine propeller plane split in two, leaving debris scattered across the busy roadway, the authorities said. The aircraft crashed on the State Highway Loop 463, in Victoria City of South Texas at around 3 pm, according to a report by NBC. Four people injured in the crash were taken to the hospitals, of them, three had non-life-threatening wounds. The fourth person was taken to another facility for a higher level of care, police said.

Addressing reporters, Deputy Police Chief Eline Moya of the Victoria Police Department said, "We are glad that it wasn't worse than what it is. This is not something we see every day." But we are glad that people seem to be OK, and they are getting checked out," she added. The moments before the crash and the devastation that followed were captured on camera by observers on the roadway. The footage, which is being widely shared on social media, shows the aircraft flying very low before landing on a street. The video then shows the plane splintered in two near the highway overpass, with debris scattered across the road. The plane, a twin-engine Piper PA-31, was carrying just the pilot at the time of the crash, according to a report by Fox News Digital.

The Victoria Police Department and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) have begun their investigation into the crash. Per a FlightAware report, the aircraft took off from the Victoria Regional Airport around 9:52 am and was airborne for around five hours before the crash.

### Russia Says Ukraine Used US Missiles To Attack Military Base in Rostov, Vows Response

**World.** Ukrainian forces launched a missile strike with Western high-precision weapons on the Taganrog military airfield in Russia's Rostov region, the Russian Defence Ministry said Wednesday. Six US-made ATACMS ballistic missiles were used, the ministry noted, adding that two of them were shot down and the rest were deflected by Russian electronic warfare systems, Xinhua news agency reported. Falling missile fragments caused casualties among the personnel, the ministry said. "This attack by Western long-range weapons will not go unanswered, and appropriate measures will be taken," it added. In a major shift of policy on the



Ukraine crisis, the US in November authorised Ukraine to use US long-range missiles to strike targets inside Russia's territory. Russia has repeatedly called it an escalation of tension around the conflict.

## New Syria PM says rights of all religious groups will be 'guaranteed' under rebel-led regime

**DAMASCUS.** Syria's new prime minister said the Islamist-led alliance that ousted president Bashar al-Assad will guarantee the rights of all religious groups and called on the millions who fled the war to return home. Assad fled Syria after a lightning offensive spearheaded by the Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) group and its allies, which brought to a spectacular end five decades of brutal rule by his clan.

Syrians across the country and around the world erupted in celebration, after enduring a stifling era during which anyone suspected of dissent could be thrown into jail or killed. With Assad's overthrow plunging Syria into the unknown, its new rulers have sought to assure members of the country's religious minorities that they will not repress them. They have also pledged justice for the victims of Assad's iron-fisted rule, with HTS leader Abu Mohammed al-Jolani vowing on Wednesday that officials involved in torturing detainees will not be pardoned. Half a million people have been detained since the start of the war, with about 100,000 dying either under torture or due to poor detention conditions, according



to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor.

"We will not pardon those involved in torturing detainees," said Jolani, now using his real name Ahmed al-Sharaa, urging "countries to hand over any of those criminals who may have fled so they can be brought to justice."

In the corridors of Damascus's main hospitals, thousands of families gathered to try to find the bodies of loved ones captured years ago by the authorities. "Where are our children?" women cried out as they grasped at the walls, desperate for closure after their years-long ordeal. Starting to feel safe?

Sunni Muslim HTS is rooted in Syria's branch of Al-Qaeda and is proscribed as a terrorist organisation by many Western governments, though it has sought to moderate its rhetoric. "Precisely because we are Islamic, we will guarantee the rights of all people and all sects in Syria," said Mohammad al-Bashir, whom the rebels appointed as the transitional head of government. Asked whether Syria's new constitution would be Islamic, he told Italian daily Corriere della Sera that "we

will clarify all these details during the constituent process." Bashir, whose appointment was announced Tuesday, is tasked with heading the multi-ethnic, multi-confessional country until March 1. After decades of rule by the Assads, members of the minority Alawite offshoot of Shiite Islam, Syrians now face the enormous challenge of charting a new course as they emerge from nearly 14 years of war. In Aleppo, Syria's second city and the first major one captured by the rebels in their offensive, shopkeeper Ramadan Dali, 70, said that "we are starting to feel safe." Juman Khilaly, 40, said that "there is

still a lot of uncertainty" over even the most basic aspects of life, like school for her 10-year-old child and soaring prices. "Everything is so expensive," she said. In the Assads' home village Qardaha, the tomb of the former leader's father was set alight, AFP footage showed, with rebel fighters in fatigues and young men watching it burn.

**Smooth transition'**

The war has killed more than 500,000 people and forced half the population to flee their homes, with six million of them seeking refuge abroad. In his interview with Corriere della Sera, which was published on Wednesday, Bashir called on Syrians abroad to return to their homeland.

"Syria is now a free country that has earned its pride and dignity. Come back," he said.

Syria's main international airport in Damascus, closed since the rebels overran the capital, will reopen "in the next few days", its director Anis Fallouh told AFP.

Bashir said Syria's new rulers would be willing to work with anyone so long as they did not defend Assad.

## Australia To Force Meta And Google To Pay For News Shared On Platforms

**Sydney, Australia.** Australia will force Meta and Google to pay for news shared on their platforms under a new scheme unveiled Thursday, threatening to tax them if they refuse to strike deals with local media. Traditional media companies the world over are in a battle for survival as precious advertising dollars are hoovered up online. Australia wants big tech companies to compensate local publishers for sharing news links that drive traffic to their platforms, an idea they have balked at in the past.

"It is important that digital platforms play their part. They need to support access



to quality journalism that informs and strengthens our democracy," Communications Minister Michelle Rowland said. Social media platforms with Australian revenue of more than

US\$160 million a year will be taxed a still-to-be-decided figure earmarked to pay for news.

But they can avoid paying the tax if they voluntarily enter into commercial agreements with Australian media companies. It is the latest salvo in Australia's efforts to reign in the tech giants. Australia last month voted for new laws that will ban under-16s from social media. It has also mooted slapping fines on companies that fail to stamp out offensive content and the spread of disinformation.

## US, China officials to hold economic talks ahead of Trump's return and looming tariff war

**WASHINGTON.** Economic officials in outgoing US President Joe Biden's administration are set to meet their Chinese counterparts this week for talks, in a final effort to strengthen ties before Donald Trump's White House return. The talks come as Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen stressed in an interview on Wednesday the need for "ongoing communications at all levels" to avoid needless worsening in relations between the world's two biggest economies.

Economic and trade tensions between Washington and Beijing have continued to flare during Biden's time in office. But temperatures could rise further under Trump, who has threatened sweeping tariff increases on Chinese goods ahead of his presidency, most recently over concerns surrounding the flow of illegal fentanyl into the United States. "It's critical to have open channels of communication," Yellen told Bloomberg Television, warning that Trump's universal tariffs proposal would likely trigger retaliation. For now, US

## William, Kate Preparing To Be King And Queen "Sooner Than Expected": Report



**World.** Prince William and Kate Middleton are reportedly accelerating their preparations to assume their future roles as king and queen, as the royal family navigates a year marked by King Charles' health concerns and evolving responsibilities. The Prince and Princess of Wales have also been through a challenging time, particularly after Middleton, 42, underwent treatment for cancer earlier this year. Following her diagnosis during a scheduled abdominal surgery in January, she spent much of the year focusing on recovery, while Prince William scaled back his public engagements to prioritise family time.

With the princess now cancer-free, the couple has gradually resumed their public duties. According to royal

biographer Sally Bedell Smith, this also meant stepping up preparations for William's eventual ascension to the throne. "Although the King is carrying out his duties with typical determination, he has had to accept limitations during his cancer treatment. As a result, William has been taking on more responsibilities, and he and Kate have been preparing for their future roles sooner than they would have expected," Bedell Smith shared with People Magazine. King Charles III has also been a huge concern for the royal family and it has led to adjustments in his commitments. These circumstances have prompted his eldest son to represent the monarchy at key events. William made a solo appearance at the reopening of Notre Dame Cathedral in

### Prince William and Kate Middleton are reportedly preparing for their future roles as king and queen earlier than expected.

Paris on December 7. "They are next in line for the biggest job of their lives, and of course, Kate's health has taken priority, but it's also allowed everyone to take a step back and figure out what's important right now," People quoted a royal family insider as saying.

Royal insiders have indicated that formal succession plans have been in development since Charles' coronation in May 2023. These plans reportedly gained urgency earlier this year due to the king's health. "It is something the institution is always mindful of," a palace source said, adding, "It is an institutional preparedness."

The increased focus on William and Kate's future roles has reshaped the dynamics within the royal family, according to a report in the New York Post. Insiders suggest the relationship between the Prince of Wales and his father has evolved, particularly as William has assumed more prominent responsibilities.



officials are seeking to reinforce communication channels on economic issues. On Thursday, Treasury Under Secretary for International Affairs Jay Shambaugh is due to meet Chinese Vice Minister of Finance Liao Min for an economic working group meeting on the sidelines of Group of 20 talks in South Africa, said the Treasury Department. "The United States and China are the two largest economies on the globe, and the American people expect that we should be able to communicate directly with Chinese officials on both areas where we agree and especially on areas where we don't," said Shambaugh. Treasury officials are expected to raise issues of concern like recent Chinese export restrictions on certain key minerals, a department spokesperson said. They will also discuss China's macroeconomic imbalances and excess industrial capacity, which they believe recent policy stimulus efforts by Chinese lawmakers have not fully addressed. Treasury officials and representatives from other agencies will travel to the eastern Chinese city of Nanjing as well, for a financial working group meeting taking place Sunday and Monday. "This upcoming meeting will continue our work to strengthen efforts to preserve financial stability and counter illicit finance threats like fraud and drug and human trafficking."

## Wounds reopen as sectarian clashes flare in Pakistan's border region

**PARACHINAR.** Once again, Ali Ghulam receives mourners at his home -- his brother and nephew killed 40 years apart in the same sectarian conflict that was reignited this year in northwest Pakistan, claiming 200 lives since July alone.

Thousands of residents are stranded without food and medicine in parts of remote Kurram district, which borders Afghanistan, as the government struggles to end clashes between Sunni and Shiite Muslims stemming from decades-old tensions over farmland. "Our generations yearn for peace," 72-year-old Ghulam told AFP at his home in Parachinar, the main town and a Shiite bastion of the restive district. The latest flare-up of violence has "reopened wounds" he said, recalling how his brother was killed in an attack in 1987 that also wounded another three of his brothers. Kurram, known as the "Parrot's Beak" for its protrusion into neighbouring Afghanistan, is bounded by dizzyingly high mountains, the northern flank of which includes the Tora Bora caves where

Al Qaeda founder and 9/11 mastermind Osama bin Laden once hid. Pakistan's northwestern border districts have long been a haven for various militant groups, with militants and weapons able to flow largely unchecked in and out of Afghanistan. "I have never experienced peace in my life and have no hope my coming generations will live free of fear," Ghulam said. Tribal and family feuds are common in Pakistan. But they can be particularly protracted and violent in the mountainous tribal northwest, where communities live by traditional codes of honour and revenge. The latest round of violence in Kurram erupted in May and intensified in July, when gunmen opened fire on a council of elders attempting to settle the latest round of disagreements over land. Various truces announced since then have held for only weeks or days at a time.

