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**weather report**

**Kolkata Weather**

14 °C | °F

Precipitation 0%

Humidity 69%

Wind 6 km/h

Mostly Sunny

**Indian Indices**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| NIFTY 50 | | |
| 26042.30 | -99.80 | -0.38 |
| SENSEX | | |
| 85041.45 | -367.25 | -0.43 |
| NIFTY BANK | | |
| 59011.35 | -172.25 | -0.29 |
| NIFTY IT | | |
| 38572.30 | -402.50 | -1.03 |
| BSE SMALLCAP | | |
| 51318.68 | -174.94 | -0.34 |

**Gold Rates**

Today gold price in Kolkata

1,40,020 1,28,350

»

Today gold price in Bangalore

1,40,020 1,28,350

»

Today gold price in India

1,40,020 (₹000) 1,28,350 (₹000)

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Members of various organisations hold a protest seeking justice for the Unnao rape case survivor, at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, Sunday.

# Narendra Modi Praises Youth-Driving Development In 2025's Last 'Mann Ki Baat' Address

CHITTAJIT DUTTA



**New Delhi, 28 December:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the world is looking at India with great expectations, largely because of the country's youth who are driving development in science, technology and digital innovation while also carrying forward India's cultural roots. Addressing the 129th episode of his monthly radio programme 'Mann Ki Baat', the Prime Minister said, "Today, the world is looking at India with great expectations. The biggest reason for this hope is our youth. In the field of science, our achievements, innovations, and technological advancements have impressed countries around the world." He said India's youth have always had a passion for doing something new and remain equally aware and socially conscious. Referring to opportunities for young people to present their ideas, PM Modi said, "Many ask how they can give a presentation of their ideas to me? The solution to this curiosity of our young friends is 'Viksit Bharat Young Leaders' Dialogue'. Last year, the first edition of this event was held, and a few days later, the second edition will be held -- on January 12 during National Youth Day, which is celebrated to mark the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. I will also join the programme." He said that during the dialogue, youth will share their ideas on important themes such as innovation, fitness, startups and agriculture. The Prime Minister expressed happiness over the growing participation of young people in this initiative. "A few days ago, a pitch competition related to this was held, in which more than 50 lakh young people participated. An essay competition was also held, where students expressed their views on various topics. In this competition, Tamil Nadu secured the first position and Uttar Pradesh the second," he said. "Young people in the country are getting new opportunities to showcase their talent. Many platforms are being developed where youth can display their skills and interests," he added. PM Modi also spoke about the Smart India Hackathon 2025, which concluded earlier this month. "During this hackathon, students worked on over 270 problems from more than 80 government departments. The students provided solutions related to real-life problems. For instance, on the challenge of traffic, the youth shared a very interesting perspective related to 'Smart Traffic Management'," he said.



Members of various Hindu organisations hold a protest condemning reported incidents of violence against Hindus in Bangladesh, in Bengaluru, Sunday.

## Humayun Kabir's Party To Contest 182 Seats In Bengal Polls, Eyes Tie-Up With Asaduddin Owaisi

**Staff Reporter, Kolkata, 28 December:** Suspended Trinamool Congress leader and Bharatpur MLA Humayun Kabir on Saturday said that his newly-launched Janata Unnayan Party (JUP) will contest 182 seats in the West Bengal Assembly elections.

He further expressed his desire to form an electoral alliance with the Indian Secular Front (ISF) and Asaduddin Owaisi's AIMIM. However, the ISF has not yet issued any statement regarding an alliance with Humayun Kabir's party.

Earlier, Kabir had said that his party would contest 135 out of the total 294 Assembly seats in the state. His goal was to win at least 90 seats. The MLA from Bharatpur is confident that he will play a decisive role in the government formation next year.

On Saturday, Kabir stated, "We have only one goal: to stop the BJP. Those who are calling me a traitor, like Mamata Banerjee, are the ones who have betrayed the Muslim community at every step. They betrayed the community regarding the Waqf (Act). They said they would handle it alone, but in reality, they deceived the people."

He then elaborated on his plans for contesting the Assembly elections. He said, "What kind of results will we achieve by contesting in 182 seats? Let me tell you, there will be a miraculous result. Something that the senior and experienced politicians of West Bengal have failed to achieve." He further said, "In future of Bengal politics, I and the ISF are joining forces. If AIMIM joins, they are welcome."

However, he has not yet disclosed anything about seat sharing. Humayun said he will wait until December 31 for those with whom he is discussing an alliance, and then he will announce the details of the alliance.Humayun said that he will visit three Assembly constituencies for campaigning every day. He will use a helicopter to save time. However, Humayun is not worried about the Trinamool Congress, BJP, Congress or CPIM.

Meanwhile, Trinamool Congress All-India general secretary Abhishek Banerjee reacted to Kabir's statement, saying that anyone can form a party.

"Anyone can form a party. What is the problem? If one thinks one wants to, they can. People have to choose.

# On Congress' 140th Foundation Day, Digvijaya Singh's comments on RSS-BJP cadre system trigger internal unease



**Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 28 December:** The Congress' 140th Foundation Day on Sunday became the backdrop for a renewed internal debate on organisation, discipline and dissent. At the centre of it was senior leader Digvijaya Singh's controversial remark praising the organisational rise within the RSS-BJP, and the varied responses it triggered within the party. Congress MP Shashi Tharoor backed the core of Singh's argument, the need to strengthen the party organisation, while steering clear of any endorsement of the RSS ideology. "The organisation should be strengthened, there is no doubt," Tharoor said when asked about the issue.

The controversy began a day earlier at the Indira Bhawan headquarters, ahead of a Congress Working Committee meeting, when Singh wrote about how the BJP-RSS system allowed a grassroots worker to rise to the posts of chief minister and prime minister by "sitting at the feet of their leaders."Singh's remarks reopened questions about unity and internal discontent within the Congress.Rahul Gandhi said the Congress is not just a political party, but the voice of India's soul that has stood with every weak, deprived and hardworking person.In a post on X, he said, "The resolve is to fight even more strongly the battle for truth, courage, and to protect the Constitution against hatred, injustice, and dictatorship. We pay homage to that historic legacy and those great sacrifices that won freedom for India, laid the foundation of the Constitution, and strengthened the values of democracy, secularism, social justice, and equality."

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, without naming Singh, underlined the party's position and its contrast with the BJP-RSS combine."We may have less power, but our backbone is not weak. Whether we are in power or not, we do not seek votes in the name of religion. We believe in religion, but some have turned religion into politics," he said. "The BJP has power, but it lacks truth. RSS leaders had once refused to accept even the Tricolour and Vande Mataram and they are now crushing the rights of the people."CWC member Pawan Khera disagreed with Singh. "I don't agree with what he said. Godse's supporters cannot be Gandhi's supporters," he said.

Congress MP Manickam Tagore said, "RSS is an organisation made of hatred. RSS spreads hatred. Al Qaeda is also an organisation made of hatred. Al Qaeda also spreads terrorists. We do not need to learn anything from RSS. Al Qaeda and RSS have the same model."Sachin Pilot sought to play down the controversy, insisting there was no internal rift. "Congress is united. The country needs a strong opposition. There are no differences within Congress. Opinions are free to express. They said what they had to say. Our single goal is to strengthen Kharge and Rahul (sic)," he said.

Congress leader Supriya Shrinate said, "I feel the BJP is distorting the intent of Digvijaya's post. The Sangh, which spreads hatred and gets inspiration from the ideology of Godse, who killed Mahatma Gandhi, we don't need to learn anything from them."

