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## Startups are the future engines of the country's economy and society: Prime Minister Modi

**Startups now need to focus on the manufacturing sector and create products that meet global standards: Modi**

Agency, New Delhi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday that startups in India now need to focus more on the manufacturing sector. He said that we need to create new and world-class quality products. On the occasion of National Startup Day, Prime Minister Modi participated in a program at Bharat Mandapam today, marking a decade of the Startup India initiative. The Prime Minister said that earlier, only children from wealthy families started new businesses and ventures, while most children from middle-class and poor families only dreamt of getting a job. But the Startup India program has changed this mindset, and because of this, today young people are solving real problems through startups. The Prime Minister

interacted with members of the startup ecosystem during the program. Some selected startup representatives shared their entrepreneurial journey experiences. The Prime Minister addressed the gathering on this occasion. Calling the continuously increasing role of women in new startups a matter of pride, the Prime Minister said that today, 45 percent of new startups have a woman as a director or partner. India has become the world's second-largest

startup ecosystem in terms of women's participation. The Prime Minister termed the country's startup mission a "Rainbow Mission," saying that it has connected diverse sectors and created new opportunities. He praised the risk-taking ability of the country's youth, saying that today, those who think beyond a monthly salary are not only accepted but also respected. Earlier, risky ideas were viewed as fringe or unconventional, but now they are becoming fashionable.

**Philosopher Thiruvalluvar honored by several leaders, including Prime Minister Modi**

New Delhi: Tributes were paid to the great Tamil saint, poet, and philosopher Thiruvalluvar on the occasion of Thiruvalluvar Day. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and opposition leaders paid homage to him on Friday, remembering his contributions. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while paying tribute on Thiruvalluvar Day, said that Thiruvalluvar was a multifaceted personality whose works and ideals inspire countless people. He said that Thiruvalluvar believed in a society that is harmonious and compassionate and that he

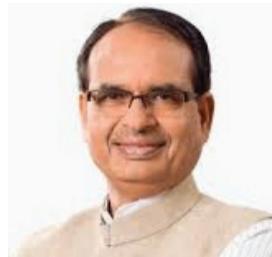
The Prime Minister said that in the last 10 years, the Startup India mission has

represented the best of Tamil culture. The Prime Minister urged people to read the Thirukkural, saying that it offers a glimpse into the profound wisdom of the great Thiruvalluvar. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla described Thiruvalluvar as a great Tamil saint, poet, and philosopher, saying that through his immortal work, the Thirukkural, he provided profound guidance to the world on ethics, governance, righteousness, and compassion. He said that Thiruvalluvar's teachings transcend time, religion, and geography and continue to inspire humanity with the values of moral conduct.

become a revolution. India is today the world's third-largest startup ecosystem.

## Government to introduce strict new bill on seed quality: Shivraj

Agency, New Delhi



The central government is going to introduce a bill to ensure better quality seeds for farmers, which includes stringent provisions. Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan gave this information in a media interaction on Friday. Speaking to the media at his residence, the Agriculture Minister said that the penalty provisions in the old 1966 Seeds Act are quite weak. A strong law was needed to protect farmers from substandard and counterfeit seeds and to severely punish those who deliberately sell them. We want to ensure that farmers get good quality seeds. Shivraj said that strict action will be taken against dealers selling counterfeit or poor quality seeds, and they will also have to pay higher fines than before. He said, "Our goal is to ensure that farmers

with selling substandard seeds to farmers. According to the new proposal, deliberate fraud will be met with heavy fines and strict penalties. The minister clarified that the new rules will only apply to commercial companies. Farmers will have complete freedom regarding the exchange of traditional seeds. Farmers can sow their own seeds. The exchange of seeds among themselves or the local exchange of seeds (such as the practice of returning one and a quarter times the amount) will continue. These rules will not affect the rights of small and traditional farmers. He explained that the new system will ensure a complete traceability system for the origin and supply chain of seeds. Through QR codes, it will be possible to track where the seed was produced, who manufactured it, and how it reached the farmer.

## Brief News

**Amidst Tensions, Iran Aims Missiles at Israel; Indian Embassy Issues Advisory**



**Jerusalem:** The ongoing tension between Iran, the US, and Israel has taken a mysterious turn. On one hand, Gulf countries have refused to grant the US airspace for an attack on Iran, while on the other hand, Trump has softened his stance. Following this, Iran has aimed missiles at eight Israeli targets. Amidst all this, the Indian Embassy has recently issued an advisory for its citizens. Indian citizens have been advised to be "extremely vigilant" and to avoid traveling to Israel. In the advisory, the Indian Embassy has conveyed the following message to Indian citizens: "In view of the prevailing situation in the region, all Indian citizens residing in Israel are advised to remain vigilant and strictly adhere to the security guidelines and protocols issued by the Israeli authorities and the Home Front Command." It further states that "Indian citizens are advised to avoid all non-essential travel to Israel."

**Large number of armed men enter Balochistan, vandalize government and private banks**



**Islamabad:** The situation in Kharan district of Pakistan's Balochistan province spiraled out of control when a large number of armed men entered the city and launched attacks in different areas. A media report said that, according to local authorities, the attackers targeted the main police station in Kharan city and vandalized government and private banks. Eyewitnesses said the attackers were riding in cars and on motorcycles. A senior police officer said that no police officer was injured in the attack, but police vehicles and weapons were damaged. The attackers took some weapons with them. According to the police, the attackers entered the police station and forcibly freed the undertrial prisoners who were being held there. After this, some armed men reached the city's market area, where two to three banks were damaged.

## CBI conducts raids at multiple locations in Kolkata in bank fraud case involving mining company

Agency, Kolkata

The CBI conducted raids at several locations in Kolkata in connection with a loan fraud case involving a mining company that allegedly caused a loss of Rs 7.25 crore to UCO Bank. Officials said raids were conducted at the residence of a businessman in the New Alipore area of the city and other locations, including New Town. They said five CBI teams conducted searches at a multi-storey residential complex on the fifth floor in the New Alipore area, in addition to New Town. According to media

reports, the complex is believed to be linked to Amit Kumar Kejriwal and Sarwan Kumar Kejriwal, promoters and guarantors of Swati Mining Company. An official said the coordinated operation was aimed at collecting documentary evidence and other materials related to the investigation. The CBI had registered a fresh case on December 30, 2025, against the company, its directors Girija Thakur and Samrat Chakraborty, and promoters and guarantors Amit Kumar Kejriwal and Sarwan Kumar Kejriwal, based on a complaint from UCO Bank.

## Om Birla expresses gratitude for PM Modi's visionary leadership

New Delhi: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his visionary leadership in inaugurating the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPC). Birla said on Friday on X, "The inauguration of the 28th CSPC by your (Prime Minister Modi's) hands is a moment of pride not only for India but for the entire democratic community of the world." He added that it is a result of your (Prime Minister Modi's) able guidance that India is hosting the most participatory conference in the history of CSPC. The Lok Sabha Speaker said that your (Prime Minister Modi's) approach towards democratic traditions is giving new direction and inspiration to parliamentary functioning on the global stage.

## Mamata Banerjee uses 55-minute documentary 'Lokkhi Elo Ghore' to woo women voters

Kolkata: Ahead of the West Bengal assembly elections, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) has turned to the silver screen to promote its welfare schemes. It has unveiled a 55-minute documentary highlighting Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's flagship schemes as life-changing initiatives. Titled 'Lokkhi Elo Ghore' (Lakshmi Comes Home), the film premiered at Nandan on Wednesday at 5 PM on the topic: "How can a tribal-majority, resource-rich state advance sustainable and green industrialization, responsible mineral-based manufacturing, and inclusive, investment-led development?" Professor Alpa Shah, Professor of Social Anthropology at Oxford University and Fellow of All



## Maharashtra BMC Elections: Mahayuti Leads, Opposition Voices Dissent

Agency, New Delhi

**Rahul Gandhi said: People are losing faith in the country's democratic institutions.**



a strong lead in key municipal bodies. Posting on the social media platform X, Rahul Gandhi said that the Election Commission misleading citizens is the reason for the erosion of trust in our democracy. Vote theft is an anti-national act. Meanwhile, according to initial trends from the vote counting in the Brihanmumbai Municipal

Corporation (BMC) elections, the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance is leading in approximately 52 wards, based on postal ballot figures. Official figures from the SEC and BMC are awaited. According to the postal ballots counted so far, the BJP is leading in 35 seats, and the

Shiv Sena in 17. The morning has not brought good news for the Thackeray brothers so far, as the Shiv Sena (UBT) is reportedly leading in 22 seats. Raj Thackeray's Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) is leading in eight seats so far. The Congress is leading in four seats in the initial count. According to figures released by the State Election Commissioner on Friday, the recently concluded Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation elections saw a voter turnout of 52.94 percent.

## Chief Minister Hemant Soren to present Jharkhand's development model at Oxford University on January 23

Ranchi/UK. Chief Minister

Hemant Soren will deliver a special lecture at the Blavatnik School of Government, Oxford University, on January 23, 2026, during his upcoming official visit to the United Kingdom. The Chief Minister will speak at 5 PM on the topic: "How can a tribal-majority, resource-rich state advance sustainable and green industrialization, responsible mineral-based manufacturing, and inclusive, investment-led development?" Professor Alpa Shah, Professor of Social Anthropology at Oxford University and Fellow of All



Souls College, and Professor Maya Tudor, Professor of Politics and Public Policy at the Blavatnik School of Government, will also participate in the discussion. The program will feature an in-depth discussion on alternative, inclusive, and environmentally sensitive development models for tribal-majority and resource-rich

states like Jharkhand. In his address, the Chief Minister will present the Jharkhand government's "vision of development in harmony with nature" on a global platform. Special emphasis will be placed on green industrialization, responsible mining, participation of local communities, and investment-led inclusive development strategies. This event is considered a significant opportunity to present Jharkhand's development policy to the international academic and policy-making community.