More than 300 shops and over 200 homes in Sunni areas have been destroyed, often by fire, and hundreds of families have fled.



**Bin Laden, Tehran and the Taliban**

Pakistan is a Sunni-majority country with Shiites making up 10 to 15 percent of the population, or at least 25 million people.

Members of the two sects have periodically clashed in Kurram, where Shiites are particularly vulnerable as they must pass through Sunni-majority neighbourhoods to access essential services. Kurram's location on the frontier of Pakistan and Afghanistan put it at the heart of the religious and political upheavals of the last five decades. In 1979, Shiites led a revolution in Iran and later that year the Soviet Union

invaded Afghanistan, prompting Sunni hardliners there to rise up against them.

Pakistan's military ruler Zia-ul-Haq aligned with them, funneling thousands of Sunni militants into Afghanistan through Kurram.

"It became a hub for arms supply to Afghanistan, including landmines, mortar shells, and weapons of all kinds. Every household in Kurram had a stockpile of weapons," Malik Attaullah Khan, a local tribal elder told AFP. Khan, who signed a 2007 agreement aimed at bringing peace to Kurram, criticised the government for failing to "fulfil its responsibility" in enforcing land settlements. The ethnic Pashtun heartland was merged into the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in 2018, but the Pakistani state maintains limited control in the merged districts. In rural areas of Pakistan, villages often bypass the formal justice system and men-only "jirgas" or councils made up of respected village elders resolve disputes, sometimes in the form of fines or land reallocation.

## One Nation, One Election Bill gets Cabinet nod, Set to be tabled in Parliament

**New Delhi:** The Union Cabinet has given its approval for the "One Nation, One Election" Bill, which is expected to be tabled in the ongoing winter session of Parliament this week. Following its introduction, the bill will be referred to the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) for further review.



The proposal stems from the recommendations of the Ramnath Kovind Committee, which suggests that elections for Parliament and state assemblies should be held simultaneously. Additionally, it proposes that local body elections be conducted within 100 days of the national and state elections, marking a phased implementation approach. The initiative, which aims to synchronize elections across multiple levels of government, would require 18

constitutional amendments. Several of these amendments will need ratification by at least half of India's states.

A separate recommendation by the Law Commission advocates for simultaneous elections for all three levels of government: Lok Sabha, state assemblies, and local bodies, beginning in 2029. The Commission's proposal also includes provisions for the formation of a unity government in the event of a hung parliament or no-

confidence motions. This move aligns with a key promise made by the BJP in its Lok Sabha election manifesto. However, the proposal

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has faced opposition from several parties within the INDIA alliance, including the Congress and AAP, who argue that the change could disproportionately benefit the ruling party.

On the other hand, key NDA allies, such as JD(U) and Chirag Paswan's party, have expressed support for the bill.

To ensure a broad consensus, the government plans to consult state assembly speakers, experts, civil society groups, and the public before proceeding.

The comprehensive 18,626-page report from the Kovind Committee outlines the two-stage process for implementing simultaneous elections, which would first align Lok Sabha and state assembly elections and later include local body polls.

## BIT Mesra to Host 2 Day Workshop on Blockchain for Secure Energy Management



**Ranchi:** The Department of Electrical & Electronics Engineering at BIT Mesra, in collaboration with SERB (now ANRF), will organize a two-day workshop on leveraging Blockchain technology for secure energy management in microgrids. The event, scheduled for December 14-15, 2024, will be held at the BIT Mesra campus in Ranchi, Jharkhand.

The workshop is designed for faculty members and will cover topics like Secured Energy Management Systems, Blockchain deployment, and Cyber-Physical Systems. It will also feature hands-on laboratory sessions to enhance practical knowledge.

The workshop is supported by Professor Indranil Manna (Vice Chancellor, BIT Mesra), Professor R.C. Jha (Chairman, EEE Department), and coordinators Dr. Deepak Kumar and Professor Tirthadip Ghose.

## Domestic Tourist Visits in India Reach 250 Crore in 2023: Shekhawat



**New Delhi:** India's domestic tourism has seen a remarkable surge, with tourist visits rising from 120 crore in 2014 to 250 crore in 2023, according to Culture and Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat. Speaking to the media in New Delhi, Shekhawat emphasized the significant growth in the sector, reflecting India's increasing appeal as a domestic tourist destination.

The Minister also highlighted India's impressive rise in the Global Travel and Tourism Development Index, where the country's ranking has jumped from 65th place to 39th in the past decade. He further noted that the tourism sector has contributed to the creation of over seven crore jobs between 2022 and 2023.

Shekhawat outlined several key initiatives aimed at enhancing the country's cultural and tourism landscape. He announced plans to construct the world's largest museum in front of the Rashtrapati Bhawan, which will showcase India's 10,000-year history and cultural evolution.

Additionally, the Minister revealed plans to establish a cultural village at the upcoming Maha Kumbh in Uttar Pradesh next year. The village will be dedicated to highlighting India's rich spiritual and cultural heritage.

In another important development, Shekhawat announced that the government has recognized Assamese, Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, and Bengali as classical languages, increasing the number of classical Indian languages to eleven.

## BDO Arrested in Bihar for Taking Rs 70,000 Bribe



by Rahul Kumar

**Gaya:** Rahul Ranjan Kumar, the Block Development Officer (BDO) of Fatehpur in Gaya district, Bihar, was arrested by the Vigilance Investigation Bureau on Wednesday evening while accepting a bribe. The arrest took place near the Sadar Subdivision Grievance Redressal Office.

Kumar was accused of demanding a bribe in exchange for approving an online application for a scheme. The incident, which dates back to 2023, came to light when the applicant filed a complaint with the Vigilance Department in Patna. Following an investigation, the claims were found to be true, prompting the Vigilance team to set up a trap.

According to Patna Deputy Superintendent of Police Pawan Kumar, the BDO was apprehended while accepting Rs 70,000 from Randhir Prasad, the Up Mukhiya of Fatehpur Block. The bribe was demanded to approve a scheme under the seventh plan for the financial year 2023, which the BDO had withheld despite its approval in a meeting. Additionally, Kumar allegedly sought money to make the scheme online.

Randhir Yadav, the complainant, reported the incident to the Vigilance Department, which led to the operation in Gaya. Local residents have expressed relief and satisfaction over the BDO's arrest, with some even claiming that the officer routinely demanded bribes for approving any scheme. According to locals, Kumar's refusal to approve development works unless given bribes had been a longstanding issue in the region.

## Jharkhand Govt. Files FIR Against Mumbai Firm, Middlemen

The Jharkhand government has filed an FIR against Mumbai-based M/s Transrail Lighting Limited and five middlemen for illegally sending 47 workers from the state to Cameroon. The middlemen named in the FIR are Mannan (Mumbai), Akash, Satwik, Vijay Mahto, and Mahesh. The action was taken after Chief Minister Hemant Soren received complaints about unpaid wages from the stranded workers in Cameroon. Following the CM's orders, the Labour Department initiated the process to ensure the workers' wages are paid and filed FIRs in Hazaribagh, Bokaro, and Giridih districts.

## Congress wants to deviate the issue of Sonia Gandhi-George Soros link: Nadda

**New Delhi:** The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has criticized the Congress for attempting to shift attention away from the alleged connection between Congress leader Sonia Gandhi and financier George Soros. The controversy emerged amid a standoff in Parliament over the INDIA bloc's motion to remove Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar.

BJP President and Union Minister J.P. Nadda took aim at Congress Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, for reportedly filming a mimicry of Vice President Dhankhar in Parliament. Nadda stated, "The Vice President, who also serves as the Rajya Sabha Chairman, holds a constitutional position. It is inappropriate for the Leader of Opposition to make a video mocking this role and encourage such behavior."



Nadda further expressed his disappointment that Sonia Gandhi and the Congress party did not condemn the mimicry. He said, "It reminded me of my college days when opposition and ruling parties engaged in similar conduct. Yet, the Congress leadership remained silent." The BJP president accused Congress of trying to divert attention from allegations linking Sonia Gandhi to George Soros, claiming that the Congress was attempting to "deviate and divert" the debate surrounding this

issue. Nadda added, "The nation is disturbed by the idea that George Soros wants to undermine the stability of our country. People want to know the truth behind the connection between Sonia Gandhi and Soros."

The BJP has alleged that Sonia Gandhi was involved with Soros-funded organizations, specifically the Forum of Democratic Leaders in the Asia-Pacific (FDL-AP), where she purportedly served as co-president. They also accused the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, led by Sonia Gandhi, of partnering

with Soros' Open Society Foundation, suggesting foreign influence on Indian institutions.

Congress MP Karti Chidambaram dismissed these claims, calling them "baseless" and "conspiracy theories" that had no place in serious political discourse.

Earlier, Nadda also responded to Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge's criticism of Dhankhar's handling of Parliament proceedings. Nadda called Kharge's accusations "unfortunate," emphasizing that the Chairman's rulings in the Rajya Sabha were final and should not be questioned. He also pointed out that despite being given multiple opportunities, Kharge had declined to speak in the House, accusing the Congress of deliberately disrupting Parliament's functioning.

## Six DPS Bokaro Students Triumph in CLAT 2025

**Bokaro:** Six students from DPS Bokaro have achieved remarkable success in the Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) 2025, a prestigious national entrance examination conducted by the National Association of Law Universities (NLU Consortium) for admission to law schools across India. Among them, Aadya Mishra, a bright Class 12 student, secured the top position at her school with an impressive All India Rank (AIR) of 390, scoring 90.50 marks.

Other successful students from DPS Bokaro include Pranjal, who ranked 978th nationally, and Atulya Trishri,



who achieved AIR 2551. Arfa secured an OBC rank of 1509 (AIR 7700), while Trisha obtained an OBC rank of 1987 (AIR 12709), and Ayush Kumar earned AIR 4350. Dr. A.S. Gangwar, Principal of DPS Bokaro, congratulated all the students for their out-

standing achievements and wished them a bright future ahead. Aadya Mishra Dreams of Delivering Justice as a Judge Aadya Mishra, who secured AIR 390 in CLAT-UG 2025, expressed her aspirations to become a judge in the future.

Inspired by her family, Aadya decided to pursue a legal career after her 10th grade, and her success in CLAT marks a significant step toward that goal. Speaking on Thursday, she shared her passion for providing timely and fair justice to those in need. "Many people in our country are deprived of justice at the right time. It has always been my dream to bring real justice to such individuals," she said. Aadya, daughter of businessman Abhishek Mishra and writer Shweta, has also been actively involved in co-curricular activities alongside her academic pursuits.

## Nationwide Cashless Treatment Scheme for Accident Victims to Launch Soon



**New Delhi:** Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, announced today in the Lok Sabha that a nationwide cashless treatment scheme for road accident victims will soon be launched. The scheme, which is currently operational in six states, will first be introduced in Uttar Pradesh and later expanded across the country.