# President Droupadi Murmu Undertakes Submarine Sortie At Karnataka Naval Base

ANIKET NASKAR



**New Delhi, 28 December:** President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday embarked on a submarine sortie at the Karwar naval base in Karnataka, officials said. Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi accompanied the President onboard INS Vaghsheer, a Kalvari class submarine. The President is also the Supreme Commander of the armed forces. This maiden sortie onboard a Kalvari Class Submarine by President Murmu is the second by a President. APJ Abdul Kalam was the first president to undertake a submarine sortie.

President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday undertook a sortie onboard Indian Navy's frontline submarine INS Vaghsheer on the Western seaboard. Murmu became the second President to undertake a submarine sortie. In February, 2006, APJ Abdul Kalam became the first president to experience a submarine sortie.

Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi accompanied President Murmu during the sortie in the Kalvari class submarine from the Karwar naval base in Karnataka, officials said. The President is also the Supreme Commander of the armed forces. "President Droupadi Murmu embarked the Indian Navy's indigenous Kalvari class submarine INS Vaghsheer at Karwar Naval Base," the President's secretariat posted on social media.

The President, donning a naval uniform, waved at naval personnel before entering the submarine. INS Vaghsheer, the sixth and final submarine of the P75 Scorpene project, was commissioned into the Navy in January. It is one of the most silent and versatile diesel-electric submarines in the world, according to Navy officials. It is designed to undertake a wide range of missions, including anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, intelligence gathering, area surveillance, and special operations.

Armed with wire-guided torpedoes, anti-ship missiles, and advanced sonar systems, the submarine also features modular construction, allowing for future upgrades such as the integration of Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) technology. The Indian Navy is developing Karwar base considering India's long-term security interests in the Indian Ocean region.

President Droupadi Murmu embarked on a submarine sortie at the Karwar naval base in Karnataka today. Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi accompanied the President onboard INS Vaghsheer, a Kalvari class submarine. The President is also the Supreme Commander of the armed forces. This maiden sortie onboard a Kalvari Class Submarine by President Murmu is the second by a President. APJ Abdul Kalam was the first president to undertake a submarine sortie in 2006 at Visakhapatnam. After arrival in Karwar, Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot welcomed her. President Murmu is on a four-day visit to Goa, Karnataka, and Jharkhand beginning yesterday.

Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi, Chief of Naval Staff, accompanied the President during the mission on the INS Vaghsheer. The naval engagement represents a rare hands-on demonstration of India's maritime combat capabilities for a head of state.The voyage marks only the second time an Indian President has undertaken a submarine sortie, following the late A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, who performed a similar mission in 2006.The event took place at Karwar Harbour, a critical facility for the Western Naval Command and home to "Project Seabird," the largest naval infrastructure development in the Eastern Hemisphere.

## Omar Abdullah Government Faces Protest By Its Own Party MP Over Reservations

**Staff Reporter, Srinagar, 28 December:** The Omar Abdullah-led government in Jammu and Kashmir is facing protests over the delay in the rationalisation of the reservation policy, led by the party's own Member of Parliament, Aga Ruhullah Mehdi. The Srinagar MP has announced that he will join a protest with General category students in Srinagar tomorrow. Aga Ruhullah, who has openly criticised the Chief Minister and accused him of "compromising the core party ideology," stated that he is joining the protests to demand a meaningful dialogue with stakeholders and an equitable resolution to the reservation issue in the Union Territory. "I will not leave the students alone. If the government fails to take them into confidence and resolve the issue, I will join the protests," Aga Ruhullah said.As per the existing reservation policy, which was invoked during direct Central rule, the General category - which constitutes approximately 70% of the population in J&K - is allotted only 40% of seats in government recruitment. The J&K Cabinet recently moved to amend this. Sources indicate that under the new policy adopted by the Cabinet, 50% of jobs will now be available for the Open Merit (General) category. However, this decision requires approval from Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha. The Chief Minister stated that the file was sent to the L-G's office on December 3, but it remains pending.

# Moscow's response to European attack will be devastating: Russian foreign minister

**Staff Reporter, Moscow, 28 December:** Russia does not intend to attack anyone in Europe, but its response to any strike will be devastating, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Sunday, noting the EU's "war party" has become a stumbling block in Ukraine peace efforts.Lavrov's warning came on a day Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is scheduled to meet with US President Donald Trump at the latter's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida.

"My message for European politicians who seem to have problems getting to grips with this fact is to repeat one more time that there is no need to be afraid of Russia attacking anyone," Lavrov said in an interview with state-run news agency TASS."However, should anyone consider attacking Russia, they would face a devastating blow," Lavrov added.

As Zelenskyy is set to meet Trump with his peace plan backed by key European powers, who according to media reports, insist on deployment of European troops as part of security guarantees for Kiev, Lavrov said they will be a 'legitimate target' for Russia. "Whether leaders like (EU chief) Ursula von der Leyen, (German Chancellor) Friedrich Merz, (UK prime minister) Keir Starmer and (French President) Emmanuel Macron and the like have reached a point of no return is hard to say.



"We do see that so far, the European war party has been investing its political capital in inflicting a strategic defeat on Russia, and is ready to go the whole nine yards," the Russian minister said."I would like to place a special emphasis on the fact that these actions on their behalf were totally illegitimate. After all, Russia has never taken the initiative to target its European neighbours with unfriendly actions," Lavrov stated.

He said Russia appreciates efforts by President Trump and his team to achieve a peace settlement. Moscow is committed to continuing to work with the American negotiators to devise lasting agreements for addressing the conflict's root causes, he added.

After Trump came to power, Europe and the European Union emerged as the main stumbling block to peace, he said. "They are making no secret of the fact that they are getting ready to fight it out with Russia on the battlefield." In another report, TASS quoted Lavrov as saying that Moscow will fully back Beijing on Taiwan in the event of a flared up conflict as the West sees it as a tool of military-strategic deterrence against China.

"As for the possible escalation in the Taiwan Strait, the procedure for acting in such situations is set forth in the Treaty of Good-Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation with the People's Republic of China of July 16, 2001."One of the basic principles of that document is mutual support in defending national unity and territorial integrity," Lavrov pointed out."Taiwan is currently used as a tool of military-strategic deterrence against the PRC. This is also a matter of pursuing vested interests: some in the West are keen to profit from Taiwanese money and technologies," Lavrov underscored.