## PM to inaugurate the country's first Vande Bharat sleeper train today

Agency, New Delhi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be on a two-day visit to West Bengal and Assam on January 17 and 18. During this visit, he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for development projects worth more than Rs 10,000 crore related to rail, road, and waterways. The Prime Minister will flag off the country's first Vande Bharat sleeper train on Saturday, which will run between Guwahati and Howrah. He will also perform the groundbreaking ceremony for the Kaziranga Elevated Corridor in Assam. According to the Prime

comfortable and affordable, saving approximately 2.5 hours of travel time. The following day, Sunday, the Prime Minister will inaugurate various development projects worth more than Rs 830 crore in Singur, Hooghly district. He will also lay the foundation stone for a modern port electric catamaran at Balagarh, which will boost inland water transport and reduce congestion on Kolkata's roads. The Prime Minister will flag off a total of 7 Amrit Bharat Express trains from Bengal. These trains will connect cities like New Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, and Malda with metropolitan cities like Bengaluru, Mumbai.

## The security breach in Parliament on December 13, 2023, was not merely a coincidence: High Court

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Thursday said that the security breach in Parliament on December 13, 2023, could not have been merely a coincidence. The incident occurred on the anniversary of the 2001 terrorist attack on Parliament. A bench of Justice Prathiba M Singh and Justice Sudha Jain made this observation while hearing the bail applications of three accused in the security breach case: Manoranjan D, Sagar Sharma, and Lalit Jha. According to media reports, the accused's lawyer argued that there was no connection between the two events as the accused in this case were merely protesting against unemployment, but the bench said that it could not be a coincidence...

## India crosses 400 million 5G users, ranks second globally: Scindia

New Delhi: India has achieved a major milestone in the field of digital technology. India has now become the world's second-largest country in terms of 5G user base. More than 400 million people in India are using 5G services. Only China is ahead of India in terms of 5G adoption. Union Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia wrote on 'X' on Friday that India now has the second-largest 5G subscriber base after China and is one of the fastest adopters of this technology in the world. Scindia further wrote that with over 400 million 5G users, India has today become the world's second-largest 5G subscriber base, making it one of the fastest adopters globally.



**Brief News****East Singhbhum: Mother Goddess Still Worshipped on 200-Foot-High Talai Hill**

**East Singhbhum:** Talai (Tilai) Hill, located on the border of Rajnagar-Potka block in East Singhbhum district, once again became a witness to faith, belief, and tradition, as the grand worship of Mother Thakurani was performed with full rituals on 'Akhan Din', the second day of the Makar Sankranti festival. This is not just a religious ritual, but a living picture of the faith that has been passed down through generations, behind which lies a true and inspiring story. From morning onwards, a devotional atmosphere prevailed in the surrounding villages, including Dangaradiha, Sijulta, Hensal, and Pata Hensal. Amidst the sound of drums and trumpets, devotees dressed in traditional attire, and chants of "Jai Maa Thakurani," the entire area seemed to be filled with divine energy. At the Thakurani temple in Hensal village, the first formal worship was performed by Naik Baba Bhim Sardar and Manindra Gop, son of village head Ashok Gop. After this, a group of devotees reached the Thakurani temple in Pata Hensal, where they collectively prayed to the Mother Goddess for happiness, peace, and prosperity. From here begins the most difficult but most sacred journey of faith. After the worship at the temple, all the devotees proceeded towards the summit of the approximately 200-foot-high Talai Hill. The uneven path, the height, and the fatigue—amidst all this, only faith kept the devotees going. Upon reaching the ancient well-like worship site at the top of the hill, the atmosphere became even more divine. It is believed that Mother Thakurani herself appeared here and bestowed blessings for the protection and welfare of the village. It is because of this belief, stemming from a true incident many years ago, that the tradition of this worship began, which the villagers continue to observe with complete devotion even today. During the special worship of the Mother Goddess, the hill resonated with the chants of "Jai Maa Thakurani," and the atmosphere was completely immersed in devotion. Local villagers played a crucial role in ensuring that the entire event was conducted peacefully and in an orderly manner. Special attention was paid to security, order, and traditions so that every devotee could have darshan of the Goddess without any hindrance. On this auspicious occasion, a large number of villagers and devotees were present, including Ujjwal Modak, Amarnath Gop, Poltu Gop, Bimal Gop, Bholanath Gop, Badrinath Mahakud, Krishna Namta, Jena Majhi, Vishnu Gop, Ashok Mistry, Arup Mandal, Khokan Mandal, and Tapan Gop.

**Marwari Yuva Manch Blood Donation Camp on January 18**

**Khunti:** Under the auspices of the Marwari Yuva Manch branch, a blood donation camp will be organized at the local Rajasthan Bhavan on Sunday, January 18, from 9 AM onwards. In this regard, Sandeep Pipuriya of Marwari Yuva Manch said that the Khunti city branch of the Manch has been continuously organizing blood donation camps for the people and has received everyone's cooperation. He expressed hope that this time too, they will receive full cooperation from the people. He appealed to the residents of Khunti district to donate blood in large numbers and contribute to saving lives. Sandeep Pipuriya said that whenever we donate blood, we save someone's life. Therefore, everyone should donate blood.

**Drinking Water Scam Case: High Court Stays FIR Against ED Officials, Directs State Government to Provide Security**

**Ranchi:** Amidst the conflict between the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Jharkhand Police, the Jharkhand High Court has stayed the police action on the FIR filed by Santosh Kumar, an accused in the drinking water scam, against ED officials. The court also directed the state government to provide full security to the ED officials and their office. The case was heard on Friday in the court of Justice S.K. Dwivedi of the Jharkhand High Court. Hearing the writ petition filed by the ED, the court clarified that no punitive or investigative action would be taken against the ED officials for the time being. This order of the court has brought great relief to the ED officials against whom Santosh Kumar, an accused in the money laundering case, had filed a named FIR. Following the court's order, paramilitary force BSF will now be deployed for the security of the ED officials and their office. The court has also directed the state government and Santosh Kumar to file their replies in the matter. The next hearing of the case has been scheduled after two weeks. The Enforcement Directorate had filed a writ petition in the Jharkhand High Court against the action taken by the Ranchi Police at the ED office on Thursday. In the petition, the ED demanded that the FIR filed by Santosh Kumar be quashed and that the entire case be investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The ED had also requested an early hearing in the matter. During today's hearing, the ED informed the court that important evidence related to the involvement of several senior officials has emerged during the investigation of the drinking water scam. The ED alleges that the FIR filed by Santosh Kumar is aimed at influencing and putting pressure on the investigation of the scam.

**Azim Premji University's third campus will open in Ranchi. Its aim is to improve and enhance the quality of education in Jharkhand and the eastern part of the country**

**Ranchi:** Today, Azim Premji University announced the launch of its third campus in Ranchi. With the opening of this campus, the Azim Premji Foundation has furthered its commitment to providing socially relevant and contextually appropriate education in Eastern India. The new campus builds upon the university's extensive experience in the fields of education, development, public health, and governance. It reflects a vision of connecting academic learning with the ground realities of society and the region. Zulfiqar Haider, the designated Vice-Chancellor of Azim Premji University, Ranchi Campus,

while speaking about the campus's objectives, said, "We want our Ranchi campus to be closely connected to the social and developmental needs of the region. We want our campus to contribute to human development by fostering knowledge in the region. The university will offer a variety of courses and programs designed to meet the learning needs of students and working professionals across different sectors." Azim Premji University aims to deeply engage with the traditions, history, knowledge systems, and worldviews of the diverse tribal and other communities

of Jharkhand. Azim Premji University's 150-acre campus is being built in Itki. This campus will feature state-of-the-art classrooms, laboratories, sports facilities, student hostels, and faculty housing. There are also plans to include a hospital and a medical college. The campus will be designed with environmental considerations in mind, incorporating energy-efficient systems and rainwater harvesting facilities. The Azim Premji University Ranchi campus will offer undergraduate, postgraduate, diploma, certificate, and continuing education programs. These programs will

cover subjects such as education, development studies, economics, public health, climate change, and sustainability. The programs are designed to address the development needs of Jharkhand and Eastern India. They will be taught by faculty with both academic and practical field experience. This academic year, two Master's programs will be launched: MA Applied Economics and MA Development. Postgraduate diplomas in Local Development, Early Childhood Education, and Educational Assessment will also be offered. Several short-term certificate programs related to public

health, education, and development will also begin this year. Speaking about the broader objectives of Azim Premji University, Zulfiqar Haider said, "Based on the guiding values of the Azim Premji Foundation, Azim Premji University is being established for social good. Through education, teaching, research, and on-the-ground work, we aim to contribute to building a just, equitable, humane, and self-reliant society." Our Ranchi campus will play a crucial role in knowledge creation, promoting socially relevant ideas, and enhancing the skills and capabilities of the people in Jharkhand and the eastern

**Shri Mahavir Mandal Central Executive Committee Meeting Concludes, Success of Ram Navami Festival 2025 Reviewed**

Agency. Ranchi

A meeting of the Central Executive Committee of Shri Mahavir Mandal was held in Ranchi on Friday, chaired by the Mandal's President, Jai Singh Yadav. The meeting reviewed in detail the Shri Ram Navami festival held in 2025-26. Addressing the meeting, President Jai Singh Yadav said that with everyone's cooperation, the Shri Ram Navami festival in 2025 was celebrated grandly, in a disciplined and peaceful manner throughout the state. The role of the akhara (traditional wrestling arena) organizers across the state in making the event a success was highly commendable. He attributed this success to all the akhara organizers, office bearers of Shri Mahavir Mandal, devotees of Lord Rama, as well as the district and municipal administration, and expressed his gratitude to all of them. Minister Subhash Sahu gave a detailed account of the work done during the Ram Navami festival and



invited suggestions from the members to make the event even grander, more organized, and attractive in the coming years. The members present offered their suggestions, which were discussed in detail. The meeting also discussed the elections for Shri Mahavir Mandal for the new session 2026-27. Matters related to the income and expenditure of the organization were also considered. The President suggested that more and more people should be associated with the organization and that the old members should also extend their full cooperation to the Mandal during the Shri Ram Navami festival so that the event can be made even more magnificent.