The new initiative will allow road accident victims to receive treatment worth up to 1.5 lakh rupees at participating hospitals, without the need for upfront payment. This move is expected to significantly improve emergency medical responses for accident victims and reduce fatalities caused by delayed treatment.

Addressing concerns over the rising number of road accidents, Gadkari urged Members of Parliament to establish Accident Prevention Committees in every district. These committees will be tasked with identifying and addressing the root causes of accidents. The Minister pointed out that Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh are the states with the highest number of accidents, while Delhi, Bengaluru, and Jaipur top the list among cities. Highlighting the urgency of timely medical care, Gadkari noted that 30 percent of road accident victims die due to delays in receiving early treatment. He further revealed that the cashless treatment scheme has already saved 2,100 lives in the six states where it is currently being implemented.

## At least six killed in Tamil Nadu hospital fire

**Chennai:** A devastating fire at a private hospital in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, claimed the lives of at least six people, including a child, on Thursday night.

The blaze broke out around 8 p.m. at City Hospital, located on Trichy Road. Initial reports suggest that the fire may have been triggered by an electrical short circuit within the hospital.

Emergency crews battled the flames for nearly two hours, with TV footage showing thick smoke billowing from the building. The victims were found in the hospital's lift.

A thorough investigation is currently underway to determine the exact cause of the fire.

Meanwhile, all other patients were safely evacuated and transferred to nearby medical facilities.

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# Ajit Doval to meet Chinese Foreign Minister for key talks after LAC border truce

► The meeting comes in the wake of recent disengagement efforts at Depsang and Demchok, signalling a potential breakthrough in the broader resolution of the border dispute.



→ Ajit Doval to meet Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi for LAC talks  
→ First high-level dialogue since 2020 Galwan clash  
→ Outcome to influence next military-level meeting

As India and China move towards resolving the long-standing tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval is set to meet Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi for a key discussion on the issue.

The Special Representative (SR) talks, scheduled for late December, will mark the first high-level dialogue since the Galwan Valley clash in 2020. The previous SR

meeting occurred in December 2019, prior to the escalation of tensions.

The meeting comes in the wake of recent disengagement efforts at Depsang and Demchok, signalling a potential breakthrough in the broader resolution of the border dispute.

The SR talks are expected to involve multilayered discussions aimed at defining and delineating the LAC more clearly, with the ultimate goal of achieving a lasting resolution. Sources indicate that the

outcome of these talks will determine the timeline for the next Corps Commander-level meeting, which will focus on operational issues regarding the ongoing patrolling and buffer zones to prevent further confrontations. India and China have engaged in a series of military and diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the situation along the LAC since 2020. The upcoming talks represent a crucial opportunity for both nations to address their differences, enhance trust, and establish a more stable framework for managing their contested border.

# We said Manipur, he thought Kareena Kapoor: Congress's dig as PM meets Kapoors

New Delhi. The Congress party took a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his meeting with Bollywood's popular Kapoor family on Tuesday. The Kapoor family had met PM Modi to invite him to the Raj Kapoor Film Festival, which marks the legendary actor and filmmaker's 100-year legacy. Taking a dig at the meeting, Congress leader Pawan Khera said, "We said Manipur, he thought Kareena Kapoor."

Several members of the Kapoor family, including Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt, Kareena Kapoor, Karisma Kapoor, Riddhima Kapoor Sahni, Aadar Jain, Armaan Jain, and Neetu Kapoor posed for a group picture with the PM.

Kareena Kapoor, Raj Kapoor's granddaughter, was accompanied by her husband, Saif Ali Khan. She shared several photos from her meeting with PM Modi. In one of the photos, the PM is seen signing an autograph for Kareena's sons, Taimur and Jeh. The dig by the Congress over meeting with the Kapoor family is the latest in a series of swipes at the Prime Minister, accusing him of deliberately avoiding a visit to Manipur, a state that has been marred by ethnic violence for

over a year. Ethnic violence between the Meitei and Kuki communities has claimed more than 200 lives in Manipur since May last year.

### MANIPUR VIOLENCE

Manipur has been witnessing sporadic violence ever since ethnic clashes broke out on May 3. The ethnic violence first



broke out after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. At least 258 people were killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kuki-Zo groups since May last year.

# BJP vs Congress over no-trust motion, George Soros claims stall Parliament again

**Parliament updates:** Both Houses have been briefly adjourned amid an uproar over the no-confidence notice against Jagdeep Dhankhar, and the alleged nexus between George Soros and Sonia Gandhi.

New Delhi. Rajya Sabha proceedings were disrupted again on Thursday following a heated exchange between the treasury benches and the opposition over the no-confidence notice against chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar, and the alleged nexus between US hedge fund tycoon George Soros and Sonia Gandhi. The Lok Sabha was also briefly adjourned following a verbal duel between BJP and Congress members over the Gautam Adani bribery case. As soon as the proceedings began in the Rajya Sabha, Union Minister JP Nadda trained his guns on Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge over his "biggest disruptor" remark against Dhankhar. Nadda said Kharge's



remark was "objectionable." The Rajya Sabha chairman cannot be questioned with regard to admissibility or for other purposes. The chairman's ruling cannot be questioned or criticised. To do so is contempt of the House," Nadda said. The Congress-led opposition has moved a no-confidence motion against

Dhankhar, accusing him of being "explicitly partisan" in conducting the proceedings of the House. Nadda also accused the Congress leadership of having links with Soros-backed outfits that were allegedly working to destabilise India. "The country wants to know the relationship between former Congress president Sonia Gandhi and US billionaire George Soros," Nadda said, triggering protests from the opposition benches.

On Wednesday, Kharge, addressing a press conference, accused Dhankhar of acting as a government spokesperson for his "next promotion" while defending the move to submit the no-trust motion notice.

# Shashi Tharoor pans trolls over old leg injury image: Desperate for distraction

► The pictures being circulated on social media show Shashi Tharoor in bed with a cast around his left ankle. However, the image is from 2022.



New Delhi. Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor has lashed out at trolls after an old image of the Kerala MP with a bandaged left foot started circulating on social media. The pictures show Tharoor in bed with a cast around his left ankle. However, the image is from 2022. "When the usual troll factory is reduced to circulating a two-year-old picture of mine with a sprain led foot, accompanied by picayune comments, one realises how desperate they are for a distraction," Tharoor tweeted.

The Thiruvananthapuram MP clarified that he was absolutely fine and has been regularly attending the winter session of Parliament. "For all those expressing concern about my well-being, I am pleased to say that not only is my leg alright, but I have been attending Parliament daily and spoke in the debate on the National Disaster Management bill yesterday," he said.

In 2022, Tharoor sprained his left foot after missing a step in the Parliament building during the winter session. The former Union Minister had also shared photographs of him in a hospital bed with a cast around his left ankle.

Due to the injury, Tharoor had to be taken to Parliament in a wheelchair. He had then expressed his disappointment on how poorly equipped India was for disabled people.

"This temporary disability has taught me how poorly equipped we are to support people with disabilities," the Congress MP had tweeted then. The Congress MP, who often grabs social media attention for his unique linguistic style, however, is no alien to trolls. In August, Tharoor was trolled for his "memorable day in Wayanad" post during his visit to the landslide-hit district. The tragedy left over 300 people dead and displaced hundreds. "For all the trolls: the definition of 'memorable': Something that is memorable is worth remembering or likely to be remembered, because it is special or unforgettable. That's all I meant," he tweeted.

# Trinamool MP submits written apology over remarks on Jyotiraditya Scindia

New Delhi. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Thursday said that TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee has submitted a written apology for his remarks against Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia besides apologising in the House. As soon as the House met, some members belonging to the ruling alliance stood up to raise the issue of the remarks made by Banerjee. However, Birla intervened and said whatever happened on Wednesday was unfortunate and no member should make any personal remark against any fellow member.

Without taking the name of Banerjee, he said any remark against women is in bad taste and it hurts their dignity and honour.

The speaker said agreements and disagreements are part of the democratic process but no member should make any personal remark against anyone. "The member concerned had apologised (in the House). He has also given me in writing too," he said and started with the day's proceedings. On Wednesday, there were verbal clashes when Banerjee was speaking in the House



during a discussion on the amendments to the Disaster Management Act. The TMC member had alleged non-cooperation by the central government during the COVID-19 pandemic, but Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai countered it, saying it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who helped all the states and successfully handled the crisis by taking everyone along.

Rai also alleged that the West Bengal government tried to put hurdles in the transportation of the Covid vaccines through the state. Scindia stood up to support Rai, saying that India had emerged as a "Vishwa Bandhu" during the pandemic and helped all the needy countries across the world. Following this, Banerjee attacked Scindia and made certain remarks against the minister which were expunged by the Speaker after an uproar. The verbal spat between the treasury and opposition benches led to adjournment. When the House reconvened, Banerjee apologised for his remarks, but Scindia refused to accept it, saying the opposition members should desist from making personal attacks. "Mr Kalyan Banerjee rose in this House and said sorry. But I will say that we all come to this House with the spirit of contributing to the nation's development... but we also come with a sense of self-respect."

# AAP's Poll Special: 1,000 A Month For Delhi Women, 2,100 If It Wins

Minutes after the AAP's announcement, the BJP's Virendra Sachdeva issued a sharp reminder: "Kejriwal should answer promises made for women before the Punjab," he said.

New Delhi. Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday announced a new scheme for Delhi women - ? 1,000 in their accounts every month, with a promise to double it to ? 2,100 if his Aam Aadmi Party wins February's election.

However, the initial payment of ? 1,000 cannot be credited till after the election, he said, pointing out "... poll dates will be announced in 10-15 days, so it is not possible to transfer the money now." The AAP boss, with Chief Minister Atishi by his side, also hit out at the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party, accusing them of having delayed the scheme's roll-out - by "conspiring and sending me to jail (in the alleged liquor policy case)" - and having cost Delhi women the steady honorarium.

I have come to make two big announcements for the people of Delhi... both are for women. I had

earlier promised to give ? 1,000 to every woman. This proposal was passed in a cabinet meeting chaired by Atishiji this morning. Now this scheme has been implemented in Delhi... (But) elections will be announced in 10-15 days, so it is not possible to transfer money to your accounts right now. Also, some women had said ? 1,000 will not be enough - due to inflation and price rise. Therefore, registration will start from tomorrow for ? 2100 per month... "This scheme is for empowering women and addressing their financial needs," Mr Kejriwal said, snapping back at criticism from the BJP - that it is merely a poll-related freebie, or revdi. "What the BJP calls 'revdis', I see as a



step to strengthening our society. The BJP also asks, 'where will the money come from?'... but I had said we will give free electricity (a promise the AAP made before the 2015 Delhi election, and which is now a party standard) and we did that," he reminded voters. "I want to tell the BJP... I am a magician. I am a magician of accounts," he declared with a

smile. Senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia, who was Deputy Chief Minister under Mr Kejriwal before he was arrested in connection with the liquor policy case, added his praise for the new scheme.