# EC Explains SIR Notices to Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar's Family Amid Growing Public Curiosity

**Staff reporter, Kolkata, 28 December:** The Election Commission of India (ECI) has stepped forward to clarify the issuance of Special Intensive Revision (SIR) notices to the family of Trinamool Congress MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, a development that had sparked widespread speculation and debate. The clarification, aimed at quelling confusion and public concern, comes amid heightened scrutiny of the ongoing voter verification process and its impact on high-profile families. According to official sources, the notices issued under the SIR process are procedural and impartial, targeting certain anomalies and requiring verification of residency and voter eligibility. The Commission emphasized that receiving a notice does not imply any wrongdoing or negative presumption. In the case of MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar's family, the SIR notices were reportedly triggered by routine administrative checks rather than political or personal considerations. The process, as explained by the ECI, is part of a larger nationwide effort to ensure the integrity of the electoral rolls. The SIR exercise involves verifying the authenticity of voter entries, cross-checking documentation, and updating information wherever discrepancies are observed. While the procedure applies to all citizens, public attention intensifies when the families of prominent politicians are involved, as seen in this instance. MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar responded to the clarification by emphasizing



her family's willingness to cooperate with the authorities. She urged the public to understand that the process is procedural and not targeted against any individual. "The notices are part of an administrative exercise, and my family will provide the necessary details to comply fully," she stated, highlighting the importance of transparency and rule of law. The issuance of SIR notices has previously sparked debates about procedural fairness and the potential for perceived political bias. Critics argue that prominent political families receiving notices can create unnecessary controversy, while supporters maintain that uniform application of the rules is essential to uphold electoral integrity. The ECI's clarification aims to reassure citizens that the process is impartial, methodical, and designed to strengthen democracy rather than undermine it. Observers note that the SIR process has already impacted thousands of households across the country, particularly in constituencies with dense populations and complex voter data. The Commission has reiterated that all communications sent under SIR must be responded to promptly to prevent future complications regarding electoral registration and voting rights. As news of the notices circulated widely in media and social networks, the ECI's explanation sought to prevent misinterpretation. By emphasizing transparency, neutrality, and procedural correctness, the Commission aims to build public confidence in the system and demonstrate that electoral oversight is carried out with fairness, irrespective of an individual's social, political, or public stature. While the controversy surrounding high-profile recipients of SIR notices has attracted political attention, officials insist that the underlying goal remains the integrity of India's democratic process. The clarification regarding MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar's family underscores that compliance and cooperation are the expected responses to such notices, and that the process itself should not be sensationalized or politicized. As the SIR process continues, citizens and political observers alike are watching closely, keen to ensure that verification exercises are conducted fairly, transparently, and without undue controversy.

# Mamata Banerjee to Lay Foundation Stone of Durga Angan in Newtown: A New Chapter in Cultural Revival

**Staff reporter, Kolkata, 28 December :** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is set to lay the foundation stone of the much-anticipated Durga Angan in Newtown this Monday. The event, expected to draw dignitaries, devotees, and the general public alike, marks a milestone in the state's efforts to promote community spaces that celebrate tradition, religion, and civic engagement.

Durga Angan, envisioned as a vibrant hub for cultural and religious activities, will serve as a focal point for celebrations, gatherings, and artistic performances. Strategically located in Newtown, a rapidly developing township known for its modern infrastructure and urban planning, the project reflects the state government's initiative to merge contemporary city life with the spiritual and cultural pulse of Bengal.

Chief Minister Banerjee, who has been closely associated with initiatives promoting cultural and religious institutions, is expected to inaugurate the groundwork with a traditional ceremonial ritual. Her presence is likely to infuse the event with both political and spiritual significance, underscoring the government's commitment to supporting spaces that foster community participation and social cohesion.

Local authorities have prepared the site meticulously to accommodate the foundation-laying ceremony. Security arrangements have been strengthened, with dedicated zones for visitors and media coverage to ensure smooth proceedings. Cultural programs and devotional performances are also scheduled as part of the event, highlighting the artistic and spiritual essence that Durga Angan is set to embody.

The project has been widely welcomed by residents and community leaders in Newtown, who view it as more than just a religious venue.

They see Durga Angan as a space that will encourage social interaction, preserve cultural heritage, and provide a platform for local artists and performers. The initiative is also expected to contribute to urban beautification, making Newtown not only a residential and commercial hub but also a center of cultural and religious vibrancy.

Politically, the foundation stone ceremony carries



significance as it reinforces the administration's connection with grassroots communities and cultural stakeholders. Chief Minister Banerjee has often emphasized the importance of protecting and promoting Bengal's cultural identity, and the Durga Angan project is seen as a continuation of that vision. By anchoring modern urban planning with traditional values, the state aims to create inclusive spaces that cater to both spiritual and social needs.

Public anticipation for Monday's ceremony has been high, with devotees, cultural enthusiasts, and local residents expressing eagerness to witness the event firsthand. Social media buzz and local media coverage have amplified interest, reflecting the project's resonance beyond the immediate vicinity. For many, the foundation stone-laying is symbolic of new beginnings, a gesture that promises not only physical construction but also the nurturing of faith, art, and community spirit.

As construction of Durga Angan commences, the focus will shift to realizing the vision of a multipurpose cultural space that can host festivals, performances, and community initiatives year-round. Officials have assured that the development will adhere to modern safety standards while preserving the aesthetic and spiritual essence that defines traditional Bengali religious architecture.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Newtown is therefore more than a ceremonial formality; it is a statement of intent. It signals the state's commitment to cultural preservation, community engagement, and urban development in harmony with tradition. Durga Angan promises to become a landmark in Newtown, a testament to Bengal's living heritage, and a space where devotion, culture, and community converge in celebration.

# Senior Citizens Struggle Amid SIR Hearings: AITC to Take Concerns to Election Commission

**Staff reporter, Kolkata, 28 December :** A wave of concern has emerged as reports surface of senior citizens facing harassment and anxiety due to the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) hearings. The All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) has announced that it will send a delegation to the Election Commission of India (ECI) to formally convey the plight of elderly citizens, demanding that their difficulties be addressed with urgency, sensitivity, and fairness. According to AITC leaders, numerous senior citizens have received SIR notices requiring verification of their voter information, creating stress, confusion, and in some cases, fear. Many recipients, some of whom have been registered voters for decades, are reportedly struggling to produce the required documentation or navigate complex bureaucratic procedures. In extreme cases, reports indicate that some elderly citizens are feeling humiliated and targeted, amplifying the need for immediate intervention. Speaking on behalf of the party, senior AITC officials emphasized that the SIR process, while intended to ensure accuracy in voter rolls, must not become a source of distress for citizens who have always acted in good faith. They argued that the elderly, often less mobile and less familiar with digital processes, are particularly vulnerable and deserve special consideration and protection. The planned delegation will meet with Election Commission representatives to seek concrete solutions. Among the key demands are simplified procedures for senior citizens, assistance in submitting required documents, and assurances that no voter will be unfairly removed from electoral rolls due to procedural lapses beyond their control. The party has stressed that maintaining electoral integrity should not come at the cost of dignity, respect, and peace of mind for the nation's elderly population. Observers note that the situation highlights a broader tension inherent in mass voter verification exercises. While accurate electoral rolls are crucial for democracy, large-scale bureaucratic processes must be balanced with citizen-friendly approaches. The AITC's move to engage directly with the ECI underscores the political sensitivity of the matter and the importance of ensuring that administrative procedures do not alienate or intimidate any segment of the electorate. Reactions from the public suggest growing empathy for senior citizens affected by the SIR notices. Families, social groups, and advocacy organizations have echoed concerns raised by the AITC, calling for a humane and compassionate approach. Many point out that elderly citizens, who have spent decades contributing to society and exercising their democratic rights, should not face undue hardship in complying with procedural requirements. Election authorities have previously maintained that the SIR process is impartial and essential for maintaining clean and accurate voter rolls. They have urged citizens to cooperate and assured that there are mechanisms in place for assistance and grievance redressal. However, party leaders argue that the scale and complexity of the process require proactive measures, especially for vulnerable groups like senior citizens. The upcoming delegation from the AITC is expected to formally submit petitions and suggest practical steps to minimize distress, including mobile verification units, extended deadlines, and simplified documentation processes for the elderly. Leaders hope that the ECI will respond promptly to ensure that no citizen's right to vote is compromised due to procedural challenges.