**Paras HEC Hospital launches scalp cooling therapy, offering relief from hair loss for cancer patients**

This machine has been installed for the first time in Bihar and Jharkhand

**Ranchi:** To mitigate the problem of excessive hair loss during chemotherapy for cancer treatment, Paras HEC Hospital has taken a significant initiative. The hospital has introduced a scalp cooling therapy machine, which has been installed here for the first time in Bihar and Jharkhand. Dr. Gunjes Kumar of the hospital's Oncology Department explained that this machine is based on vasoconstriction technology. A continuous flow of coolant is maintained in a cap filled with the cooling agent. The machine's temperature is



approximately 0° Celsius, while the cap's temperature ranges from 17° Celsius to 21° Celsius. This cooling constricts the blood vessels, reducing the effect of

chemotherapy drugs on the hair follicles. Dr. Gunjes said that this technique controls hair loss in more than 50 percent of patients, which is considered highly effective globally. For cancer patients, especially women, losing hair is a psychological trauma. This technology empowers them physically as well as mentally and improves their quality of life. Dr. Nitesh Kumar, Facility Director of the hospital, said that Paras Hospital Ranchi is continuously working towards providing modern and advanced facilities for its patients, and this scalp cooling therapy machine is a part of that effort. This step by Paras Hospital has emerged as a new ray of hope for cancer patients.

**JDU Submits Memorandum to SSP (City) Regarding Kairav Gandhi's Kidnapping**

Agency. East Singhbhum

Regarding the kidnapping of Kairav Gandhi, son of prominent city businessman Devang Gandhi, the Janata Dal (United) East Singhbhum district president, Subodh Srivastava, submitted a memorandum to the Superintendent of Police (City), East Singhbhum, on Friday, demanding swift and effective action. In the memorandum, the JDU district president stated that serious concerns remain regarding Kairav Gandhi's safety since the kidnapping. Reports of a ransom demand and a 48-hour ultimatum have surfaced in the media, which, if true, makes

the situation even more alarming. He mentioned that this incident has not only plunged a respected business family into deep distress but has also raised questions about the law and order situation in the entire city. Subodh Srivastava urged the police administration to take all necessary steps immediately, considering the seriousness of the matter, to form special teams to apprehend the kidnappers as soon as possible, and to fully activate technical resources and intelligence networks. He also said that this case is linked to the administration's reputation, and a lack of swift success could erode public confidence in law and order.

**'Marwar Festival – 2026' a commendable effort to revive cultural heritage: Governor**

Agency. Ranchi

The Marwar Festival is not just a cultural event, but a commendable effort to present the rich cultural, social, and traditional heritage of Rajasthan and the Marwari community in a vibrant form on the sacred land of Jharkhand. Such events play a significant role in the preservation and promotion of the country's diverse cultural traditions. Jharkhand Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar said this while addressing the inaugural ceremony of the three-day 'Marwar Festival – 2026' held in Ranchi on Friday. Addressing the festival organized by the Jharkhand Provincial Marwari Conference and



the Marwari Sahayak Samiti at the Marwari Bhavan on Harmu Road in Ranchi, the Governor said that the traditional folk dances, folk music, cultural performances, traditional cuisine, handicraft exhibitions, and various competitive activities organized during the festival all present a vibrant example of social harmony, mutual goodwill, and cultural diversity. He said that this

event embodies the Prime Minister's concept of 'Development with Heritage' and 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' (One India, Great India). India's greatest strength lies in its unity in diversity, and such cultural festivals further strengthen this spirit. Appreciating the contribution of the Marwari community, the Governor said that philanthropy, service-mindedness, discipline,

# 'As if it's Jantar Mantar!' SC 'disturbed' by ED's charge; agency says TMC asked people to come to HC before I-PAC raid hearing

**NEW DELHI, Agency:**

The Supreme Court on Thursday expressed that it was "disturbed" by the chaos at Calcutta high court on January 9 which led to the adjournment of the hearing on ED plea against Mamata Banerjee government over I-PAC raids. Reacting to the central agency's charge that TMC "instructed" people to go to the HC, SC remarked whether it was a protest site like Jantar Mantar.

"Kindly see what happened in this case. We approached the (Calcutta) High Court. This is what happens when mobocracy replaces democracy. This is what the high court records. I have placed on record Whatsapp chats of the

law wing of the party in power. This was not spontaneous and they were instructed by the legal cell of the party to go there," PTI quoted SG Tushar Mehta saying.

"Come everyone? As if it's Jantar Mantar!", remarked Justice Mishra. The SG pointed out that "buses and vehicles" had allegedly been arranged to ferry people to HC on January 9. He further said that prior to yesterday's hearing, the acting chief justice had issued an administrative order restricting the entry of unauthorised persons into the courtroom.

"The proceeding was live-streamed and the hearing was less than satisfactory. ED faced many difficulties and



the microphone was constantly muted," Mehta said.

As advocate Kapil Sibal commenced his submissions on behalf of Mamata, the

bench observed that the incidents that unfolded in the Calcutta HC were disturbing. "We are disturbed by the manner in which the hearing

in the High Court was last week adjourned due to commotion," Justice Mishra said.

When the SG suggested that the gathering in the courtroom may have been intentional or unintentional, the judge responded, "intentional or not, the high court has recorded something", pointing to the fact that the high court itself had adjourned the matter after recording the reason as commotion.

Calcutta HC proceedings were adjourned on January 9 after chaos disrupted the hearing in the ED-I-PAC matter and the Trinamool Congress's counter-petition.

The top court termed the ED's allegation that Mamata

obstructed its investigation as "very serious" and said it would examine whether state authorities can interfere with probes conducted by central agencies in serious cases. The court stayed the FIR filed by West Bengal police against ED officials and ordered that CCTV footage of the January 8 raids be preserved.

The ED approached the top court after its officers allegedly faced resistance during searches at the I-PAC office and the residence of its director, Pratik Jain, in a coal smuggling case. While the ED claimed Banerjee entered the premises and took away "key" evidence, the chief minister and the TMC denied it.

## Cash recovery row: Supreme Court junks Justice Yashwant Verma's plea; inquiry panel to proceed

**NEW DELHI, Agency:**

The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed Allahabad high court judge Yashwant Verma's plea challenging Lok Sabha speaker's decision to appoint a committee for his impeachment.

This comes after Verma moved the top court following Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla's announced that a three-member panel has been constituted to investigate allegations against him. The members of the committee include Justice Amit Kumar, Justice Maninder Mohan Srivastava and B B Acharya, the Lok Sabha Speaker announced. Birla accepted the motion signed by 146 MPs for impeachment of Justice Yashwant Verma.

Earlier in August last



year, the top court held that an in-house inquiry procedure which led to a recommendation to remove Justice Yashwant Verma has legal sanction.

The apex court dismissed a plea filed by Justice Verma challenging the in-house inquiry panel's report, and the former Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna's recommendation

to initiate impeachment proceedings against him in the case of the fire incident that led to recovery of burnt unaccounted cash at his official residence in the national capital, when he was a sitting judge of the Delhi High Court.

Cash was allegedly found by fire tenders when a fire broke out at his Delhi residence on March 14, while

he was a judge of the Delhi high court. The judge was not present at his house.

During a hearing on July 28, the Apex court had posed various questions to Justice Yashwant Varma while hearing his plea. The court asked Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing on behalf of Justice Varma, why his client did not challenge the three-judge in-house inquiry procedure constituted by the Chief Justice of India prior to his appearance before the panel.

The top court questioned why Justice Varma chose to appear before the in-house inquiry panel if he believed it was unconstitutional, and why he is challenging it only now, after the proceedings have concluded.

**SURAT/BHIWANDI, Agency:** The menace of banned Chinese manja cast a deadly shadow over the kite-flying season, killing nine people in Gujarat, while a fireman in Maharashtra and a 33-year-old man in Vadodara were electrocuted in kite-linked accidents.

In Surat, a motorbike carrying a couple and their daughter plunged about 60ft from Chandrashekhar Azad flyover. Sources said Rehan Shaikh, 34, lost control while trying to avoid manja strands dangling across the bridge and struck the railing, throwing all three down to the ground below. Shaikh and daughter Alisha Khutun died after being rushed to hospital. Shaikh's wife Rehana Bibi, who initially survived, died at hospital on Thursday.