"Congress and BJP could not think of these things... when the public asks they make excuses. Kejriwal announced this scheme today, and after the election, women will be given ? 2100..."

### BJP's Punjab Reminder

Meanwhile, minutes after he announced the pre-poll sop, the BJP's Delhi unit chief, Virendra Sachdeva, issued a sharp response. "Kejriwal should answer promises made for women before the Punjab election. How many women in Punjab have got it in their bank accounts?" "And now, because

Vidhan Sabha elections are coming in Delhi, you give (this) lollipop?"

Mr Sachdeva was speaking about a promise the AAP made before the 2022 election - to deposit ? 1,000 in the bank accounts of eligible women in that state - and which has not yet happened. That amount was later raised to ? 1,110. Last month Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Manna acknowledged still-pending promise, and said he would make it his "mission" to execute it.

### What Is AAP's 'Mahila Samman Yojana'?

A budget of ? 2,000 crore has been set aside for this scheme, which was proposed in the Delhi government's 2024/25 budget.

It is meant to benefit women with no formal source of income. Women who pay tax and those already receiving financial aid from other government schemes are not eligible.

## Why Punjab has fallen deeper into the abyss

AS I heard the news of the attempt to assassinate Sukhbir Singh Badal, my mind flashed back to the April of 1983 and the killing of AS Atwal (DIG), an outstanding police officer and a gem of a person. Atwal was martyred while on duty with the limited resources he had while facing an armed militancy. Sukhbir survived — barely. The individual heroics of a policeman saved the day, but how a known terrorist with Pakistani training and support was allowed to not only receive the area but also approach a Z plus protectee is a question that remains to be answered. They say that history repeats itself but in the case of Punjab, we seem to be approaching the cycle with alarming speed. The conditions being created are similar, but as, yet, we do not have a full-blown militancy. The Punjab countryside is awash with unemployed youth who indulge in petty crimes and feed the drug industry. A lot of them have organised themselves into armed gangs, available for kidnappings, killings and inter-gang warfare. Their tentacles reach into Canada, the USA, Australia and, of course, Pakistan. They even operate from within jails — how is this possible? The youth are unemployed as agriculture has been, for the past many decades, a failing proposition for most marginal farmers. Punjab was never given priority for industrialisation as it was considered a border state and was landlocked. Even today, with its huge diaspora, air connectivity to the rest of the world remains a distant dream, with paltry routes being assigned to its international airports. Employment in the defence and paramilitary forces is no longer of the scale it used to be. Also, most youth are unemployable in skilled professions because of a failed education system. In the 1960s and 70s, the region had four of the top medical institutions — Amritsar medical college, CMC, Ludhiana, Rajindra Hospital, Patiala, and the PGIMER, Chandigarh. Today, barring the PGI, the rest are poor reflections of their old days as poor funding and administration has eroded them. Punjab University commanded immense respect, boasting a successful alumnus in all fields of life; today, it's a shadow of its former self. The odd IIT or private institution that has come up is a case of too little. There seems to be no well-conceived plan to create suitable employment. Why are the youth running to foreign shores for basic education and jobs? Why are they not productively employed here? recall the theory of 'Mastery Inaction', initially practised by John Lawrence (Viceroy of India) in the 1860s through his policy on dealing with Afghanistan after the death of its Emir, Dost Mohammad Khan, and the subsequent civil war. This policy helped the British consolidate their Indian empire. Its adaption on the home front is leading to the creation of a failed state. The concept of proactive administration, which identifies problems, finds solutions, engages in planning for its citizens, has changed to 'masterly inactivity', a conjurer's trick of creating an illusion of activity where there is none. Punjab alone is not at fault, Delhi also is missing in action. There is no acknowledgement of our problems. A proxy war was waged on the country through instigating, funding and promoting militancy in the state by Pakistan for two decades. What happened from 1970 to 1995, the days of horror and nights of massacres inflicted on us, is well known.

The Government of India resources were poured into fighting the militancy, but it was the blood of Punjabis that soaked its fields. Things were brought under control, but the political, administrative and economic fabric was destroyed. The situation required an initiative — a 'master plan'. It required political and administrative leadership of the highest order, but this was not to be. There has been no coordinated plan to pull Punjab out of this morass, no injection of financial or administrative support to help revive it. People forget the sheer scale of human tragedy during this time — over 3,000 police and paramilitary personnel were martyred. The Centre should have taken the lead and Punjab followed in its effort to revive.

## The significance of variability in data-based estimates

The average is not the 'only' message. If individuals from all walks of life understand that, the data-based world will become more transparent and clear to people.

IONCE served in a debate competition as one of the three judges. The ranking made by me prevailed even after the final rankings of the candidates were prepared by aggregating the scores given by all judges. The other two judges were taken aback. However, as a statistician, I was aware of the cause. The other two judges' ratings were much less variable; they were typically in the range of, say, 60 to 65. However, the distribution of the scores given by me had a lot more variability because they ranged from 5 to 95. Ideally, the scores should be added up after each judge's score has been divided by an appropriate measure of variability. Unfortunately, there was no such clause. This also holds true in many other real-world scenarios.

In fact, statistics recognises many measures of central tendency, or "average", such as the mean, which is the total divided by the number of observations, and the median, which is the middle-most value. We often state that country X has a larger per capita income than, say, country Y.

However, is the average income a reliable measure of the state of the economy if social inequality is ignored? In his 2013 book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Thomas Piketty used quantiles, such as the percentage of total wealth held by the poorest half of the population, the top 10%, the top 5%, the top 1%, or even the top 0.1% or 0.01%, because he believes that the Gini coefficient — a single number between 0 and 1 — is insufficient to explain the economic inequalities and their evolution. Four or five of these quantiles are seen to be adequate to understand the key components of economic inequality and its development, depending on the type of inequality and the time period that is being studied. Therefore, we basically require a sense of how wealth is distributed, which is just variability. Unfortunately, the majority of data-based estimates of different political and socioeconomic indicators are typically published without sufficiently addressing the estimates' variability.

Three researchers from the University of Southern Denmark have illustrated four classes of circumstances in which the conclusion reached based solely on the mean is qualitatively changed when variability is also taken into account. Their paper, "Variability Matters", was published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research*

and Public Health in 2020. Variability is a significant issue when it comes to economic disparities, health and longevity disparities among social groups and population selection potential, which is based on the fitness distribution's tails. This is becoming increasingly clear to experts working on data. It has also been suggested that predicting and comprehending the Covid-19 pandemic required an understanding of the disease transmission variability. Again, Havelock Ellis, an English physician and author, first put up the theory of greater male variability in 1894 to explain the overabundance of males among the eminent and among the mentally ill. This theory has been used to attempt to explain why Harvard has so few female



mathematics professors, for instance. The statement, "A statistician confidently waded through a river that was on average 50 cm deep. He drowned," is commonly credited to Dutch author and television personality Godfried Bomans. To be fair, though, a statistician would never do that because she understands the importance of variability and that the river's depth might surpass her height in the midway.

The significance of understanding variability in medical prognosis is demonstrated by the extraordinary story of renowned evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould. Gould was diagnosed with abdominal mesothelioma, an incurable cancer, in 1982. From the medical literature, he learnt that the median survival duration was eight months. "I will probably be dead in eight months," he thought initially. However, means and medians are abstractions of reality, as Gould was aware. Because Gould was an optimist and because he understood

nature, statistics and the meaning of variance in life's processes, he consequently took a very different approach to the mesothelioma statistics. Well, half of the population will undoubtedly survive longer than eight months if the median is eight months. Due to his youth, disease identification at a relatively early stage, first-rate medical care he received, and a strong will to live, he didn't give up. "The distribution of variation had to be right-skewed... the upper (or right) half can extend out for years and years... my favourable profile made me a good candidate for that part of the curve," he thought. Gould's 1991 essay "The Median Isn't the Message" was included in his book *Bully for Brontosaurus: Reflections on Natural History*, which has been reprinted numerous times for a wide range of readers. Twenty years (not 20 months!) after being diagnosed, Gould passed away due to a different cancer. Perhaps, significant in this context is a quotation from William Winwood Reade that was referenced in Arthur Conan Doyle's novel *The Sign of the Four*. "While the individual man is an insoluble puzzle, in the aggregate he becomes a mathematical certainty," Sherlock Holmes said to Watson. "You can, for example, never foretell what any one man will do, but you can say with precision what an average number will be up to," said Holmes. Finally, let's consider a snapshot of election prediction. In the recent US presidential election, the final-minute survey indicated that Donald Trump would receive 47.2% of the national vote and Kamala Harris 48.4%. But in the end, Trump and Harris received 49.9% and 48.4% of the vote, respectively. Was the poll prediction, at least for the vote share percentages, overly weird statistically? Obviously not. The opinion poll predictions are usually subject to a plus-minus 3% margin of error if proper care is taken to design them. This means that if the same process is applied frequently, the true population average will, 95% of the time, fall within the sample estimate, plus or minus 3%, which is derived using the variability of the estimates, and sample sizes in opinion polls are ideally set accordingly. As per this, the aforementioned opinion poll suggests that Trump's expected vote share could reach 50.4%. At least, it didn't go beyond that limit!

All being said, the average is not the "only" message. If individuals from all walks of life understand that, the data-based world will become more transparent to the people.

## Assad's fall

### Fragile hope in Syria's new dawn

THE downfall of Bashar al-Assad marks the end of over half a century of authoritarian rule in Syria, ushering in a fragile era of hope and uncertainty. Assad's hasty departure, following a swift rebel offensive led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), symbolises both the collapse of despotism and the challenges of rebuilding a fractured nation. For over 13 years, Syria endured a brutal civil war that claimed over 5,00,000 lives and displaced millions. Assad's regime, once propped up by Russia and Iran, crumbled under the weight of its own corruption and violence. Yet, the victory of the HTS, an Islamist faction, offers no guarantee of stability. While its leader, Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, has shifted the group's narrative toward national liberation, critics question the HTS' capacity to govern inclusively. The immediate challenges are monumental. Syria's institutions lie in ruins and its economy shattered by war and sanctions.



Internally displaced citizens and refugees yearn for a

return to normalcy, but fears of ethnic and sectarian divides linger. The promise of democracy is clouded by the ghosts of Libya and Iraq, where transitions led to chaos rather than cohesion. The US faces a critical moment in its West Asia strategy. Having supported Kurdish forces against the ISIS and maintained a military presence, Washington must now navigate the aftermath of Assad's fall. Its role could define whether Syria's future is one of peace or continued strife, balancing counterterrorism with humanitarian engagement. External forces further complicate Syria's path. Turkey, the Gulf states and western powers have vested interests, while Israel and Iran remain wary of instability spilling across borders.

While Trump has said the Americans must keep off, the question is how the HTS was able to find the gunpowder to mount the final assault on Damascus, forcing even the Russians to withdraw. Who has this kind of military might?