# Star Exodus: Why Celebrities Are Jumping Ship from BJP Ahead of West Bengal Assembly Elections 2026

**Staff reporter, Kolkata, 28 December :** A growing number of celebrities are leaving the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Once hailed as a key pillar in the party's strategy to attract urban and youth voters, these public figures are now turning away, raising questions about the party's appeal, internal dynamics, and future electoral prospects in the state.



Political analysts suggest that the exodus of celebrities is not merely a matter of personal choice; it reflects broader concerns about party culture, political strategy, and public perception. Many stars, who had initially joined BJP with hopes of contributing to governance and cultural outreach, cite dissatisfaction with decision-making processes, lack of recognition, and internal conflicts as primary reasons for leaving. For them, the glamorous political entry has been overshadowed by organizational rigidity and contested priorities.

The departures are particularly notable because celebrities play a dual role in politics—they bring visibility, charisma, and outreach, while also influencing voter sentiment. Their exit, therefore, is more than symbolic; it is a potential blow to BJP's campaign machinery. Observers note that the party's attempts to leverage star power in urban constituencies now face serious challenges, as disenchanted figures either distance themselves quietly or openly criticize party strategies.

Adding to the controversy is the perception of a shrinking space for independent voices within the party. Several high-profile resignations highlight frustrations over ideological alignment, cultural sensitivities, and communication gaps with the central leadership. Many celebrities, accustomed to public adoration and creative freedom, find themselves constrained by rigid political expectations, prompting them to reconsider their affiliation.

The timing of the departures, just ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections, intensifies the impact. Opposition parties are quick to seize upon these developments, portraying the BJP as a party losing credibility and influence. Analysts argue that in a state like West Bengal, where emotional connect, regional identity, and cultural alignment are crucial, losing celebrity support can influence voter perception more than conventional political rhetoric.

From a voter perspective, the celebrity exodus contributes to a narrative of instability. While ordinary supporters may remain loyal to the party, the departure of well-known figures creates an aura of unease, questioning whether the party can maintain unity and effectiveness in the run-up to elections. Social media amplifies these developments, with trending hashtags, interviews, and opinion pieces highlighting the pattern and intensifying its visibility.

Party sources, however, insist that the departures, while unfortunate, do not signify a larger crisis. They argue that political careers are fluid and that personalities move in and out of political affiliations regularly. BJP officials emphasize that the core organizational strength, grassroots presence, and policy framework remain intact, and that electoral strategies are being recalibrated to address emerging challenges.

Meanwhile, political commentators suggest that the exit of celebrities offers an opportunity for introspection. It signals the need for parties to cultivate an inclusive culture, where voices are respected, creative expression is acknowledged, and public personalities feel empowered rather than constrained. In West Bengal's vibrant political and cultural ecosystem, failing to address these factors could affect not only star support but also broader electoral resonance.

The star exodus from BJP is likely to remain a talking point. While it may influence urban and youth voters, it also reflects deeper questions about political engagement, identity, and the intersection of celebrity with governance.

For the BJP, the challenge lies not merely in replacing these personalities, but in re-establishing trust, enthusiasm, and alignment with the very public figures who once promised to amplify the party's vision in West Bengal.

# Bangladesh's Ex-PM Khaleda Zia In "Extremely Critical" Condition, Says Doctor



**Staff reporter, Dhaka, 28 December :** Bangladesh's former prime minister Khaleda Zia is in an "extremely critical" condition, her personal physician has said. Zia, the 80-year-old chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), has been undergoing treatment at Dhaka's Evercare Hospital since November 23 for multiple health complications.

On December 11, she was placed on "ventilator support to give rest to her lungs and other vital organs." "It cannot be said that her condition has improved. She is passing through an extremely critical phase," Dr AZM Zahid said during a briefing held shortly after midnight on Saturday outside Evercare Hospital, without prior notice.

He also urged the nation to pray for Zia's recovery, news portal bdnews24.com reported."If, by Allah's mercy, she can get through this critical period, we may hear something positive," Zahid said. Her son and BNP acting chairperson Tarique Rahman spent more than two hours at the hospital before leaving shortly before midnight, party members said.

Both local and foreign physicians are involved in Zia's care, with her daughter-in-law, Dr Zubaida Rahman, also actively participating in the treatment process.The BNP has previously indicated that it would prefer Zia to be taken abroad for advanced medical treatment. However, her current physical condition does not allow for air travel, so her treatment continues in the country



# Today's Horoscope

**ARIES:** You experience a sense of freedom today. And in this mood you feel like doing all the things that you loved to do in your childhood. It is a nice time to take your family on an outing.

**TAURUS:** You have a hectic day ahead, says Ganesha. You will be immersed in your work all day long and will love doing so. A lot will get done by the end of the day.

**GEMINI:** It's time you took stock of your personal life. Is there someone you want to propose but are afraid to do so? Ganesha advises you not to let the fear of rejection stop you from making an effort.

**CANCER:** Ganesha says that this will be a unique and auspicious day for you. You will get clue and hints of this from morning itself. A religious ceremony in the house.

**LEO :** You will have to bear more responsibilities in the office. You need to carefully weigh your alternatives before making a decision. On the personal front.

**VIRGO:** Today is a mixed bag of values and pragmatism, says Ganesha, and if there were to be a competition for the most humanitarian person, you would be likely to win hands down.

**LIBRA:** It is very likely that you will arouse immense jealousy in others with your success and growth in business. Your business rivals may attempt to dent your credit worthiness in one way or the other.

**SCORPIO:** The grey strands on your head is not just a colour, but speaks about your experiences. Your wisdom will make you take appropriate decisions at work.

**SAGITTARIUS:** Today is a curiously interesting day for you. While you are always well-groomed, today, you may take that extra bit of care to look best and attract a lot of praise for that too.

**CAPRICORN:** If wasteful expenditure has left your bank balance a tad below what you had anticipated, you will have reasons to rejoice today, says Ganesha.

**AQUARIUS:** Do you wish to have a new car or any other property? Make the bookings today, as it is favourable day to make such purchases. You will prioritise your needs.

**PIECES:** Fear is a part and parcel of life, and while it can not be eliminated, it can certainly be tamed, and that is what you will be doing today. All your suppressed audacity will be on full display.