Riyansh Borse, 8, was cycling in Surat's Jahangirpura when a



kite string cut his throat and he died bleeding. Prince Batham, 23, died in a similar way in another location. He was the youngest among three brothers and a native of Kannauj in UP.

In Bharuch district, Rahul Parmar, 35, died after a manja cut his throat while riding a motorcycle. An eight-year-old boy died after suffering critical neck injuries in Anand district while riding with his father on the motorcycle's fuel tank. In Aravalli district, 17-year-old Tirth Patel died after a kite string caught his neck.

## Omar Abdullah speaks to Jaishankar on J&K students stuck in Iran

**Srinagar, Agency:**

Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah spoke on Thursday with external affairs minister S. Jaishankar on the situation in Iran and cited assurances that all steps will be taken for the safety of hundreds of students and others from J&K stranded in the protest-wrecked country.



PDP president and former CM Mehbooba Mufti sought central intervention. "Thousands of students from across the country, including Kashmir, are stranded in Iran amid the present volatile situation. This has triggered deep fear and anxiety in anguished parents desperately worried about their children's safety. Urge S. Jaishankar and MEA (external affairs ministry) to intervene urgently and ensure their safe return," Mehbooba posted on X.

## Opposition slams Chhattisgarh govt as 'rat' theory blamed for vanishing paddy

**RAIPUR, Agency:**

'Rats' have become Chhattisgarh's newest political flashpoint after managers at paddy procurement centres blamed rodents, among other reasons, for paddy worth crores of rupees going missing or rotting.

In Kabirdham district, about 26,000 quintals of paddy worth Rs 7 crore were reported 'damaged', dried or missing from two procurement centres. Officials initially cited rats, termites, and weather as reasons for the loss, triggering a backlash from opposition parties which alleged a statewide scam in grain procurement and storage.

The state issued a clarification, stating that reduc-



tion in paddy weight due to moisture loss and minor pest-related damage is a scientific, natural and decades-old phenomenon, not evidence of corruption. Officials stressed that paddy loses weight when stored in open due to evaporation of moisture, a phys-

ical process recognised across all major paddy-producing states.

However, opposition parties alleged the 'rat' explanation was a cover for the scam as paddy worth Rs 30 crore across Kabirdham, Mahasamund, Jashpur, and Bastar has either rotted,

gone missing or been written off on account of pests, moisture, and weather.

Janta Congress Chhattisgarh launched a 'wanted rats' campaign in Kabirdham's Kawardha, putting up posters across district. The party's state chief, Amit Jogi alleged, "They are saying rats ate paddy. So, we have put up posters and are searching for this missing rat." He urged people to tell the party "whether these rats have four legs or two."

As the controversy grew, BJP MP Brijmohan Agrawal added fuel to the fire with a sarcastic remark that the govt would "arrange cats for the treatment of rats" accused of devouring paddy.

## Experts warn: Mass removal of stray dogs could backfire on public health

**NEW DELHI, Agency:** A coalition of multisectoral experts from a range of global institutions has lent its weight to petitioners in the stray dog case being heard in Supreme Court. The coalition warned that authorities' proposals to remove and mass-shelter India's free-living community dogs could undermine public health, go beyond the law, destabilise urban ecosystems and impose enormous fiscal costs, without delivering greater public safety.

The cautionary note draws on experience of veterans in public health, behavioural science, veterinary medicine and law. Signatories include Chinni Krishna who pioneered India's Animal Birth Control programme, evolutionary biologist Lee Dugatkin

(University of Louisville, US), Anindita Bhadra of IISER Kolkata, public health expert Leena Menghaney, Pushpinder Singh Khera of AIIMS Jodhpur, and Julie Corfmat of Mission Rabies among a host of others. Organisations include International Companion Animal Network (ICAN), Pet Dog Trainers of Europe (PDTE), International Institute for Canine Ethics (IICE) and Bangalore Hundeskole Academy for Research and Canine Studies (BHARCS). Highlights of their analysis:

Free-living dogs form stable social groups when food sources, sterilisation, and vaccination coverage remain consistent.

Large-scale removal disrupts these systems, creating territorial vacuums



that are rapidly filled by other dogs -- often unvaccinated and unsterilised -- an effect associated with increased dog-bite incidents and heightened disease risk.

Mass removal undermines rabies control by dismantling herd immunity. India's existing Catch-Neuter-Vaccinate-Release (CNVR) frame-

work, when implemented consistently, targets the internationally recognised threshold of vaccinating at least 70% of dogs in a given area. Data show steep declines in human rabies deaths and dog-bite incidence in areas with sustained sterilisation and vaccination programmes. Abandoning this approach risks reversing hard-earned gains achieved over past two decades. Mass sheltering, experts argue, compounds the risks. High-density animal housing is globally classified as a biohazard activity, requiring stringent quarantine, disease surveillance, and worker-safety protocols. Dugatkin noted claims justifying removal often rest on myths rather than biology. "These dogs have coexisted with humans in India for millen-

nia. Disrupting stable populations based on fear or misinformation ignores everything we know about animal behaviour and disease ecology," he said. Anthrozoologist Sindhu Pangal said the debate had become detached from evidence. "Replacing proven, low-cost public-health systems with a mass-detention model is not just unscientific -- it actively increases risk while draining resources that should be strengthening vaccination and disease prevention," she said. Position statements from IICE highlight that large shelters frequently experience overcrowding, stress-induced immunosuppression, and rapid disease transmission, particularly where enforcement capacity is limited.

## EDITORIAL

## Diluting ISI's institutional autonomy

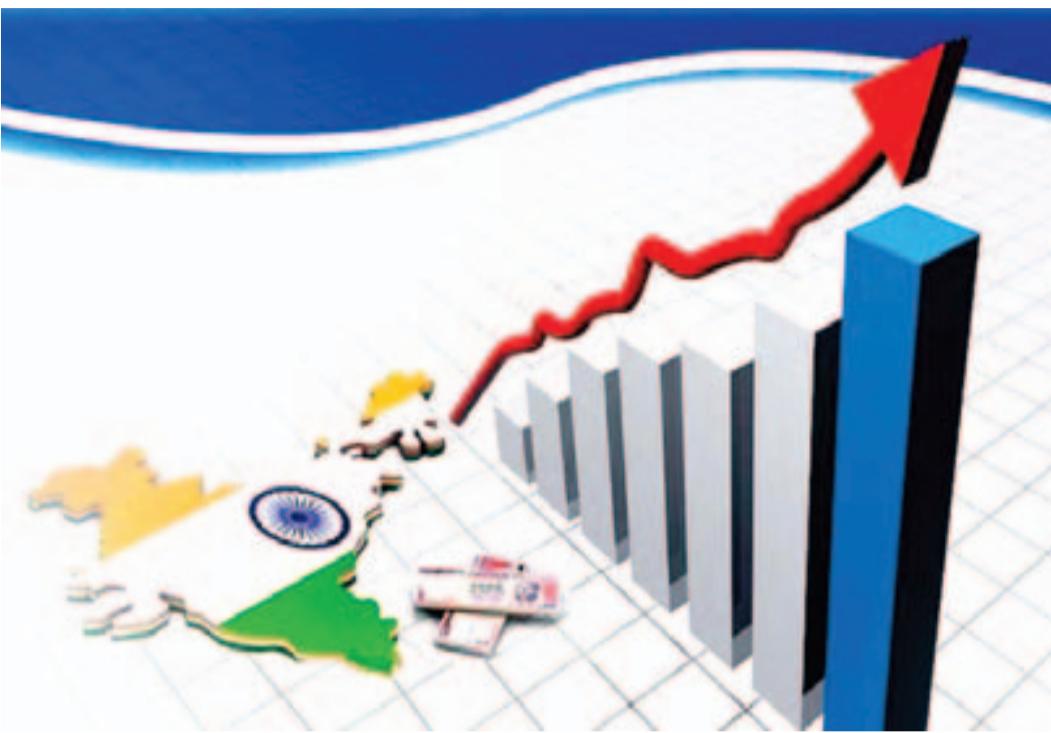
The 95-year-old Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), considered the gold standard for statistical research in the country, is facing the threat of losing its institutional autonomy and independence following the NDA government's move to revamp its structure and convert it into a corporate body. This fits into a broader pattern of systematic dilution of institutional autonomy and federal values through over-centralisation of powers over the last few years. The Draft Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) Bill, 2025, released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), proposes major structural reforms that appear to be opaque and hastily formulated without any prior debate. The Centre wants to overhaul the governance structure of the Kolkata-based premier institute, which is synonymous with India's early efforts to use Statistics for policy and development. There are growing concerns over how the hasty reforms could dilute the autonomy and undermine the federal spirit. Over 1,500 academicians have expressed grave concern and held demonstrations to protest the government's plan, which focuses on corporatisation and revenue generation. What is alarming is that the draft Bill, seeking to repeal the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) Act, 1959, omits references to national development, social welfare, and planning but introduces new priorities such as global excellence, interdisciplinary collaboration, innovation, and financial self-sustainability. Experts fear that increased focus on revenue generation may shift ISI away from basic research, and the essential long-term research could suffer under a corporate-style funding model. The new legislation undermines the original agreement under which the ISI society was formed in 1931. The institution's historical contributions include the development of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), which laid the foundation for India's official statistical system. The proposed Bill seeks to transform ISI from a registered society into a statutory body. This structural shift is framed by the government as a step toward modernising and strengthening ISI as it approaches its centenary. Under the 1959 Act, ISI's governance rested with a council that included significant academic representation, including 10 members from within ISI. The draft Bill's new Board of Governance (BoG) is heavily dominated by government nominees, leaving no elected representatives from among faculty or researchers. This raises concerns of political interference, especially in appointments and academic decision-making. The proposed BoG is empowered to make key administrative and academic decisions. It also has provisions to significantly expand revenue generation through student fees, consultancy services, and sponsored research projects. Centralised control is proposed over faculty selection, recruitment, and appointments. The focus of the new legislation shifts from a nation-building and welfare-oriented mission to one centred on global excellence, institutional branding, and innovation. Bypassing the existing society registered under state law amounts to an infringement of state jurisdiction and risks undermining the established legal framework that has guided ISI for decades. The Bill severely undermines academic autonomy by enabling the BoG to override decisions of the Academic Council.