## Stakes are the highest for Israel

### Assad was pillar of Iran-led 'axis of resistance' that posed a challenge for Jerusalem & US

THE US and its Turkish and Israeli allies are the prime movers in what has been characterised as the Syrian revolution that brought a stunning end to the 54-year rule of the Assad dynasty. They are the apparent beneficiaries of a process that started with a civil war, which began in 2011 and reached its climax on December 8 when the regime collapsed and the country's dictator, Bashar al-Assad, fled to Moscow with his wife and three children.

Assad was the main pillar of the Iran-led "axis of resistance" that posed a major challenge for both Jerusalem and Washington. He was also Russia's most trusted regional ally and his departure means Moscow is obliged to evacuate its last naval and military strongholds in West Asia.

Turkey, for its part, will finally have a sympathetic regime in charge in Damascus that can help Ankara confront the problems it faces with its Kurdish minorities living along the Syrian border. Even better for Turkey is the prospect of lakhs of Syrian refugees returning home and reducing the economic burden of hosting them that Ankara has been forced to bear for the past over a decade. The stakes are the highest for Israel where Assad's downfall has attracted mixed responses, ranging from jubilation to fears about what could emerge in the new Syria. "This is a historic day in the history of the Middle East," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared during a visit to the Syria border. "The Assad regime is a central link in Iran's Axis of Evil — this regime has fallen." In a bit to take credit for what has happened in Syria, Netanyahu added,

"This is a direct result of the blows we have inflicted on Iran and Hezbollah, the main supporters of the Assad regime. This has created a chain reaction throughout the Middle East of all those who want to be free from this oppressive and tyrannical regime." In this time of uncertainty, including a power vacuum in Damascus, Israel has taken the initiative by launching a series of pre-emptive military measures. These include deploying army bulldozers, painted in distinctive orange colours, to dig three-metre deep ditches along the Syria border to block militants from attacking the Jewish state that has the most to lose from what unfolds in Damascus. The nightmarish scenario for Israeli generals, echoed in Washington, is a repeat of last year's invasion from Gaza when Hamas gunmen used 4-by-4 Toyota pickups to crash through border fences and launch the deadliest attack against Jews since the World War II Holocaust. At least 1,200 Israelis were killed and thousands injured, while 240 were kidnapped and taken as hostages. Currently, 100 hostages still remain in custody.

Israelis, monitoring the progress of Syrian rebels, as they too drove to Damascus in similar four-by-four convoys and backed up by rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), are fearful that what happened across the Gaza border last year could be repeated on the northern border with Syria. Digging the trenches — code-named Project New East — is one of the several measures approved by cabinet ministers who have been holding emergency meetings to assess the unfolding crisis in Syria.



In another unprecedented move, thousands of Israeli soldiers have created a 14-km deep buffer zone on the Syrian side of the border, known as Mount Hermon and famous on the Israeli side as a winter ski resort. Israeli media has published pictures of soldiers displaying their national flag with a caption declaring: "Syria's Mount Hermon has been occupied." Such is the fear of an escalating conflict along this border that the Israeli cabinet is contemplating ordering the army to expand its presence by capturing yet more Syrian territory. In the past few days, Israeli warplanes have launched endless strikes on Syrian military bunkers, missile bases and strategic military installations that are alleged to host clusters of chemical weapons, first used more than a decade ago to intimidate opponents of ousted President Bashar al-Assad, an ally of Russia and Iran, when they demanded the

end of his authoritarian rule. At the time, Assad defied US President Barack Obama by crossing a so-called red line and deploying these chemical weapons with disregard for international law. Obama could have retaliated, but chose not to risk involving the US in the Syrian civil war. Delight in Assad's downfall is shared by many Syrian political prisoners rescued from his notorious jails. Horror stories of what they endured have sent shock waves across the region. These include the account of a weeping man who described how he and 54 others were due to be executed last Sunday, but were saved at the last minute when the regime in Damascus collapsed.

Another released victim is a middle-aged woman who was jailed as an unmarried teenager and has now emerged as the mother of two children. She has no idea about the identity of the children's father, or fathers. Some elderly prisoners, long presumed dead by their families, have resurfaced to tell their horror tales. None of these accounts come as a surprise to Syrian human rights campaigners, who explain how Assad and his late father, Hafez al-Assad, were among the Arab world's most ruthless dictators. Although the Assad family's human rights record has never been of interest to Israel, Tel Aviv has always been fearful of how Syria has played host to multiple terror groups headed by the likes of Nazi fugitive Alois Brunner, an associate of the late Adolph Eichmann, who died in 2001, Germany's Baader-Meinhof, Carlos the Jackal, and members of the Japanese Red Army.



# बर्फबारी का मजा लूटना चाहते हैं तो, पटनीटॉप हैं आपके लिए पर्फेक्ट

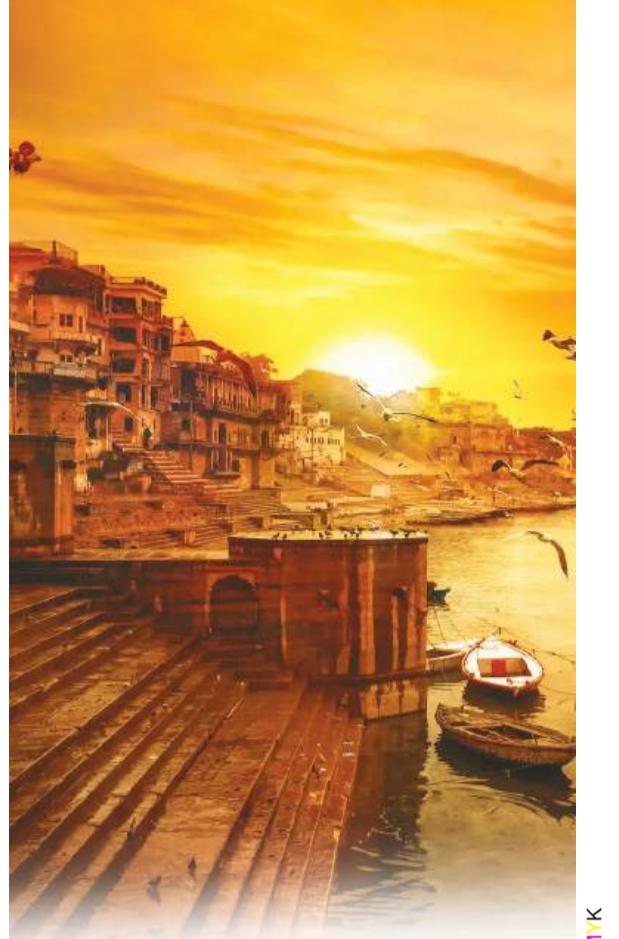


पटनीटॉप-सनासर (जम्मू कश्मीर)। चारों ओर बिछी हुई बर्फ की सफेद चादर, देवदार तथा चीड़ के पेड़ों से गिरते बर्फ के टुकड़े सच में यहां आने वालों को नई दुनिया का आभास देते हैं। जिधर नजर दौड़ाए, बस बर्फ ही बर्फ दिखती है और उस पर दिखते हैं बर्फ के खेलों का आनंद उठाते हुए लोग, जो देश के विभिन्न भागों से आए थे। यह है पटनीटॉप का प्रसिद्ध और मनमोहक पर्यटन स्थल जहां सिर्फ गर्मियों ही नहीं बल्कि सर्दियों भी मनोहारी होती है। जम्मू से 108 किमी दूर पटनीटॉप का रमणीय और प्राकृतिक सौंदर्य से भरपूर स्थल समुद्रतल से 6400 फुट की ऊंचाई पर है। लंबे लंबे चीड़ और देवदार के पेड़ हर उस शख्स को अपनी ओर आकर्षित कर रहे हैं जो प्रकृतिप्रेमी हैं। साल भर इसकी खूबसूरत ढलानों पर जमी रहने वाली बर्फ भी पर्यटकों को अपनी ओर खींच लेने की शक्ति रखती है। जम्मू पर्यटन विभाग पटनीटॉप में बर्फ के खेलों का मजा आने वाले पर्यटकों को देने के लिए अगले कुछ दिनों में 'स्कीइंग फेस्टिवल'

आयोजित करने जा रहा है। जम्मू क्षेत्र में यह अपने किसम का वार्षिक स्कीइंग फेस्टिवल होता है जिसमें पर्यटकों को स्कीइंग तो सिखाई ही जाती है और साथ ही पर्यटक बर्फ के खेलों का आनंद भी लूटते हैं। जब कश्मीर में आतंकी घटनाओं ने देश-विदेश के पर्यटकों को गुलमर्ग के प्रसिद्ध पर्यटन स्थल से मुखा मोड़ने पर विवश किया तो उत्तर प्रदेश व हिमाचल प्रदेश के बर्फीले क्षेत्र बर्फ के खेलों के विकल्प के रूप में उभर कर सामने आए थे। अब जम्मू क्षेत्र के 'पहलगाम' के रूप में जाने जाना वाला पटनीटॉप नए और महत्वपूर्ण बर्फ के पर्यटन स्थल के रूप में पूरी तरह से उभर चुका है। पहलगाम के उपरान्त पटनीटॉप को स्कीइंग स्थल के रूप में ख्याति प्राप्त करवाने में पर्यटन विभाग के जम्मू विंग का अच्छा खासा सहयोग रहा है। विभाग की मेहनत ही है कि आज पटनीटॉप में स्कीइंग और पैराग्लाइडिंग करने वालों की भीड़ लगी रहती है। स्कीइंग के लिए तो पटनीटॉप की सबसे ऊंची पहाड़ी पर बनी

छोटी और बड़ी स्लोपों के साथ ही पटनीटॉप के साथ लगते नथाटाप क्षेत्र को भी इस्तेमाल में लाया जा रहा है। जो आप ही खूबसूरती की एक मिसाल है। पर्यटन विभाग की ओर से अन्य स्लोपों की तलाश तथा उनका विकास किया जा रहा है ताकि स्कीइंग के लिए आने वालों की भीड़ से निपटा जा सके। आने वाले सभी लोगों को बर्फ के खेलों का आनंद उठाने का अवसर उपलब्ध नहीं हो पाता क्योंकि स्कीइंग साल में सिर्फ सर्दियों के अर्द्धाई महीनों में ही होती है। हिमाचल में यह सिर्फ दो महीने होती है पर पटनीटॉप व नथाटाप में यह कभी-कभी 3 महीनों तक होती रहती है क्योंकि बर्फ पिघलती नहीं है। ऐसा भी नहीं है कि स्कीइंग न कर पाने वालों को पटनीटॉप आकर निराशा होना पड़ता हो बल्कि कई बार लोग बर्फ पर फिसलने वाली लकड़ी की स्लेज का मजा लूटते हैं। कुछ लोग बर्फ के पुलने बना बर्फ के अन्य खेलों में लिप्त होते हैं। यह सब कुछ साल के सिर्फ अर्द्धाई महीनों के दौरान ही इसलिए होता है क्योंकि बर्फ इसी