# Putin Issues Stark Warning of Force Ahead of Trump-Zelenskyy Meeting

**Staff reporter, Washington, 28 December :** Russian President Vladimir Putin has issued a sharp warning of potential military force just days before a highly anticipated meeting between former U.S. President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The statement, laced with both caution and defiance, underscores the fragile and tense state of international diplomacy amid ongoing conflict in Eastern Europe. Putin's remarks came during a high-profile address to Russian military officials and political allies, in which he emphasized that Moscow remains prepared to defend its strategic interests "by any means necessary." Analysts interpret the warning as a message to both Kyiv and Washington, signaling Russia's unwillingness to compromise on matters it considers critical to national security and geopolitical influence. The timing of the warning is particularly notable. The Trump-Zelenskyy meeting, widely expected to focus on strengthening support for Ukraine and potentially discussing military and economic aid, has drawn global attention. For Putin, the gathering represents a moment where Western support for Ukraine could be publicly reinforced, a scenario he seeks to counteract with a display of resolve and implicit threat. Diplomatic observers suggest that Putin's statement serves multiple purposes. Domestically, it reinforces his image as a strong leader, ready to protect Russian sovereignty and national interests. Internationally, it is a strategic signal intended to inject caution and uncertainty into discussions involving Ukraine, potentially complicating Western plans and negotiations. The warning has already triggered reactions in both the United States and Europe. U.S. officials, while emphasizing continued support for Ukraine, have reiterated the importance of diplomacy and restraint. European leaders have called for calm and measured responses, stressing that dialogue must remain the primary tool for resolving the ongoing conflict. Analysts note that the global balance remains delicate, with each statement from Moscow scrutinized for indications of potential escalation. Trump and Zelenskyy are expected to address issues related to security assistance, economic reconstruction, and strategies to counter Russian advances. The meeting has been framed as both symbolic and substantive—a reaffirmation of Ukraine's Western partnerships and a potential blueprint for future cooperation. Putin's warning, however, casts a shadow over these discussions, highlighting the ever-present risk of escalation in the region. Military experts caution that such statements, while rhetorical, are rarely devoid of strategic intent. Russia's recent troop movements and military exercises suggest that the country is signaling readiness to act, even as it navigates diplomatic channels. The dual approach of threat and negotiation has long been a feature of Moscow's foreign policy, and analysts suggest that global leaders must weigh rhetoric against tangible military developments. The stakes of the upcoming meeting extend beyond Ukraine's borders. Global markets, energy supplies, and regional security are all influenced by the interplay between Russian actions and Western responses. Investors and policymakers alike are monitoring the situation closely, aware that even a minor miscalculation could have far-reaching consequences. For Zelenskyy, the Trump meeting represents an opportunity to reinforce alliances and secure tangible support. For Trump, the gathering is likely to serve as both a political statement and a reaffirmation of engagement in international security matters. Putin's warning, however, serves as a stark reminder that diplomacy in this arena is fraught with tension, and that words alone can have the power to influence global dynamics. Putin's warning of force adds a layer of urgency to the Trump-Zelenskyy meeting, reminding all parties that in matters of international security, timing, rhetoric, and perception can shape outcomes as much as strategy or policy. The coming days will be crucial in determining whether dialogue can prevail over threats, or whether the rhetoric of force will further heighten global uncertainty.

# Ranveer's New Year vacation destination with Deepika and family members is New York



**Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 28 December:** Ranveer Singh is currently in New York with his wife Deepika Padukone and other family members, including his parents Jagjit Singh Bhavnani and Anju Bhavnani, as well as his elder sister Ritika Bhavnani. Photos from the vacation have now surfaced online, showing the Dhurandhar actor spending quality time with his family in the city.

A fan in New York shared photos with Ranveer, in which the actor is seen happily posing with them. Another picture showed Deepika smiling alongside Ranveer's sister Ritika. The fan shared in the comments section of the post that they met the actor at a bar in New York.

For the outing, Ranveer Singh opted for a casual winter look, wearing a black sweater layered with a grey patterned scarf, a black beanie and tinted rectangular sunglasses, with a bright red cross-body strap completing the look. Deepika Padukone, on the other hand, kept it chic and minimal in a soft white coat paired with a matching thick scarf.

Ranveer Singh's appearance in New York comes amid the phenomenal box-office run of Dhurandhar, which has entered the list of the top 10 highest-grossing Indian films after earning over Rs 1,000 crore worldwide within just 23 days of its release.

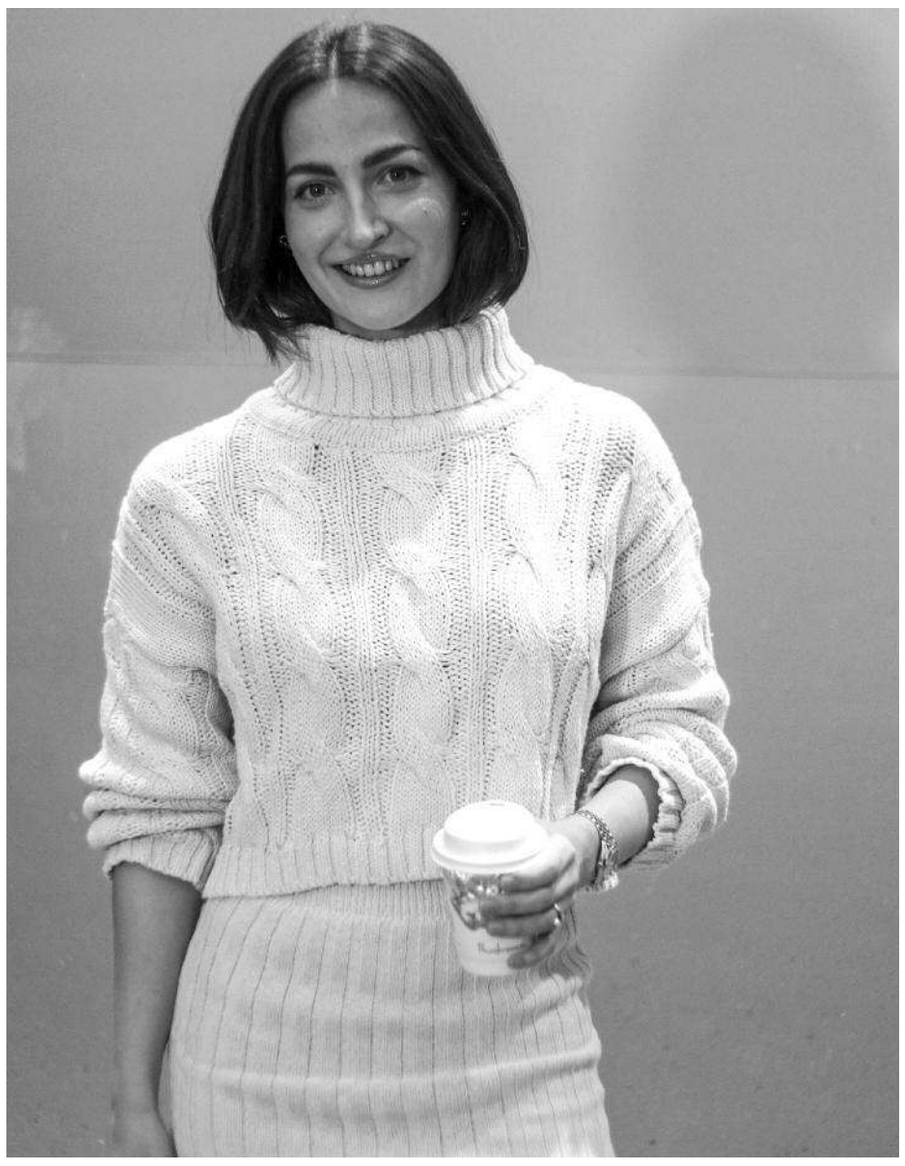
After taking a dig at Ranveer Singh's Dhurandhar, content creator Dhruv Rathee has now called out Bollywood actresses for getting skin-lightening treatments, including the actor's wife, actor Deepika Padukone. In his latest video on YouTube, titled The FAKE Beauty of Bollywood Celebrities, Rathee claimed that many actors like Kajol, Bipasha Basu, and Priyanka Chopra have got such procedures done. But, his allegations didn't sit well with Deepika's fans and they jumped to defend her on social media.

"The beauty that you think is God-gifted, has actually become doctor-gifted," he said, while pointing out at Bollywood celebrities in the video. Then, he mentioned a few cosmetic surgery procedures, including, nose jobs, lip fillers, fat removal, jawline augmentation, face lift, botox, and others, alleging that most Bollywood and Hollywood celebrities get these done to make the general public feel insecure. He then showed clips of several celebs accepting that they have gotten under the knife, and debunked the ones who haven't publicly admitted it.