## Economists see India's GDP growth strong in real terms

The National Statistics Office (NSO) on Wednesday released the first advance estimates estimating the Real GDP to grow by 7.4% in the Financial year 2025-26 against the growth rate of 6.5% during FY 2024-25. Real GDP is estimated to attain a level of Rs 201.90 lakh crore in FY26, against the Provisional Estimates (PE) of GDP for FY25 of Rs 187.97 lakh crore, it said. Further, the data said the Nominal GDP is estimated to grow at 8% in FY2025-26.

Speaking on the estimates, Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist, Crisil said, "The 60 basis point gap between nominal and real GDP this fiscal will be the lowest since 2011-12." India's growth momentum has sustained despite elevated global uncertainty due to tariff tensions, riding on accommodative monetary and fiscal policies, robust corporate balance sheets, and favourable developments such as above-normal monsoons and low crude oil prices.

Fixed investments is the primary driver this fiscal, with growth picking up to 7.8% vs 7.1%. Private consumption growth has held up at 7% -- above the trend but a tad slower than the previous fiscal," he said. "Next fiscal, we expect the nominal and real growth to flip - nominal growth is expected to rise to close to its long-term average at 10.5-11% and real growth to be at 6.7%," he added. "While the scope for further policy rate cuts will be limited, transmission of previously announced cuts will continue to



support the economy next fiscal. The effects of monetary policy typically operate with a lag. We expect the government to maintain capital expenditure growth at a moderate pace in the forthcoming budget."

"Of late, the government has been advancing domestic reforms, including deregulation, to improve the business climate and enhance the economy's long-term growth potential. These measures could have a positive impact on private investments, which are beginning to show some signs of improvement," Joshi said. DK

Srivastava, Chief Policy Advisor, EY India said First Advance Estimates for 2025-26 indicate a narrowing of the difference between nominal and real GDP growth rates which are estimated at 8.0% and 7.4% respectively.

Real growth remains fairly impressive. "This growth is clearly led by growth in investment of 7.8% which exceeds private final consumption expenditure growth of 7%. On the output side, services growth with its three main segments of trade, transport et al., financial and real estate, and public administration,

growing at 7.5%, 9.9% and 9.9% respectively, thereby outperforming the growth of manufacturing which remain healthy at 7.0%. Agricultural growth at 3.1% is lower than the average of the last four years which is 4.5%," Srivastava said. "The unexpectedly low implicit price deflator-based inflation at 0.5%, leading to a nominal GDP growth of 8% has significant implications for the revised estimates of the 2025-26 budget aggregates.

In particular, the budget estimates for this year had

assumed a nominal GDP growth of 10.1%. Although this does not affect the magnitude of fiscal deficit which at 4.4% of nominal GDP was budgeted at Rs 15.7 lakh crore. "Dr. Manoranjan Sharma, Chief Economist, Infomerics Ratings said, "This momentum is underpinned by several structural drivers: sustained public capital expenditure across infrastructure, transport, and energy; resilient domestic consumption, particularly in urban markets; an improving investment cycle supported by corporate deleveraging; continued strength in services—notably IT, finance, and tourism; and overall macroeconomic stability, reflected in contained inflation and a manageable fiscal deficit."

While these forces are tangible, their durability and alignment cannot be taken for granted. "Growth remains supported by public investment-led expansion, the continued dominance of the services sector, and India's favourable demographics combined with a large domestic market, which together provide resilience to demand and output," he said. However, risks persist from elevated global economic uncertainty, still-cautious private investment sentiment, vulnerability in agriculture due to weather dependence, and potential inflationary pressures that could limit monetary policy flexibility, he highlighted.

## US withdraws from 66 international organisations

US President Donald Trump signed a memorandum on Wednesday (local time), directing the withdrawal of the United States from international organisations, conventions and treaties that are "contrary to the interests" of the US. The announcement was made in the statement of the Presidential

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Other non-UN bodies International Energy Forum, the International Renewable Energy Agency, the Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation and the Global Counterterrorism Forum, among others. Key UN organisations from

executive departments and agencies to take immediate steps to effectuate the withdrawal of the United States from the organisations mentioned in the memorandum as soon as possible, and said that for United Nations entities, withdrawal would mean ceasing participation in or funding to those entities to the extent permitted by law. It mentioned that Trump's decision comes after considering the Secretary of State's report and after deliberating with his Cabinet, that he determined the participation, or support to the organisations was contrary to the interests of the United States.

The move almost a year after the Trump administration had announced the withdrawal from the

World Health Organisation (WHO) in January 2025, citing the mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic. The US had also withdrawn from UNESCO in July 2025, saying that the latter was not in the "national interest" of the United States.

## Krishen Khanna's paintings take you through India-Pakistan partition



Paintings have the power to heal wounds that words often cannot touch, and in the hands of Krishen Khanna, this magic becomes a language of its own, speaking directly to the soul through color.

Triveni Kala Sangam's Gallerie Nyia in Mandi House recently opened its doors to Gravitas: A Journey from Within, an exhibition that is much more than a display of art. The exhibition pays tribute to Krishen Khanna, the legendary Indian painter who celebrated his 100th birthday on July 5, 2025. With a career spanning over seven decades, Khanna has documented India's social, historical, and political landscape with unflinching honesty and profound compassion.

The title Gravitas captures the weight of memory and emotion embedded in Khanna's work. It evokes the gravitational pull of art that refuses to let viewers look away, connecting us across time, trauma, and shared human experience.

Through his paintings, Khanna bridges the past and present, offering insight into both the individual and collective memory of a nation.

The exhibition features a selection of Khanna's works alongside pieces reflecting the Partition of India. His subjects include workers, musicians, and migrants, each rendered with sensitivity and depth. Through these canvases, Khanna reminds us that history is not just a record of events but a tapestry of emotions, experiences, and understanding.

## POEMS

## Rain Song

The radio blares "Dialogue of Souls," and the woman who hated clouds watches the sky. Where is the sea now? she asks. Where is it from here? What is its name?— this rain on a morning ride to school, winter, my seventh year, my father driving through rain, his eyes fixed on a world of credit and debt. On the radio, devotion to the lifer of harm from those who despair, knower of secrets with the knowledge of certainty. Not even the anguish of those years, the heavy traffic, cold and wind could have touched me. I was certain the palm holding me would be struck again. Chance allows for that and for stars to throb in reachable depths. Filled with grief bordering happiness, I didn't care if I was safe, whether the storm was over, only that it came, the slash of lightning, the groaning sky, and the storms we made, how rain stripped everything of urgency, how to the lifer of harm rise those who despair.

By Khaled Mattawa

## A matrimonial quest: When destiny answered the call

I joined the State Judicial Service in October 1983, with my first posting at Patiala. At the time, I belonged to a class of officers widely regarded as the most "sought-after commodities" in the matrimonial market. Proposals arrived steadily, one after another.

But none clicked. I remained unmoved, held back by an inexplicable inertia—as though my heart was waiting for a call only it could recognise.

That call seemed distant until a proposal arrived from a reputed family in Tarn Taran. Coincidentally, my younger brother was already engaged to

a girl from the same town, with their wedding set for the following April. Though the alliance appeared convenient yet a strange reluctance lingered within me. I did not wish to have my in-laws settled in the same town as my brother's. "I will meet her when we visit Tarn Taran for my brother's wedding," I told the family, more to buy time than out of interest. My heart whispered a silent 'No'.

April arrived in a whirlwind of colour, music, and vibrant Punjabi wedding celebrations. The moment which I had been postponing finally arrived. My eldest

sister and I were ushered into their drawing room. I had already rehearsed my polite refusals in my head. But the moment the girl entered the room, the world shifted. All my 'Nos', refusals and rejections crumbled in an instant.

She was incredibly beautiful and I felt drawn to her immediately. It was as if chorus of bells had rung in my heart, signalling that this was it. The sound of those bells was like a symphony, telling me that we had met for a reason. The room fell silent for a moment. As if the slightest sound might shatter the spell she had cast. She

moved towards the chair opposite me, her eyes briefly meeting mine before lowering, a soft blush colouring her cheeks. Her mother followed behind with a tray, yet the clatter of teacups felt miles away. My sister nudged me gently—a silent reminder to speak.

"What are your plans after completing your studies?" I finally managed. "Do you intend to enter service?" She looked up, "I have no such plans as of now," she replied in her soft voice which matched the sound of bells which I had just heard.

There was subtle wit in her eyes, a spark of

intelligence that complemented her beauty. As she served the snacks, I watched her hands and the grace of her movements, suggesting a deep-seated composure. It was the moment when I realised that the strange reluctance which I had carried for months was unfounded. I did not need to wait for brother's wedding to decide.