दौरान रहती है और गर्मियों में पटनीटॉप आने वाले इन नजारों तथा अनुभवों से वंचित रहते हैं। गर्मियों में आने वालों को निराशा होती हो ऐसा भी नहीं है क्योंकि गर्मियों में पटनीटॉप आने का अपना ही अलग लुफ है जो कश्मीर के मुकाबले का है। ऐसा इसलिए है क्योंकि समुद्रतल से जितनी ऊंचाई पर पटनीटॉप स्थित है उससे कम ऊंचाई पर श्रीनगर शहर है। कश्मीर का मुकाबला करने वाले इस अनछुए पर्यटनस्थल पटनीटॉप में बर्फ के खेलों का एक रोचक पहलू यह है कि इसका आनंद उठाने वालों में अधिकतर वे लोग हैं जो पटनीटॉप से करीब अर्द्धाई घंटों की यात्रा की दूरी पर स्थित प्रसिद्ध तीर्थस्थल माता वैष्णो देवी की गुफा के दर्शनार्थ आते हैं। आधिकारिक रिकार्ड के अनुसार पटनीटॉप आने वाले पर्यटकों में 80 प्रतिशत वैष्णो देवी के तीर्थयात्री ही हैं।



## सबसे आकर्षक और बेहद खूबसूरत होती हैं इन जगहों की शाम

सुबह और शाम दिन के दो ऐसे प्रहर होते हैं, जब हमें जिंदगी के प्रति एक अलग सा लगाव महसूस होता है। हम में से कई लोग अपनी शाम पहाड़ों के बीच तो कोई नदी किनारे बीताना पसंद करता है। हममें से ज्यादातर लोग इन पलों को सुकून से प्रकृति के बीच महसूस करना चाहते हैं। आइए, आज उन चुनिंदा जगहों के बारे में जानते हैं, जहां की शाम बेइंतहा खूबसूरत होती है। हैं कुछ ऐसी जगहों के बारे में जहां पर आप अपनी शाम बीता सकते हैं और वाकई में इन जगहों की शाम का नाजारा काफी सुंदर और देखने लायक होता है। तो आइं जानते हैं इन जगहों के बारे में -

**बनारस** - वाराणसी शहर में लोग आध्यात्मिक उपचार की तलाश में आते हैं और गंगा यहां सबसे सुंदर अनुभव प्रदान करती है। गंगा नदी के किनारे बैठे उगते सूरज का नजारा आपको गदगद कर देगा। अगर आप सुबह जल्दी उठ सकते हैं तो नाव की सवारी भी कर सकते हैं। वैसे वाराणसी को महाकाल की नगरी भी कहा जाता है। यहां विश्व प्रसिद्ध काशी विश्वनाथ मंदिर स्थित है।

**राधानगर बीच, अंडमान** - अंडमान में स्थित हैवेलॉक द्वीप की शाम बहुत ही खूबसूरत होती है। यह सनसेट प्वाइंट प्राकृतिक सौंदर्य के कारण दुनियाभर में लोकप्रिय है। हैवेलॉक द्वीप हनीमून के लिए बेस्ट डेस्टिनेशन है। पूरे एशिया में सबसे बेस्ट सनसेट प्वाइंट माना जाता है। यहां पर जाने का सही समय अक्टूबर से अप्रैल के बीच का है।

## आप भी हैं कैपिंग के शौकीन तो जरूर जाएं इन बेहतरीन जगहों पर

क्या आपको हैं कैपिंग करने का शौक और आप खोज रहे हैं कोई ऐसी जगह जगह पर आप आराम से और शांत वातावरण में कैपिंग कर पाएं तो आज हम आपके लिए लाए हैं कुछ ऐसी जगहों के बारे में जहां पर आप आराम से और शांत वातावरण में कैपिंग कर सकते हैं। नेशनल पार्क से प्राइवेट ग्राउंड तक यह है कुछ बहुत ही बेहतर जगह कैपिंग करने के लिए। तो आइए जानते हैं इन जगहों के बारे में -

**अलास्का**-यह सबसे मशहूर और सबसे बेहतरीन कैपिंग ग्राउंड्स में से एक है। यह जगह अलास्का के कूपर लैंडिंग में स्थित है। यह तीन कैपसाइट लूप प्रदान करता है, जिनमें से एक झील पर है। यह वन्यजीवी के अवलोकन के लिए एक आदर्श स्थल है, जिसमें लायनक्स, भालू, गिलहरी और लॉन शामिल हैं। यहां पर जाने का सही समय मई से सितंबर का है।

**अरिजोना**-ग्रेड कैन्यन-यह एक ऐसी कैपिंग साइट है जो कि यहां के पर्यटकों के बीच काफी मशहूर है। यहां पर हर साल कई पर्यटक कैपिंग करने आते हैं। रात के समय यहां का नजारा देखने लायक होता है। अगर आप यहां पर कैपिंग का लुफ उठाना चाहते हैं तो मार्च से मई और सितंबर से नवंबर आपके लिए एकदम सही समय हैं।

**अर्कांसस**-पेटिट जॉन स्टेट पार्क-यह पार्क अर्कांसस का पहला स्टेट पार्क है। यह जगह अपने पर्यटकों के 125 कैपिंग साइट्स प्रदान करती है। यह जगह परिवार के साथ जाने के लिए काफी अच्छी है। यहां पर आपको मछली पकड़ना, स्विमिंग पूल, प्लेगाउंड, टेनिस और बास्केटबॉल कोर्ट और वॉटर स्पोर्ट्स जैसी गतिविधियां उपलब्ध कराई जाती हैं। यहां पर और भी कई खूबसूरत जगह भी हैं। यहां पर जाने का सही समय अक्टूबर से नवंबर क बीच का है।

**टाइगर हिल** - यह सूर्योदय देखने के लिए सबसे अच्छे स्थानों में से एक है। दार्जिलिंग आने वाले पर्यटकों के लिए सबसे बड़ा आकर्षण रहता है। टाइगर हिल राजसी माउंट कंचनजंगा, और प्रतिष्ठित माउंट एवरेस्ट के मनोहारी दृश्य भी दिखाती है। अपनी शाम को यादगार बनाने के लिए यहां से अच्छी जगह और कोई नहीं है। दार्जिलिंग जाने वाले पर्यटकों के लिए यह एक बहुत बड़ा आकर्षण है।

**नंदी हिल्स** - यहां पर आप वादियों के बीच लाल रंग के आसमान का लुफ उठा सकते हैं। अगर आपको एकांत पसंद करने वाले व्यक्ति हैं तो यह जगह आपके लिए एकदम सही है। अगर आप यहां जाना चाहते हैं तो आप उसके लिए अक्टूबर से जून में जा सकते हैं।

**उमियम लेक** - भारत के उत्तर पूर्व में स्थित यह झील सबसे शानदार स्थानों में से एक है। यह शिलांग से लगभग 15 किमी दूर स्थित है। जैसे ही सूरज उगता है और पहली किरणें झील के पानी को छूती हैं, आपको एहसास होगा कि आप किसी और दुनिया में आ गए हैं।

**कैलिफोर्निया**-योसेमाइट नेशनल पार्क-वैसे तो कैलिफोर्निया में घूमने के लिए कई सारे नेशनल पार्क हैं लेकिन यह पार्क कैलिफोर्निया का सबसे मशहूर पार्क है। बता दें कि इस पार्क को यूनेस्को की सूची में भी शामिल किया गया है। यहां पर आपको सिकोइया के पेड़ और झरनों का बीच अपना समय बीताने का मौका मिलेगा। आपको यहां पर कैपिंग करने के लिए पहले से ही रिसर्वेशन करना होगा। अगर आप यहां पर कैपिंग करने जाना चाहते हैं तो आपको मई से अक्टूबर और नवंबर से दिसंबर क बीच जाना चाहिए।

**मिनेसोटा**-स्वैट रॉक लाइटहाउस स्टेट पार्क-यहां पर आपको काफी सारे पर्यटक मिल जाएंगे यह कैपिंग करने वाले पर्यटकों के लिए एक बहुत ही पसंदीदा स्थल है। इसलिए अगर आप यहां पर कैपिंग के लिए जाना चाहते हैं तो आप अपने लिए पहले से ही रिसर्वेशन कर लें। यहां कई पर्यटक कैपिंग के साथ साथ हाइकिंग और फिशिंग भी करने आते हैं। यहां पर जाने का सही समय जून से अगस्त के बीच का है।



## नए साल पर इन जगहों पर घूमें, बजट भी नहीं बिगड़ेगा

नए साल का स्वागत करने के लिए अधिकतर लोग घूमने का प्लान बनाते हैं। लेकिन साथ ही उनके मन में यह भी होता है कि नए साल का स्वागत करने के चक्कर में कहीं उनका बजट ना बिगड़ जाए। कई बार तो लोग इस वजह से अपने घूमने का प्लान भी कैसिल कर देते हैं। अगर आपको भी लगता है कि नए साल में घूमने पर आपका बजट बिगड़ जाएगा तो अब आपको परेशान होने की जरूरत नहीं है। आज हम आपको ऐसी कुछ जगहों के बारे में बता रहे हैं, जहां आप बजट में रहते हुए नए साल का स्वागत कर सकते हैं...

### गोवा

नए साल पर घूमने की बात हो और गोवा का नाम ना आए, ऐसा तो हो ही नहीं सकता। वैसे तो आप गोवा कभी भी घूमने जा सकते हैं, लेकिन नए साल का जश्न गोवा में एक बेहद ही अलग तरह से मनाया जाता है। अगर आप यहां गए हैं तो बोहेमियन बीच पार्टी से लेकर नाइट क्लब ड्रिब्स में जाएं। दिसंबर के आखिरी दिनों में गोवा में पार्टी का दौर चालू रहता है, ऐसे में आप यहां जमकर मस्ती कर सकते हैं। अगर आप गोवा में न्यू ईयर सेलिब्रेशन करने का मन बना रहे हैं, तो टीटो क्लब, मेम्बो कैफे व बोट क्रूज पार्टी को एन्जॉय करें। अगर आप पहले से ही पैकेज बुक करवाते हैं तो आपको हर व्यक्ति का लगभग पांच से सात हजार रूपए खर्च आएगा।

### ऊटी

अगर आप शोर-शराबे से दूर एक शांत जगह पर रहकर नए साल का स्वागत करना चाहते हैं तो आपको ऊटी जाना चाहिए। आप यहां पर आकर टी फैवटी और म्यूजियम, बोटिंग, बोटनिकल गार्डन में जाएं। साथ ही नए साल की फील लेने के लिए आप सड़कों पर निकल जाएं। वहां पर

आतिशबाजी का माहौल देखकर आपके मन को यकीनन काफी अच्छा लगेगा। अगर आप यहां जा रहे हैं तो आपका खर्च सात से आठ हजार रूपए प्रति व्यक्ति आएगा।