Besides botox, the YouTuber also listed names of many actors like Bipasha Basu, Deepika Padukone, Shilpa Shetty, Kajol and Priyanka Chopra, claiming that they all have got skin lightning treatment done. "Their skin colours used to look darker in the beginning of their career, but now it's lighter," he said. He also said that such actresses take a specific glutathione injection, but reason the change in skin colour with going less under sunlight and applying creams. He even claimed that actor Shefali Jariwala passed away because of taking an anti-aging injection on an empty stomach.

However, Rathee's latest video didn't go down well with netizens. Many fans defended Deepika Padukone on X and Reddit, slamming the content-creator for his claims. "The lighting helps and editing also happens in Final Cut. I don't think she got any treatments," a person wrote. "Look at her younger pics, she wasn't thaaat dark. Barely medium skin tone. So she was just likely following the tan fashion trend of the 2000s in few of her looks like Aishwarya did for Dhoom 2," another fan commented. "Well he was against dhurandar soo ya naturally he chose the best target," a third comment read.

This isn't the first time Dhruv Rathee has attacked Bollywood. In his previous Youtube video, he had slammed Deepika's husband, actor Ranveer Singh's latest blockbuster Dhurandhar. Taking a dig at the film's director Aditya Dhar and its alleged 'well-made propaganda', Rathee had called the movie 'dangerous'. The video had received a lot of backlash from Ranveer's fans and viewers who liked Dhurandhar.



Actor Elli AvrRam during a visit to Soil Studio, Andheri, in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

# Salman Khan is a 'bad boy', Shah Rukh Khan a 'gentleman', says Arshad Warsi; actor recalls shooting unreleased with Amitabh Bachchan



**Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 28 December:** Arshad Warsi has worked with both Khan superstars, Salman Khan and Shah Rukh Khan, but his film with veteran actor Amitabh Bachchan never saw the light of day. In a recent interview, the actor revealed that Salman has a 'bad boy' aura publicly, while SRK is a 'gentleman'. Arshad also recalled shooting for an unreleased film with Big B. During a conversation with The Lallantop, Arshad Warsi recalled shooting the unreleased film Zamaanat with Amitabh Bachchan. He said, "There are genuine stars – for me, it's Dilip Kumar, Shah Rukh Khan, and Amitabh Bachchan. My luck is so bad that I have never worked with Amit ji in my life. We shot for an entire film together but it never got released. The name was Zamaanat. It went through a lot of trouble – shooting started, then paused, and this kept happening. S Ramanathan was it's director, he passed away in the middle. I actually realised at that time, Mr B had told me that I should keep doing my shot till I am happy and satisfied no matter what happens."

Warsi praised Bachchan's dedication to give his best in every shot. "We took a courtroom shot in Hyderabad. There was a lot of sunlight. There were many people on the stairs with 500-1000 people lying on the road to protest. It was a large scale set. Amit ji had a long speech in that scene."He added, "He gave around 10-12 takes in that shot, and then finally thought one of them was fine. We sat inside after it. A few minutes later, he said that we should do one more. I started smiling, and thought he was joking. But, he was serious, everyone laid down on the road once again, the entire shot happened again."

Arshad Warsi has worked with Shah Rukh in Kuchh Meetha Ho Jaye (2005) and is set to collaborate with him in King (2026). Appreciating SRK's work approach and nature, he said, "Shah Rukh knows his work. He has that old school theatre vibe, and has all the lines in his mind. He is one of the most polite and giving actors. It's very nice. I have never seen him raise his voice. I am very fond of him. Even Suhana and Aaryan have been brought up well, great kids.

I said yes to King within a second. Shah Rukh has already said that he is the last of the stars and I absolutely believe him. I love him, big fan. He has a lot of dignity."When the host asked how Salman Khan differs from Shah Rukh Khan, Arshad replied, "Salman is a bad boy. He is one of those quintessential good-looking, bad boy. Shah Rukh is a gentleman, a bit settled. There's nothing wrong with both. Salman is different personally, he is not the same. You can see his aura in public, but personally at home, he is a different person. Cracks a lot of jokes, has fun. Inherently, his entire family is very funny, they have a good sense of humour, like they have come to have fun in life."

1965 was a historic year for Hindi cinema. In the year of Sunil Dutt's definite masala movie in Waqt and Dev Anand's philosophical musings in Guide, a triumvirate of future stars were born. It was only a matter of around 25 years that all three of them announced their Bollywood arrival in style — Aamir Khan, Salman Khan, and Shah Rukh Khan. And now, 35 years later, all three of them have turned 60 this year. By that age, a regular corporate professional is slapped with VRS. While there's no retirement age for the artist, there used to be one for a star. The imposed retirement has been more apparent and blatant in case of female actors, where their stardom's death was sounded as soon as they turned 30.

# Dhruv Rathee reacts to backlash over remarks on Janhvi Kapoor's appearance: 'Bhagwan ne tumhe dimag diya hai toh kyun nahi istemal karte uska'



**Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 28 December:** Content creator Dhruv Rathee recently made headlines for his remarks on Dhurandhar. In his latest YouTube video, Rathee once again took aim at certain Bollywood actresses. However, he faced strong backlash from netizens, many of whom linked his comments, particularly those directed at Janhvi Kapoor, to her earlier condemnation of Dipu Chandra Das's lynching in Bangladesh. Rathee has since responded to the criticism and online trolling.

In a YouTube video released on December 25, Dhruv Rathee claimed that several Bollywood actresses, including Deepika Padukone, Janhvi Kapoor, Bipasha Basu, Shruti Haasan, Shilpa Shetty, Kajol, and Priyanka Chopra, had undergone cosmetic procedures.

Following the video's release, some viewers linked Rathee's remarks about Janhvi Kapoor to her earlier response to a lynching incident in Bangladesh. On Saturday, Rathee addressed the controversy by sharing a video on social media, captioned, "Did I mock Janhvi Kapoor for her post on Bangladeshi Hindus?"

In the video, Dhruv Rathee started by reading a headline and said, "Wake up Hindus, Janhvi Kapoor posted for Bangladeshi Hindu and Dhruv Rathee made a video questioning her beauty." He added, "Bhagwan ne tumhe dimag diya hai toh kyun nahi istemal karte uska.

Matlab jo IT cell wale post dalte rahenge woh tum andhadhun yakeen karte rahoge. Pehli cheez toh jis din Janhvi Kapoor ne post dali usi din maine andhe ghante mein video daldi thi. Kya yeh realistically possible hai ke main ek hi din ke andar adhe ghante ka video edit karke, research karke, shoot karke… Sab kuch ek hi din mein karke dal doon. (When God has given you a brain, why don't you use it? This means that any post that the IT cell puts up, you will blindly believe. First of all, the day Janhvi posted this, in the next half an hour, I put up my video. Is it realistically possible for me to edit, research, and shoot the video and release it in a day?)"

Pointing out that he also posted a reel on Bangladeshi Hindus, Rathee said, "Toh main uss cheez ko kyun criticise karunga. Main tum logun ki taranh nahi hun ke idhar udhar se ghum phir ke kisiko indirectly criticise karun. Jo bolna hota hai woh muh pe bolta hun.