As we said our goodbyes and turned to leave, I looked back one last time. She stood in the doorway and in that moment, I knew I had found my soulmate. My heart had pronounced the judgment. On way back, when my sister asked for my response, I

could only say, "It seems that here, I cannot say no."

The wedding celebrations continued in full swing, but my thoughts were consumed entirely by her. A day after, I had to report to the Police Training Academy at Phialaur for police training. My mother accompanied me through the night to ensure my reporting on time.

The ancient fort had become my temporary home, but my heart was still back in Tarn Taran with the girl I had just met. I saw her everywhere—her smile flickered in the shadows of the lecture hall, and I could hear her laughter echoing through the

officers' mess. During the lunch hour rush, I would find the lone LP in the mess and daily play 'O Mere Sanam, O mere Sanam, Do jism magar ok jaan Hain hum'.

It was a slow, soulful tune from an old movie 'Sangam'. My colleagues would playfully dance to the music, but I stayed still, anchored by the melody, drifting to a place where she was the only thing in focus.

The daily drills and lectures became nothing more than a distant hum. My mind was a battlefield of emotions as I replayed our meeting over and over, overanalyzing every word and every glance. The weapon training was tough, but it was nothing compared to

the ache in my heart. I was simply counting the days until I could see her again, hold her hand, and finally tell her how I felt.

Years later, the girl from Tarn Taran is no longer a fleeting vision. She is the anchor of my life—my beloved wife. The one who once occupied every corner of my thoughts during those lonely training days now moves gracefully through our home, surrounded by our children and grandchildren.

The bells that rang in my heart that day still chime softly—a constant reminder of made-to-meet meeting.

By Birinder Singh

## Farewell to Bulky Textbooks: Arihant Launches the first ever CBSE class 10's handwritten style 3D visuals Revision Book

**New Delhi, Agency:** With only a few days left for the CBSE Board Exams, the mood in thousands of Indian homes is gradually moving towards one of perceivable stress. The secret of success on board exams has never changed throughout decades: bulky textbooks, long rote memorization, and the pc that occurs the night before the test. Nevertheless, Arihant Publications is shaking up the conventional study market this year with its roll-out which is being termed by students as a game-changer. Arihant has launched to the Indian academic market, the first ever series on Quick Scan and Map Chat, meant to substitute cumbersome theory with its visual and brain-friendly learning process.

### The Problem: The Overload of information.

All Class 10 students are aware of the hassle, attempting to cover an entire year of study within a few



weeks. Conventional refreshers are usually simply summaries of the original textbook with a lot of text. They lack a human touch, which in reality helps to retain the memory.

Arihant tried to fill this gap by posing a rather simple question: Why read a paragraph when a 3D image or a handwritten flowchart can explain it within a few sec-

onds? The new product is called **Quick Scan: Notes That Feel Like a Tupper's Notebook.**

The flagship of this launch is the Quick Scan Series that comes in three separate books, whose subjects are Mathematics, Science and Social Science. In contrast to the usual printed manuals, Quick Scan is written in the style of notes. On the psy-

chological level, students feel more related to handwritten font since it resembles the touch of the personal class notes, and the contents will be less frightening and easier to study.

### What makes Quick Scan unique?

- **3D Visuals and Diagrams:** Advanced ideas (such as the human heart in Science or Geometry in Math) are divided into high-quality 3D images, which is not common in revision guide.

- **Zero Fluff:** It eliminates the frivolous wording. When something can be explained through a table or a flowchart, it is presented that way.

- **Stress-Free Revision:** The layout is made to be read within a few seconds, and students are able to read enormous portions of the syllabus in minutes, rather than hours.

### Map Chat: The Ultimate Last-Minute Secrets Weapon.

The Map Chat 2026 is the complement of the Quick Scan series.

This one book encompasses the four subjects in the Big Four namely Science, Social Science, Mathematics, and English.

The Map Chat is constructed based on science of Mind Mapping. A student is provided with 1 Chapter, 1 View rather than having to flip through pages to make the dots. The book is illustrated with whole chapters in one made-up frame with a visual representation. It is designed in a specific manner to overcome the blanking out effect that students experience during tests. Map Chat will be targeted at that pc time before an exam. It makes the student steady, providing them with a bird's-eye view of the whole topic immediately.

### First Time in the Market

Although question banks are available in hundreds, the idea of Arihant to combine 3D visual and handwritten aesthetics is the first innovation in the market.

## ICMEI Celebrates 3rd January 2026 as International Day of Cultural Relations



a vibrant global confluence of artists, diplomats, educationists, and cultural leaders. The event powerfully reinforced the belief that art and culture are the strongest bridges between nations, capable of transcending borders, ideologies, and differences.

Addressing the distin-

guished gathering, Dr. Sandeep Marwah—who has devoted over three decades to promoting Love, Peace, and Unity through Art and Culture—remarked: "In a world facing divisions, art and culture emerge as the universal language of harmony. The International Day of Cultural Relations is

a reminder that cultural understanding is not optional—it is essential for global peace and sustainable coexistence."

The declaration and continued observance of this day were met with overwhelming appreciation. Messages of congratulations and solidarity poured in from eminent dignitaries, international institutions, cultural organizations, and creative professionals across continents, applauding ICMEI's visionary initiative.

Dr. Marwah, recipient of thousands of national and international honors and holder of multiple world records, was widely acknowledged as a pioneer of cultural diplomacy.



ductor market could remain strong for several consecutive years.

TSMC Chief Financial Officer Wendell Huang stated that the company expects first-quarter sales to range between USD 34.6 billion and USD 35.8 billion. The midpoint of this range represents a 4 per cent increase from the previous quarter.

Huang also indicated that the gross margin is expected to rise to between 63 per cent and 65 per cent in the first quarter, up from 62.3 per cent in the fourth quarter, citing improved cost controls and higher capacity utilization.

## Tier-2 Cities Are Becoming India's New Management Education Powerhouses - SIBM Nagpur's Take

**Nagpur, Agency:** As India's higher education landscape undergoes a structural shift, Tier-2 cities are rapidly emerging as the new powerhouses of management education, offering quality academic ecosystems, industry integration, and enhanced student outcomes. Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Nagpur (SIBM Nagpur), a constituent of Symbiosis International (Deemed University), highlights this transition as a defining trend shaping the future of business education in the country.

Traditionally dominated by metropolitan centres, management education is now witnessing a decentralisation driven by rising costs in Tier-1 cities, evolving industry expectations, and the need for inclusive, regionally anchored talent development. Tier-2 cities such as Nagpur are increasingly attracting students seeking globally benchmarked

## Startup India marks 10 years with 2 lakh Startups, 50 daily recognitions and 21 Lakh Jobs

**New Delhi, Agency:** India's startup landscape has reached a historic milestone as the nation celebrates ten years of the Startup India initiative, with official data revealing that over 50 new startups are now being recognised across the country every single day.

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, on Friday took to his social media account to mark the occasion by highlighting the transformative impact of the past decade on the nation's economy. He noted, "The proof of the stellar success of PM Narendra Modi ji's pathbreaking initiative is the over 2 lakh DPIITGoI recognised startups in the country that have generated over 21 lakh job opportunities."

Minister Goyal also stated that India is now the 3rd largest startup ecosystem in the world with Rs 15 lakh



crore funding boosting the industry.

The rapid growth is attributed to a series of strategic reforms designed to eliminate bureaucratic hurdles and provide financial lifelines to budding entrepreneurs. Reflecting on the government's role in this evolution, the Minister shared that "in the past decade, the Government has adopted timely and agile policy interventions to make the startup ecosystem robust and business-friendly." He further

emphasised that the core strategy has remained consistent: "The focus has been on encouraging innovative ideas and helping them scale."

The initiative, which began in 2016, has grown from a handful of ventures into a massive network of over 200,000 recognised entities. This expansion is no longer limited to major metropolitan hubs like Bengaluru or Delhi; today, 48% of these startups emerge from Tier-II and Tier-III cities, democratising opportunity across the Indian heartland.

Goyal also expressed optimism about the next phase, stating, "Now, with India's strengthening trade partnerships with countries globally, more avenues will open for our Startups to expand their markets, create global impact, and build the next generation of Indian success stories."

## World Bank approves \$286 million loan to improve quality healthcare in Bengal

**New Delhi, Agency:** The World Bank has approved financing for a program to improve the quality of life and life expectancy in West Bengal through wider, more equitable access to quality healthcare.

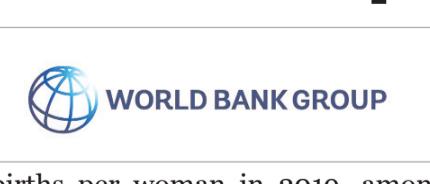
The West Bengal Health System Reform Program Operation, with a USD 286 million loan, will support the delivery of personalised healthcare services across the state for people aged 30 and above through digital tracking of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension and diabetes.

It will also bring a patient-centric care approach to the state's health systems, improve health outcome measurement, and enhance healthcare facilities' resilience to extreme

weather events.

The Program will also support strengthening gender-based violence (GBV) services, including targeted interventions for boys, married adolescents, and healthcare providers. In the five districts of Purulia, Birbhum, Murshidabad, Maldah and Uttar Dinajpur, the Program will improve access to quality healthcare services and reduce inequities in maternal and adolescent health.

The World Bank said West Bengal has made sustained health gains in the past two decades with infant mortality rates declining from 32 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2010-2012 to 19 in 2018-2020. The total fertility rate was 1.64



births per woman in 2019, among the lowest in the country.