### पांडिचेरी

समुद्र तटों पर बाइक चलाने से लेकर छत पर बने कैफे में घूमने तक पांडिचेरी आपको नए साल में एक अलग ही अनुभव महसूस कराएगा। खासतौर से, अगर आपका बजट काफी कम है और आप किसी बेहतरीन जगह पर घूमना चाहते हैं तो पांडिचेरी यकीनन आपकी जरूरत को पूरा करेगा। अगर आप वहां जा रहे हैं तो श्री अरविंदो आश्रम, प्रोमेनेड बीच, हेरिटेज वॉक, विडट फेंच कॉलोनी जाएं। यहां पर आपका प्रति व्यक्ति खर्च लगभग चार से पांच हजार आएगा।



NEWS BOX

**Did Yashasvi Jaiswal's 'too slow' remark lead to Starc revival Ponting reacts**

New Delhi. Ricky Ponting feels that Yashasvi Jaiswal's cheeky remark during the Perth Test could have led to Mitchell Starc's revival during the second match of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Adelaide. During the first match of the series, Jaiswal scored a brilliant 161 in the second innings which set up India's win. During the knock, there was a moment when the young opener would have an exchange with Starc. Jaiswal said that the Aussie pacer was 'too slow' and Starc would respond with a smile. However, in the Adelaide Test, the pacer would have his revenge as he dismissed Jaiswal for a golden duck with the first ball of the match and ended up registering his best career figures of 6 for 48 in the first innings. Speaking on the recent episode of the ICC review, Ponting suggested that the exchange with the Indian opener could have given extra motivation for Starc. "He's actually a pretty level-headed guy, Mitchell Starc. He doesn't get flustered too much, even you see when he's bowling now," Ponting said. "And if one of the batters does happen to say something, he generally responds with a little smile on his face." "But I think that smile on his face might be just a bit of a cover for the fire that's burning inside. Look, he



bowled beautifully in Adelaide didn't he." Ponting hails Starc's adaptability. Ponting also praised Starc for changing his bowling style in recent times to prolong his career. The former Aussie skipper claimed that Starc isn't slowing down, and it is just the way he is bowling at the moment. "He certainly deserves high praise. I mean, he's probably in the last couple of years been better than he's ever been," Ponting noted. "And the reason that I say that is I think he's a more consistent bowler now than he's ever been before, yet his pace is still about the same as it always was. I mean, he could bowl over 150km/h probably a few years ago and he's in absolute prime now. He's sort of operating in the mid-140s, but his consistency, the way he's starting spells is really good now as well." "I was really impressed by how he started his first spell in Perth and then the way he started his first spell in Adelaide was obviously unbelievably good. So his pink-ball record speaks for itself and I think talking to some of the players as well, I think the reason why his pink ball record is so good is I think the pink ball actually performs very similar to the white ball."

**Decisive footwork, off-stump discipline: Inside Virat Kohli's Brisbane nets session**

New Delhi. Virat Kohli seems to be all set for the Brisbane Test as the star batter engaged in an intense and focused nets session on Thursday, December 12. Kohli, who had scored a hundred in the Perth Test, would struggle in the Adelaide loss. The star batter's weakness outside off-stump was exploited by the Aussie bowlers as he was dismissed for 7 and 11 in the second Test. Kohli had decided to work on this just after the pink-ball Test, as was seen during the nets session in Adelaide on December 10. The Indian team would engage in their first training session in the city on Thursday and the focus was primarily on Kohli. The Indian star would lead the huddle and deliver a passionate and energetic pep talk to his teammates before the start of the training session. The Indian star seemed very



energetic and started off with some warmup exercises. He would follow it up with some fielding drills, which included slip catching. Kohli would then spend one and half hours in the nets in Brisbane. Kohli was very focused during the time he spent in the nets and similar to the one in Adelaide, the star batter was leaving a lot of deliveries outside off. There was also a lot of backfoot play involved during the session, which saw Kohli bring out some cut shots and pulls. Kohli would spend a lot of time with the throwdown specialists before facing the best of the Indian bowlers. The star batter focused the last half an hour on what he wanted specifically out of the session. Kohli would play a lot of backfoot punches and cover drives as well to conclude his long net session.

**Kohli's record in Brisbane**  
Kohli has played just one match in Brisbane so far in his Test career. This was during the 2014 series and the star batter could only manage 20 runs across both innings. The Indian team will be expected to have one more practice session on December 13 before the match gets underway.

**Champions League: Barcelona edge past Dortmund, Manchester City beaten again**

**Ferran Torres was the hero for FC Barcelona as they edged past Borussia Dortmund in a 5-goal thriller on Wednesday, December 11 in the UEFA Champions League. Manchester City's poor run continued as they were beaten by Juventus in Turin.**



New Delhi. In a thrilling UEFA Champions League match on Wednesday, December 11, FC Barcelona secured a hard-fought 3-2 victory over Borussia Dortmund. The win was largely thanks to substitute Ferran Torres, who scored twice, including the decisive 85th-minute winner. The match saw a dramatic five-goal second half, with Torres making a significant impact after coming on in the 71st minute. His goals helped Barcelona move to 15 points, placing

them in second place with two games remaining in the league phase. Borussia Dortmund, despite their efforts, were unable to overcome the deficit for a third time. Serhou Guirassy scored both of Dortmund's goals, but Torres's second goal, set up by a pass from Lamine Yamal, sealed the victory for Barcelona. This result dropped Dortmund to ninth place in the standings with 12 points, while the top eight teams will qualify automatically for the round of 16.

**Manchester City's woes continue**  
In other Champions League matches,

Juventus dealt a significant blow to Manchester City's hopes by winning 2-0. Dusan Vlahovic and Weston McKennie scored the goals for Juventus, with Vlahovic's header in the 53rd minute and McKennie's volley in the 75th minute securing the victory. The breakthrough for Juventus came when Vlahovic scored with a close-range header. Kenan Yildiz delivered the ball to the back post, and Vlahovic's header barely crossed the line, confirmed by goal-line technology. Despite City's increased pressure and attempts to equalise, Juventus capitalised on the counter-attack.

In the 75th minute, McKennie scored with a spectacular volley from Timothy Weah's cross, doubling Juventus' lead against the run of play. Manchester City had several scoring opportunities, most notably a missed chance by Erling Haaland in the first half. Another chance saw Ilkay Gundogan unleash a powerful long-range strike that Di Gregorio managed to push wide. With this result, Juventus moved to 11 points in the Champions League group phase, levelling them with Atalanta and just two points shy of the top eight position. Meanwhile, Manchester City plummeted to 22nd place, just one point above the bottom 12 places, which would result in elimination from the competition. City face daunting matches against Paris Saint-Germain and Club Brugge in their remaining group stage fixtures. Meanwhile, Arsenal took a significant step towards the Champions League knockout stage with a 3-0 win over AS Monaco. Bukayo Saka scored twice, with his first goal coming in the 34th minute from a Gabriel Jesus cross, and his second in the 78th minute. Substitute Kai Havertz added a third goal to seal the victory for Arsenal, moving them up to third place in the standings. AC Milan and Atlético Madrid also secured wins over Red Star Belgrade and Slovan Bratislava respectively.

**Told Naveen that we are there to support you after spat with Kohli: Sanjiv Goenka**

**Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) owner Sanjiv Goenka recently revealed that he extended support to Naveen-ul-Haq after his verbal spat with Virat Kohli during the IPL 2023.**



New Delhi. Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) owner Sanjiv Goenka recently opened up on the Virat Kohli-Naveen ul Haq verbal spat during the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2023. Notably, Kohli and Naveen had a heated exchange during Match 43 of the tournament between Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) and LSG in Lucknow. Following the incident, Kohli also had an altercation with the LSG mentor Gautam Gambhir at the end of the game. In the aftermath of the incident, the trio were

finned heavily by the BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India). Recently, LSG owner Sanjiv Goenka opened up on the incident and revealed that he had extended his support to Naveen after the incident. "That situation took place during a game. So I will not comment on whether it was right or wrong. It is easy to be judgmental but it is not for us to judge. I just told Naveen that if you need any support or you are feeling insecure, we are there to support you," Goenka said on

the TRS Podcast. Further speaking ahead, Goenka also mentioned how he motivated the Afghanistan seamer to give a strong reply with his performance. Kohli and Naveen sorted out their differences during World Cup. "But it is not about showing that you have the spirit to fight. If I was in your position, I would have said - You said this to me. Now I will bowl in such a manner that I will take all of your team's wickets," he added.

After the big controversy, Naveen and Kohli sorted out their differences during the ODI World Cup 2023 match between India and Afghanistan in Delhi. The Afghanistan bowler was welcomed with 'Kohli-Kohli' chants when he walked out to bat and also during his bowling spells. However, Kohli asked the crowd to not go after the youngster and gave him a warm hug to bring the controversy to an end.

**Boland knows how to trap Kohli then why can't we do same for Head: Mohammad Kaif**

New Delhi. Former India cricketer Mohammad Kaif feels Indian bowlers need to target Australia batter Travis Head the same way opposition bowlers target Virat Kohli. Notably, Head has been India's chief tormentor over the past year having scored match-winning centuries against them in the World Test Championship (WTC) final and the ODI World Cup 2023 final. In the ongoing series as well, Head has been in phenomenal form with scores of 89 and a match-winning 140 in the second Test in Adelaide. Mohammad Kaif feels India need to exploit Head's weakness, the same way the opposition targets Kohli by bowling outside off-stump against him. "If Boland knows how to trap Kohli then why can't we do the same for Travis Head? If his weakness is outside the off-stump, why don't we consistently bowl there? Every batsman has weaknesses. Everyone knows Virat Kohli's weakness. You bowl it outside the off-stump and he will nick it. You'll need to adopt the same strategy against Travis Head as well. You need to move ahead with proper planning. You need



to attack him from the first ball; you need to make a fixed plan to exploit his weakness, and then you can get him out," said Kaif in a video shared on his social media handles. Head's marvellous form since 2021 Head has transformed his career ever since the 2021-22 Ashes in Australia where he scored a blistering 152 (148) in the first Test in Brisbane. Since 2021, the southpaw has scored 2260 runs from 32 matches (53 innings) at an average of 45.20 and a strike rate of 79.68 with six hundreds and ten fifties to his name. Head has scored 955 runs from 12 Tests (21 innings) against India at an average of 47.75 which includes a scintillating 163 (174) in the WTC final 2023. The 30-year-old became a thorn in India's flesh in the ODI World Cup 2023 final as well with his game-changing knock of 137 (120). Hence, India desperately need to find a way to keep Head quiet for the rest of the series as he's looked the only batter to trouble them so far in the first two matches.