Aur teesri sabse interesting cheez yeh hai doston ke ye pura video plastic surgery pe hai aur uska kya impact padta hai society mein. Iss pure video mein maine Janhvi Kapoor se koi sawal nahi kiya… Question kahan hai iss video mein. (Why will I criticize this? I am not like you, who will randomly and indirectly criticize; if I have to say something, I say it to their face.

Thirdly, my friends, the entire video is on plastic surgery and its impact on society. In the whole video, not a single question has been asked to Janhvi Kapoor.)"

On Christmas, Janhvi Kapoor had condemned the lynching incident in Bangladesh. She wrote on Instagram, "What is happening in Bangladesh is barbaric. It is slaughter, and it is not an isolated incident. If you don't know about his inhumane public lynching, read about it, see the videos, and ask the questions.

And if, despite all of this, you feel no rage, then it is exactly this kind of hypocrisy that will destroy us before we know it. We will continue to cry about things halfway across the globe while our own brothers and sisters are being burned to death. Extremism in any and every form needs to be called out and condemned before we forget our humanity."

Janhvi Kapoor's good friend Orry also reacted to Dhruv Rathee's comments and said Janhvi might not even know who he is. He further went on to call Dhruv an anti-nationalist.

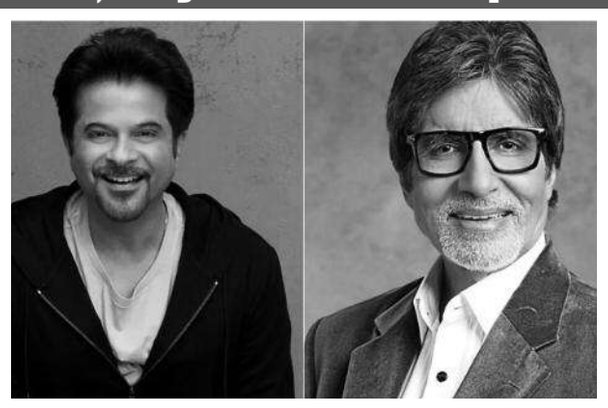
# Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri box office collection day 3: Kartik Aaryan film inches closer Rs 20 cr mark

**Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 28 December:** Bollywood rom-com Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri, starring Kartik Aaryan and Ananya Panday in the lead roles, opened to decent numbers (Rs 7.75 crore) at the box office following its Christmas release. However, the Dharma Productions film witnessed a slight dip over its first weekend. According to industry tracker Sacnilk, the film earned Rs 5.25 crore on Day 3, matching its Day 2 collections. Its total domestic box-office haul currently stands at Rs 18.25 crore. On its first Saturday, Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri recorded an overall theatre occupancy of 23.25 per cent. Morning shows saw 8.72 per cent occupancy, followed by 23.74 per cent in the afternoon, 25.82 per cent in the evening, and 34.73 per cent during night shows. In the Delhi–NCR region, the film registered an overall occupancy of 23.75 per cent across 548 shows, while Mumbai recorded a higher 28.25 per cent occupancy across 385 shows.The Kartik Aaryan–Ananya Panday starrer is facing stiff competition from Ranveer Singh's blockbuster Dhurandhar, directed by Aditya Dhar. The spy thriller has remained unbeaten by other clashing releases, continuing its dominant run at the box office and setting new records on a daily basis. The film has already crossed the Rs 1,000 crore mark worldwide, becoming the ninth Indian film to achieve this milestone.

While the box-office battle is ongoing, the film's reception among critics has been less enthusiastic. An excerpt of SCREEN'S review of Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri read, "Several questions confront you as soon as you get into this rom com which marks the end of 2025. What do you do when the two leads who are meant to do the usual squabble-make-up-make-out thing exhibit zero chemistry from the get go? What happens when the film looks like a full-blown advert for a European country — Croatia in this instance — where the first half is set? What can you do when the characters look like they've been cobbled together without a thought of whether they gel as a family?"Directed by Sameer Vidwans, Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri released in theatres on December 25. Produced by Dharma Productions and Namah Pictures, the film also features stars Kartik Aaryan, Ananya Pandey, Neena Gupta, Jackie Shroff, Aruna Irani, and Tiku Talsania.

Just as big as the headlines that blooming romances in Bollywood make, so do the breakups and even the reconciliations, even when they happen years later. In a way, one could say that privacy is a myth in Tinseltown. Even if two people never publicly confirm their relationship, reports detailing all aspects of their love story are almost always available online, making it nearly impossible for anyone to have a personal life, per se. Even Kartik Aaryan and Ananya Panday's situation was the same. Although gossip columns wrote extensively about the breakup of their rumoured courtship, neither of them, however, confirmed or denied anything, until now.Now, Kartik himself has opened up about their relationship, mentioning that he harbours nothing but love for Ananya. When asked about their breakup and how they decided to work together again, he said, "She and I understand each other a lot. It's been a journey. We've had our moments in life, and we've seen the ups and downs. And somewhere down the line, I've realised that both of us, as individuals, have really evolved and grown into that space," he said during a conversation with Filmfare.

# 'Amitabh Bachchan refused to buy Best Actor award, they went to Anil Kapoor next who took it,' claims Khuda Gawah producer



**Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 28 December:** Apart from starring in Hindi cinema's most iconic film Sholay, Amitabh Bachchan and Dharmendra were also close friends off screen and shared similar principles when it came to their work ethics. In a recent interaction, theatre owner and producer Manoj Desai spoke about how both stars refused to buy awards at a time when actors were allegedly offered trophies in exchange for monetary favours. Manoj claimed that in the year Big B refused to buy the Best Actor Filmfare award, Anil Kapoor purchased it.

Speaking to Vickey Lalwani on his YouTube channel, Manoj said, "Once me and Amitabh Bachchan were sitting together when the award function was going on. Rauf Ahmed (late film writer) came to me and asked me, 'If I give the Best Actor award to Amitabh Bachchan, will you bear the whole expense of this party?'"

Sharing how Big B strictly refused the offer, Manoj added, "I went to ask Amitabh Bachchan to ask about the same, and he told me that 'Amitabh Bachchan doesn't buy awards'. He also told me, 'I know whom this award will go, it will go to Anil Kapoor and he has already organised a big party on the terrace of his house'. And Anil Kapoor did get the award of Best Actor that year, I think he got the award for Mr India. Anil Kapoor had agreed to pay for the Filmfare party and that's why he got the award."

However, contrary to Manoj's claim, Anil Kapoor did not win the Best Actor Filmfare award for Mr India (1987). He received his first Best Actor award in 1989 for Tezaab, the same year Amitabh Bachchan was nominated in the same category for his film Shahenshah.

Manoj further said that, like Amitabh, Dharmendra also followed the same principle of not buying awards. "Dharmendra also 100% refused such offer. He said he won't buy any award. He even talked about this when he got the Lifetime Achievement award, he said in the speech that he deserved awards for many of his previous films but those awards were not given to him." Dharmendra passed away at 89 on November 24.

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, and Anil Kapoor agrees. The Mr. India actor once said that a large number of people are obsessed with always working and hardly ever take a break. "24 ghante kaam karke fayda kya hai. Hum log bhool gaye chill karna," (what's the point of working 24×7? We have forgotten how to chill), said Kapoor, adding that non-stop grind is consuming us.

Citing an example of established personalities, the actor added: "Bade bade log bahut successful hue hain. Humse zyada achieve kiya. Hazar guna zyada achieve kiya.