As a result, life expectancy in West Bengal is 72 years, which is higher than the national average. However, in spite of these gains and high literacy rates among adolescent girls (at 89 per cent), West Bengal has the second-highest rate of adolescent pregnancies in India at 16 per cent, which also drives the maternal mortality ratio at 103 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2018-2020. The districts of Purulia, Birbhum, Murshidabad, Maldah and

Uttar Dinajpur face critical challenges in reproductive, maternal, and adolescent care.

"This Program will help West Bengal deliver more equitable and higher-quality health services, with measurable results for women, adolescents, and people living with non-communicable diseases," said Paul Proce, the World Bank's Acting Country Director for India.

"By linking financing to verified outcomes and strengthening governance and climate resilience, the operation addresses both service gaps and systemic constraints that have held back health gains for vulnerable communities. This will have a direct impact on the ability to seek good jobs."

"Strengthening the continuum of care at the primary level through measures like control of hypertension and diabetes is central to bending the NCD curve," said Rahul Pandey and Meghna Sharma, the Task Team Leaders of the program.

"The program's focus on quality-of-care interventions and mechanisms to respond to gender-based violence are vital to improving health outcomes and trust in the healthcare system."

The USD 286 million loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) has a final maturity of 16.5 years, including a three-year grace period.



## Copa del Rey: Barcelona reach quarterfinals after beating Racing Santander 2-0

**Cantabria, Agency:** Barcelona put on a superb performance in the Copa del Rey, defeating second-division top team Racing Santander 2-0 on Thursday and securing a place in the quarterfinals. Goals from Ferran Torres and young star Lamin Yamal in the second half secured Barcelona's victory after a tough challenge.

Played at El Sardinero Stadium, the match witnessed a fierce contest between the two teams. The first goal of the match came in the 66th minute when Ferran Torres, dodg-

ing the offside trap, ran onto a through ball with perfect timing, beating goalkeeper Joaquin Ezqueta and slotting the ball into an empty net.

In stoppage time, Racing Santander's Manex Lozano missed a simple chance. Soon after, Barcelona took control with a swift counter-attack. Lamin Yamal scored the second goal with a brilliant finish from Rafinha's low cross, sealing the team's victory.

With this win, Barcelona joined the list of teams already qualified for

the quarterfinals, which includes Athletic Bilbao, Alavés, Albacete, Atlético Madrid, Real Betis, Real Sociedad, and Valencia. The Spanish Football Federation will conduct the quarterfinal draw on Monday, with matches scheduled for February 3-5. Following Real Madrid's loss to lower-league side Albacete, Barcelona coach Hansi Flick fielded a nearly full-strength team to avoid any mistakes. Barcelona controlled the ball early, but Racing Santander put up a strong fight.

## Indian footballer Manisha Kalyan joins Peruvian champions club Alianza Lima Femenino

**New Delhi, Agency:** Indian women's football team midfielder Manisha Kalyan has taken another big step in her career by signing a contract with four-time Peruvian champion club Alianza Lima Femenino. The club issued an official statement on Thursday confirming the signing of the 24-year-old Indian player.

Alianza Lima Femenino said in its statement, "Alianza Lima women's team announces the signing of Indian midfielder Manisha Kalyan. She will strengthen the team's attack. Manisha has joined from Greek club PAOK FC, where she competed at the highest level of European football."

Alianza Lima Femenino will be the third foreign club in Manisha Kalyan's career. After playing for Sethu FC and Gokulam Kerala FC in India, Manisha joined Cypriot club Apollon Ladies FC in 2022. She became the first Indian female footballer to play in the UEFA Women's Champions League. She scored 14 goals in 36 matches for Apollon Ladies. In 2024, Manisha joined Greek club PAOK FC, where she appeared in 23 matches and scored eight



goals. Her consistently impressive performances in European club football earned her international recognition.

Upon joining Alianza

Lima Femenino, Manisha Kalyan said, "I am very happy to be here. I have followed this team and I love their style of play. I am very excited about this new challenge."

My focus will always be on giving 100 percent, winning every match, and helping the team achieve its goals."

Manisha's signing is

being considered a major milestone for Indian women's football, opening up new opportunities for the country's players on the international stage.

**Women's Hundred: Smriti Mandhana joins Manchester Super Giants, will be seen in the upcoming season**



**New Delhi, Agency:** Indian women's cricket team's star opening batsman Smriti Mandhana has been signed by Manchester Super Giants for the upcoming Women's Hundred tournament. The franchise officially announced this major deal on Thursday. Mandhana's joining the team is expected to strengthen the Manchester Super Giants' batting. Smriti Mandhana has previously played four seasons of the Hundred League from 2021 to 2024. During this period, she scored 676 runs in 29 innings for Southern Brave. Known for her aggressive yet attractive batting, Mandhana has been among the league's most successful foreign players. A total of six Indian players have participated in the Women's Hundred so far.

**Saroj Paramanik's composed spell powers Tiigers of Kolkata to crucial win over Bengaluru**

**Surat, Agency:** Tiigers of Kolkata registered their first win of ISPL Season 3 with a disciplined all-round performance against Bengaluru in their second league encounter at the Lalbhai Contractor Stadium.

After winning the toss and opting to bat, the Tiigers posted a competitive 77 for 5, a total that proved just enough on a surface where bowlers who hit the right lengths were always in the game. At the heart of Kolkata's innings was Rajat Mundhe, according to a release, as the Gully to Glory Award winner, who once again showed maturity beyond numbers. His steady 35 off 28 balls, which included a six and a crucial nine-run hit, anchored the innings as wickets fell around him and ensured the Tiigers had something to defend.

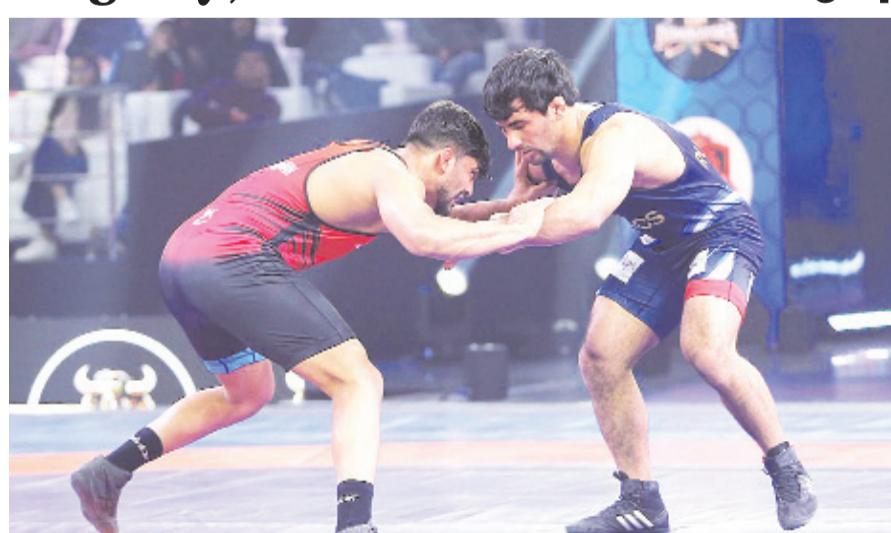
## Pro Wrestling League 2026: Punjab Royals win on opening day, beat UP Dominators 5-4

**Noida, Agency:** The fifth season of the Pro Wrestling League (PWL) 2026 got off to a great start at the Noida Indoor Stadium on Thursday night. In the opening match, Punjab Royals defeated UP Dominators 5-4 in a thrilling contest to claim two crucial points. This prestigious league will be played from January 15 to February 1, 2026.

A total of nine matches were played on the first day, in which Punjab Royals performed well and maintained control. Punjab's Chander Mohan and Priya Malik gave Punjab a strong start in the 74 kg men's category, defeating Armenia's Arman Andreasyan 12-5. In the 57 kg women's cat-

egory, Poland's Roksana Zasina defeated America's Bridget Marie Duty 13-6. Subsequently, Chirag Chiklara in the 57 kg men's category and Priya Malik in the 76 kg women's category also secured victories to strengthen Punjab's position.

UP Dominators made a strong comeback for UP Dominators. Mikhailov Vasil (86 kg men), Nisha Dahiya (62 kg women), and Vishal Kali Raman (65 kg men) performed brilliantly to keep their team in contention.



"I just focused on contributing to the team," said Harleen Deol after UP Warriors' first win

**Mumbai, Agency:** UP Warriors registered their first win in the Women's Premier League (WPL) 2026 on Thursday night, defeating Mumbai Indians with 11 balls to spare. The foundation for victory was laid by the disciplined performance of the opening bowlers, who restricted Mumbai Indians to 161 runs for 5 wickets in 20 overs.

While chasing the target, Harleen Deol was the biggest heroine of UP Warriors' victory. She played a restrained and impressive innings of 64 runs in 39 balls. Harleen's excellent timing and balance, especially in the off-side, played a key role in taking the team to the target.

After the match, Harleen Deol said, "It feels great to get our first win, and I'm happy for the team. I felt I was batting well in the last match, so there wasn't much need to change in my preparation. Sometimes things fall into place on the day, and a few balls go for boundaries. The wicket was a bit difficult in the first innings, but batting became easier later. I just thought about contributing to the team in the best way possible."

Speaking about Harleen Deol's batting and development, head coach Abhishek Nayar said, "For Harleen, it's always been team first and self second, and that's reflected in this team as well. I always encourage her to develop as a touch player as well as a power hitter, as our aim is to take the Indian players to the next level. She became the second Indian batter after Harmanpreet Kaur to score a half-century this season, and that's exactly what we wanted to see."