**AUS vs IND: How India batters trained in Brisbane ahead of 3rd Test**

**Team India engaged in intense practice in their first session in Brisbane as batters spent a long time in the nets. Fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah was also seen bowling full throttle, shutting down any concerns on his fitness.**



New Delhi. The Indian batters were seen engaging in a long practice session after their disappointing show in Adelaide. Notably, the entire squad arrived in Brisbane on Wednesday, December 11 and had their first nets session. After the loss in the second Test, the focus has been on the Indian batters who failed to continue their good show from the second innings in Perth and could only score 180 and 175 in the two innings

respectively. Hence, the batters seemed determined to put their bad performances behind them and worked on their weaknesses. Star batter Virat Kohli showed great discipline in leaving the balls outside off-stump and was decisive in his footwork. India skipper Rohit Sharma started by facing the spinners and then faced an intense spell from Navdeep Saini, Yash Dayal and left-arm throw-downs with a special focus on leaving deliveries outside the off-stump. Border Gavaskar Trophy: Full Coverage KL Rahul, who's been promoted to open in the ongoing series, was also seen having a long chat with head coach Gautam Gambhir. Ace speedster Jasprit Bumrah shut down talks on

his fitness by bowling full throttle. Opening batter Yashasvi Jaiswal was also seen rolling his arm over as he bowled to Akash Deep. On the other hand, fast bowler Mohammed Siraj looked determined to work on his line and length and give good support to Bumrah in the upcoming Test. **India eager to bounce back in Brisbane**  
The players also engaged in catching drills as Virat Kohli, Sarfaraz Khan and KL Rahul among others, honed their skills. India will be eager to once again take a lead in the series in the upcoming Test, which could well decide which way the series heads. After a thumping 295-run victory in the first Test in Perth, the Rohit Sharma-led side was completely blown away in Adelaide against the pink ball as Australia hammered them by ten wickets. Hence, it's extremely crucial for the visitors to get a much-needed win under their belt in Brisbane and put the hosts under pressure once again. They will take inspiration from their last triumph at the venue during the 2020-21 tour when they ended.

**Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood signed as BBL supplementary players**

**Australia's pace trio of Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood have been signed as supplementary players for the upcoming season of the Big Bash League. Cummins will be joining the Sydney Thunder and Starc and Hazlewood will be heading back to the Sixers.**

New Delhi. Australia's pace trio Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood have all been signed as supplementary players for the upcoming Big Bash League season 14. While Cummins will be a part of the Sydney Thunder side, Starc and Hazlewood will represent their crosstown rivals, the Sixers for the upcoming season. Both franchises would go on to confirm the signings on Thursday, December 12. Given that the trio will be busy with their international

commitments, it is expected that they will not be taking a part a lot in the upcoming season. However, the trio are expected to be a part of the off-field side of things whenever their schedule permits. Cummins had been a part of the Thunder from the fifth to the ninth season, which was his last one in the competition. Starc and Hazlewood have been with the Sixers from the very start and won the inaugural BBL title with the team, alongside Cummins as well.



What Cummins said about the move Cummins claimed that he was really proud to be a part of the Thunder. The Australia captain said that the current squad is shaping up to be a special one. As a Western Sydney guy at heart, I'm really proud to be a part of the team this summer. While international duties mean I can't be around as much as I'd

like, I'm excited to have a voice and fully back the guys throughout the season." "It's fantastic to have talent like Sam Billings back. I first played with him in Penrith, so our Western Sydney connection runs deep. He's a great addition to the squad."

Having Davey Warner locked in for a full season is huge for us. It's great to see the balance in the team, with so many leaders stepping up alongside the talented youth coming through. "This squad is shaping up to be something special, and it's set to be an unreal season of Big Bash cricket. A big thank you to our fans - I can't wait to see you out at a game during the season," said Cummins. The Sixers will start their BBL 14 campaign against the Melbourne Renegades on December 16, while the Thunder will face the Adelaide Strikers a day later. Cummins, Starc and Hazlewood are all currently involved in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series against India.

# Triptii Dimri

Looks Elated As She Kicks Off Christmas Festivities With Rumoured BF Sam Merchant



Triptii Dimri got into the Christmas spirit, and kicked off the holiday season with her rumoured boyfriend Sam Merchant last night. The actress gave fans a sneak-peek into her fun-filled outing yesterday as she painted the town red with Sam Merchant, and their friends. The actress looked cheerful and posed for several pictures as she fully embraced the holiday spirit.

Triptii Dimri took to her Instagram stories on Saturday to share some glimpses from the Christmas festivities. The 'Animal' actress, her rumoured beau Sam Merchant and their friends enjoyed a special event in Mumbai, called 'Starry Starry Night.' Two selfies clicked by Sam Merchant show Triptii Dimri and their friends posing happily. Meanwhile, other pictures and videos give us a glimpse of the event. The actress beamed with joy in the pictures, and was seen wearing a brown sweatshirt with blue denim jeans. Meanwhile, Sam was also dressed casually and was seen in a black tee. The last picture is a selfie of Triptii wherein she is seen relaxing at the end of the day, with a 'Merry Christmas' cushion next to her. Check out the pictures below!

While neither Triptii nor Sam has ever acknowledged their dating rumours, their pictures and social media posts for each other only add fuel to the rumours. Just a few days ago, as IMDD named Triptii as the 'Most Popular Indian Star of 2024,' Sam Merchant gave her a shoutout and expressed how proud he is of her. Sharing the news on his Instagram story, he wrote, "Making us proud," along with several evil eye, clapping and sunglasses emoji. A few days ago, Triptii was spotted enjoying a bike ride with Sam Merchant in the city. Pictures and videos shared by the paparazzi showed her riding pillion behind Sam. As the photographers approached, the actor was seen turning her face away to avoid the cameras.

According to media reports, Triptii began dating Sam after her rumored breakup with Karnesh Ssharma, Anushka Sharma's brother. The two were said to have parted ways in December 2022.

## Rajkumar Rao Celebrates Entertainment Leader Of The Year Award On Social Media: 'Forever Grateful'



Rajkumar Rao's journey in Indian cinema is a testament to resilience, passion, and an unwavering commitment to his craft. From humble beginnings to becoming one of the industry's most celebrated actors, Rao's story is as inspiring as the characters he portrays. This year, he added yet another milestone to his illustrious career with Stree 2, a horror-comedy that broke box office records, earning ₹505 crore globally in just 10 days. Recognizing his immense contribution to content-driven storytelling, the CNBC-TV18 India Business Leader Awards 2024 named him the Entertainment Leader of the Year. Celebrating the accolade, Rao shared his gratitude on Instagram, posting pictures from the event and writing, "Such an honour to be awarded the Entertainment Leader of the Year at @cnbctv18india India Business Leader Awards. Forever grateful to the audiences, creators, and teams that make this journey possible. #Gratitude."

Rajkumar Rao's rise to stardom wasn't without its challenges. In a candid interview with Barkha Dutt, he reflected on his financial struggles growing up in Gurugram, where even basic needs like school fees were sometimes out of reach. "I was raised in a joint family in Gurgaon, and I was not raised with money. We didn't have enough. But she never made us feel it," Rao said, referring to his mother. "There were times when school teachers paid our school fees because financially, it used to become very tough, for months. Money was an issue, but she never made us feel that there was a problem. She would arrange it somehow. For me to think that I would be a film actor one day was an impossible dream. But my mother really supported me." Moving to Mumbai in 2008 came with its own set of challenges, from surviving on a tight budget to navigating an unfamiliar city with no connections. Rao described those years as some of the toughest in his life.

## Sobhita Dhulipala-Naga Chaitanya Give Sneak-Peek Into Telugu Wedding Rituals; Share Dreamy PICS From Ceremony



Sobhita Dhulipala and Naga Chaitanya have finally shared the official pictures from their wedding ceremony. The couple got married in a traditional Telugu ceremony on December 4 at Annapurana Studios in Hyderabad. While several visuals from their special day surfaced online, fans were eagerly waiting for the newlyweds to post the official pictures. Much to their delight, Chay and Sobhita have finally dropped some dreamy photos from their wedding ceremony that give fans a sneak-peek into the beautiful traditional wedding rituals. The first picture shared by Sobhita and Naga Chaitanya shows the actress rubbing haldi on Chay's face. As part of Madhuparaka? ritual, Sobhita is dressed up in a white sari with a red border. Meanwhile, another picture shows the bride and groom exchanging jaimalas. Sobhita and Chay are seen playfully exchanging flower garlands. Another picture features Sobhita during the Talambralu ceremony. As part of the Telugu ritual, the bride and the groom pour a rice and turmeric mixture over each other's head. The picture shows Sobhita beaming with joy as the rice mixture is poured over her.

Meanwhile, another picture shows Sobhita wearing a toe ring. In one photo, she is seen seated on a huge, decorated basket that looks like a lotus. She looks stunning in a beautiful golden kanjivaram saree. Another picture shows Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita looking lovingly at each other at the wedding ceremony. The last black-and-white snap is from the Arundhati Nakshatram ritual, where the bride and groom are shown stars representing Arundhati and Vasistha. Naga Chaitanya is seen lovingly holding Sobhita's hand as she pointed out at the stars.

Soon after Sobhita and Naga Chaitanya shared the pictures, congratulatory messages started pouring in. Music composer Vishal Dadlani wrote, "Congratulations guys! The best of all things, always! @sobhitad." Meanwhile their fans showered them with love and blessings. Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita Dhulipala's wedding was attended by celebrities such as SS Rajamouli, Ram Charan, Chiranjeevi, Rana Daggubati, Karthi, Anurag Kashyap, among others.

# Kareena Kapoor

Wishes Mother-in-law Sharmila Tagore Happy Birthday, Calls Her 'Coolest Gangsta'

Kareena Kapoor Khan shares a strong bond with her mother-in-law Sharmila Tagore. Today, the veteran actress is celebrating her birthday. And her dotting daughter-in-law Kareena has shared some cool photos to wish her happy birthday. The actress has called her coolest gangsta. Fans too reacted. Taking to her Instagram handle, Kareena shared photos and wrote, "Who's the coolest

veil. A morning after the star-studded event, Bebo dropped a sun-kissed selfie of herself flaunting her no-makeup look. Not long ago, Kareena Kapoor also posted a multi-picture post giving fans a glimpse of her stunning look at the opening night of the prestigious Red Sea International Film Festival in Saudi Arabia. The beauty arrived in style on the red carpet in an Oscar de la Renta appliqued strapless gown. Her stunning look, paired with crystal-adorned jewels, including rings and dangling earrings, raised the oomph factor, leaving fans in awe of her beauty. Sharing her insights on what makes a movie truly successful in today's cinematic landscape, the actress said that the only successful formula for a film to work is that it has to create magic. Talking about Kareena Kapoor Khan's professional commitments, the actress has been a part of some exciting projects like The Buckingham Murders and Singham Again.

Rohit Shetty's multi-starrer also starred Akshay Kumar, Ranveer Singh, Ajay Devgn, Tiger Shroff, Deepika Padukone and Arjun Kapoor. Meanwhile, the star has also bagged the Best Actor and Web Original Film (Female) award at the Filmfare OTT Awards 2024 for her role in Sujoy Ghosh's directorial Jaane Jaan.



Gangsta ever? Do i need to say? Happy birthday to my mother in law Just the Best." In the photos, Kareena is posing with Sharmila Tagore. In other photos, the veteran actress is playing with Jeh. Fans dropped heart emojis in the comment section.

On December 5, the actress graced the opening night of the film festival in Jeddah. The Singham Again actress turned heads with her oh-so-gorgeous purple gown and a sheer