Speaking about the dressing room atmosphere, Abhishek Nayar said, "Our team culture doesn't change with wins or losses. We've faced challenges in some matches, but players like Kranti Gaud and Phoebe Litchfield keep the energy in the dressing room high. A positive atmosphere is crucial regardless of results."

Emphasizing the importance of leadership, the head coach added, "Strong leadership is crucial in T20 cricket, and Meg Lanning has been excellent in this regard. She is proactive in every aspect, understanding the team's strengths and weaknesses intimately. As the tournament progresses, the impact of her leadership will become more evident. She is the true boss of this team."

# Working on Gandhi Talks challenging and exciting: Aditi Rao Hydari

Actress Aditi Rao Hydari is excited about the release of her upcoming silent film 'Gandhi Talks'. Meanwhile, he told that the experience of working in the film was both challenging and exciting. He described the experience of sharing the screen with Vijay Sethupathi in the film as wonderful. Directed by Kishore Pandurang Belekar, this film is going to be released in theaters on January 30. Aditi said that this was the first time for her to share the screen with Vijay

Sethupathi. Although earlier also both were going to come together in many projects, but due to some reason or the other they could not be completed. Aditi told, we were almost going to work together in some films, but every time something happened and things could not move forward. This jinx was bound to break.

I am happy that this has come to fruition with a very different and special film 'Gandhi Talks'. He termed this film as one of the most unique projects

of his life.

The film is completely silent, with no dialogues. Aditi said, in this film you just remain calm, watch and feel. Emotions have to be expressed even without dialogue, this is its beauty.

This was as challenging as it was exciting for me. Aditi always chooses stories with deep, true and meaningful characters.

He said that the five-year old child inside me is still alive, who dreams, believes in them and tries to fulfill them.



## Priyanka Chopra celebrated daughter Malti's birthday, hosted a party on Little Mermaid theme

Priyanka Chopra Jonas, who has made her own identity from Bollywood to Hollywood, is once again in the news, but this time the reason is not any film or award, but a very beautiful moment of her personal life. Priyanka and her American pop star husband Nick Jonas' daughter Malti Marie has turned four. The couple celebrated this special occasion with full love and happiness, a glimpse of which was shared by Priyanka and Nick themselves on social media. Priyanka Chopra

showed a glimpse of Malti's birthday party on her Instagram story. He posted a picture celebrating Malti's birthday on The Little Mermaid theme. The cake at the party was specially prepared keeping this theme in mind. Disney's famous character



Ariel and her friend Sebastian were made on the cake. While sharing this picture, Priyanka wrote in the caption, she has turned four years old. Meanwhile, Nick Jonas also shared a lovely picture on his daughter's birthday, although he covered Malti's face with a cake emoji.



## Ghulam Mustafa Khan: How a classical singer carved the sounds of Bollywood

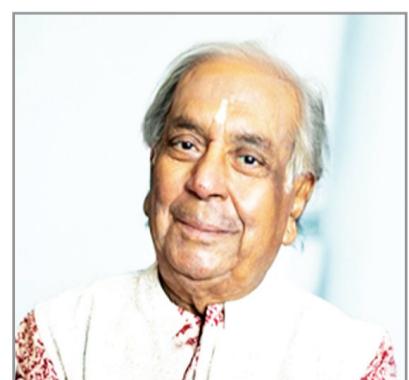
Born on 3 March 1931 in Badaun, Uttar Pradesh, Ghulam Mustafa Khan was destined for music even before his birth. His father Ustad Waris Hussain Khan and grandfather Inayat Hussain Khan (founder of the Rampur-Sahaswan Gharana) had decided that this child would carry forward the Caliphate tradition of the house. Ustad often recalled that while other children played marbles in the streets, he used to practice kharaj (low octave) for hours in front of his father. His father was very strict in matters of music. Once Ustad had told, "My father loved me very much, but whenever I used to sit for Riyaz, he used to discipline me like a soldier. It was this discipline that created the preparation in his neck, which later on would run for three and a half octaves without getting tired. Ustad Ghulam Mustafa



method like Jati-Gayan, which was buried in books for centuries. It proved that the 22 Shruti of Indian music are not an imaginary concept, but the subtle intervals sung by him are still a subject of research for the music students. There was a hesitation among the classical singers whether to sing for the films or not. His singing in the 1981 film Umrao Jaan is still considered as the grammar of music. From Dhar Dhyan... (Bhairav) to "Darshan Deho Shankar Mahadev... (Yaman), the listener is transported to a different spiritual world. Muzaffar Ali and Khayyam Sahab always used to say that without Ustad's voice, that period of Umrao Jaan would have been incomplete.

## Birju Maharaj: When the train moved on the stage through dance, the soul of Kathak spoke in the curls

It was evening time, in the courtyard of an old house in Lucknow, a thin boy of seven-eight years was doing such a jugalbandi with heavy curls tied around his feet that even the masters present there were stunned. The feet of that child were not tapping on the ground, but on the fine thread of the rhythm which even great giants are not able to catch. This child was none other than the future Kathak emperor Pandit Birju Maharaj. Birju Maharaj's childhood was not as pleasant as a fairy tale. When he was born on 4 February 1938 in the famous Kalka-Bindadin Gharana of Lucknow, he was named Dukhharan. Perhaps the family had an inkling that



with his talent this child would not only take away the sorrow of his home but of the entire art fraternity. Later his name was Brijmohan Nath Mishra, who became Birju Maharaj to the world. At the age of just nine, the shadow of his father and guru Achchan Maharaj left his head. At that young age, when children

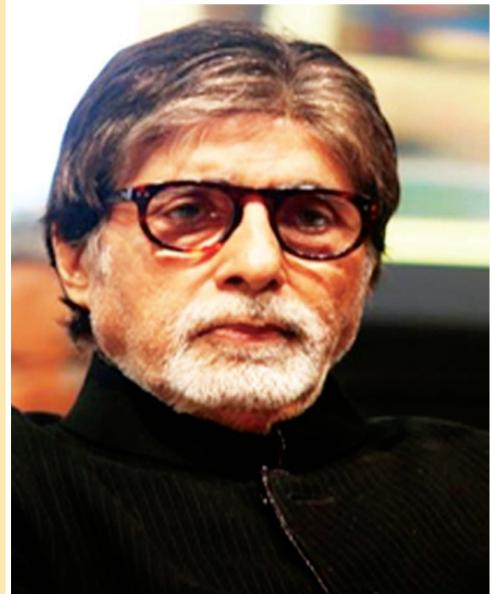
play with toys, the burden of preserving the centuries-old heritage fell on the shoulders of Birju Maharaj. He honed his art under the tutelage of his uncles (Lachhu Maharaj and Shambhu Maharaj) and gave it a new identity. The biggest specialty of Birju Maharaj was that he did not just dance, he told stories.

The word Kathak means that if the story is told then Kathak should be said. The gestures of his hands and the movements of his eyes could narrate the entire Ramayana or Krishna Leela without speaking. There is a famous story that once on a stage he created the sound of a train running, its engine whistling and the track rattling with just the beat of his feet.

## Shilpa Shetty reached Puri's Jagannath temple on Makar Sankranti, shared the amazing experience of darshan

Actress Shilpa Shetty, who is involved in the case of fraud of Rs 60 crore from a businessman, reached the shrine of Lord Jagannath on Makar Sankranti. Actress Shilpa Shetty was seen visiting the temple with her mother Sunanda. The experience of seeing him was emotional. He said that he was fortunate to have the wonderful darshan of Lord Jagannath on this special day. Shilpa Shetty was seen visiting Lord Jagannath temple in Puri with her mother Sunanda Shetty. On this occasion, Shilpa and her mother were seen in yellow suits. First he visited the lamp post outside the temple and then went to the sanctum sanctorum of the temple and had darshan of Lord Jagannath. Let us tell you that on the occasion of Makar Sankranti, a special event is organized in the Jagannath temple and 56 offerings are offered to the Lord, in which Khichdi made of sesame seeds and seasonal vegetables is special. While talking to the media, the actress said that it is a privilege for her to have darshan today. He gave special thanks to the temple administration, because it was because of them that he was able to have a good darshan of Lord Jagannath.

Trying to learn something new every day, but time flies: Amitabh Bachchan



Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan remains constantly connected with people not only through his films but also through his thoughts and writings. For the last several years, he has been openly sharing his thoughts on topics like life, work, time, age and technology through his personal blog. In this episode, in his new blog, Amitabh Bachchan said deep things about the learning process, the speed of time and today's rapidly changing working environment. In his blog post, Big B said that a person learns something new every day, but there is also a kind of regret associated with it. He wrote, sometimes it seems that the things that have to be learned today, I wish they had been learned long ago. However, the technologies and systems that are being understood today did not exist earlier. With increasing age it is natural for the desire to learn, hard work and energy to decrease, and this truth forces me to think again and again. Amitabh Bachchan also talked about the fast pace of technological development in today's era.

He said, new inventions and systems are emerging so fast that by the time a person starts understanding them properly, time has already passed. Due to this rapid change, many times it feels as if a person is being left behind, especially when it becomes no longer easy to learn and adopt new things with age. Referring to his recent experiences, Amitabh Bachchan said, I learned an important lesson from these discussions. In any work, it is important to first strengthen its foundation. After this, the responsibility should be handed over to new age skilled, technically proficient and expert people to take that work forward. This not only makes work better but also saves time and resources.