Jo kam bhi karte hain successful bhi hote hain, wo chill bhi karte hain relax bhi karte hain, holiday pe bhi jate hain." (Many people are successful who have achieved thousands of times more than we have. Such people also relax and go on holidays.)

Anil Kapoor believes that this inability to take a break from the grind is because we have made financial issues our entire personality: "Gareebi humari fitrat me hai…Humari rag-rag mein hai insecurity aur gareebi".

Taking a cue from Anil Kapoor's confession in an interview with Republic World, we reached out to Mehezabin Dordi, a Clinical Psychologist at Sir HN Reliance Foundation Hospital, Mumbai, to understand how this 24/7 hustle culture affects people's mental, psychological, and emotional health. "In today's hustle culture, we've started wearing exhaustion like a badge of honour," says Dordi, who further points out that being "busy" has become a measure of worth.

Editorial

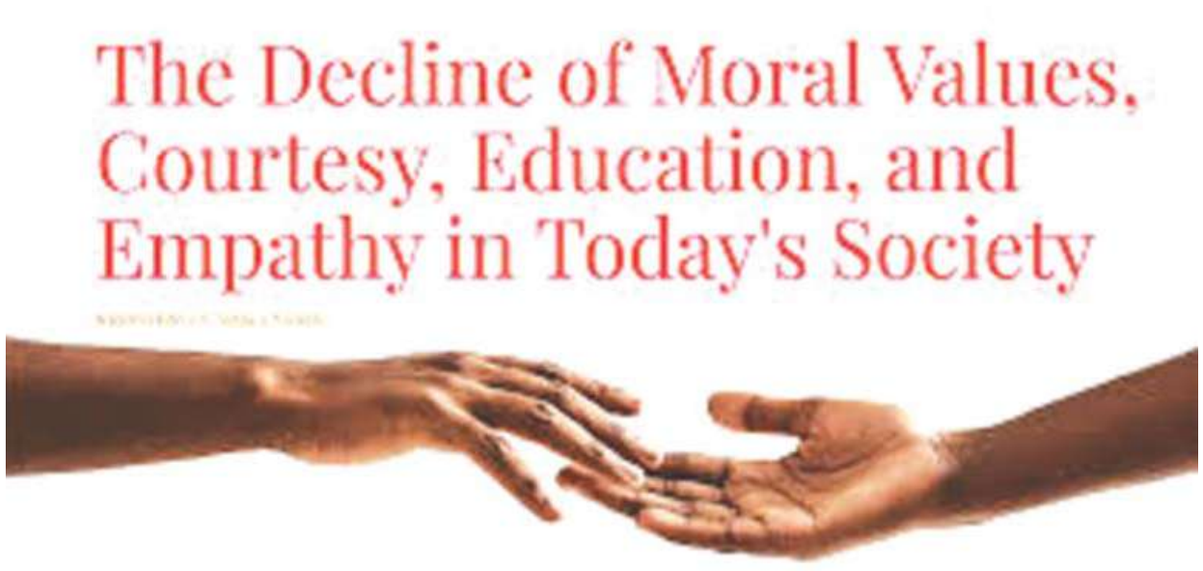
## "Chalk Dust and Uncertainty: When the Future of Teachers Hangs in the Balance"

Questions have once again been raised about the future of many teachers, and with them rises a deeper, more troubling question about the future of education itself. Behind files, notifications, courtrooms, and policy corridors lies a human story—one written in chalk dust, worn lesson plans, and years of service spent shaping young minds. When the fate of teachers becomes uncertain, it is not merely a professional crisis; it is a moral and social one that touches the very foundation of a nation's progress. Teachers are not temporary fixtures in society. They are the quiet architects of thought, discipline, and civic values. Yet today, many of them find themselves trapped in a haze of ambiguity—appointments questioned, qualifications re-examined, recruitment processes scrutinized, and careers suddenly placed under a cloud. The anxiety that now shadows classrooms is not born of poor performance or lack of dedication, but of administrative indecision and policy shifts that arrived without warning or clarity. At the heart of this crisis is uncertainty. Teachers who once entered the profession with hope and dignity now stand at crossroads, unsure whether their years of service will be honored or erased by technicalities. For many, teaching was not simply a job but a calling, chosen often at the cost of more lucrative opportunities. To question their legitimacy years later is to reopen old wounds and inflict new ones, not just on individuals but on families who depend on their stability. Education systems thrive on continuity and trust. When teachers are left in limbo, that trust begins to fracture. Classrooms become spaces of silent tension, where educators teach while wondering if tomorrow they will still belong there. Students, perceptive as they are, sense this unease. Learning suffers when the teacher's own future is insecure, when passion is dulled by fear, and commitment is overshadowed by doubt. This situation also exposes a larger failure of governance. Recruitment drives, certification processes, and appointment mechanisms are not overnight affairs. They are designed, approved, and implemented by institutions. If flaws exist, responsibility cannot rest solely on those who followed the rules as they were presented at the time. Retrospective scrutiny, without humane safeguards, risks turning teachers into scapegoats for systemic lapses they did not create.The debate surrounding the future of teachers has also ignited public outrage and political sparring. Yet beyond slogans and statements lies the urgent need for balance—between accountability and compassion, legality and justice. Upholding standards in education is essential, but so is protecting those who have served in good faith. A system that punishes its educators without offering resolution undermines its own credibility. Moreover, the social consequences of such uncertainty are far-reaching. Teaching remains one of the most influential professions, especially in developing societies. When young people witness teachers struggling for job security and dignity, the profession loses its appeal. Who will choose to teach tomorrow if today's teachers are left fighting for survival? The long-term damage to the education ecosystem could be irreversible. There is also a psychological toll that cannot be ignored. Months, sometimes years, of waiting for clarity erode mental well-being. Teachers report sleepless nights, declining health, and a constant fear of disgrace. This is not the environment in which educators can inspire confidence, curiosity, or creativity among students. An anxious teacher cannot fully nurture a hopeful generation. What is required now is not haste, but wisdom. Policymakers must act decisively, transparently, and humanely. Clear timelines, fair review mechanisms, and protective measures for those already in service are essential. Dialogue must replace ambiguity, and empathy must guide enforcement. Justice delayed or obscured only deepens wounds and fuels distrust. The future of teachers is inseparable from the future of education. To safeguard one is to secure the other. A society that fails its teachers ultimately fails its children, its values, and its promise of progress. As the debate continues and questions grow louder, one truth remains undeniable: teachers deserve certainty, dignity, and respect. They deserve a future that reflects the countless futures they have helped build. Anything less would be an injustice written not just in policy documents, but in the lives of generations to come.

## "Dunia Diary: A World Turning Pages Faster Than We Can Read"

The world today feels like a restless diary, its pages flipping faster than history can catch its breath. Every dawn brings a new headline, every dusk closes on unfinished questions. Wars simmer without endings, diplomacy speaks in cautious tones, economies sway between hope and anxiety, and ordinary lives are reshaped by decisions taken far beyond their borders. This is the essence of the Dunia Diary—a chronicle of a planet in motion, where nothing stands still and certainty is a rare luxury. Across continents, the global order appears both familiar and fragile. Old power equations persist, yet their grip weakens under the pressure of new realities. Nations once considered peripheral now shape conversations at the center, while traditional powers grapple with internal divisions and external challenges. The world is no longer divided neatly into blocs; it is layered, complex, and often contradictory. Allies disagree, rivals cooperate, and neutrality itself has become a strategic position rather than a moral stance. Conflict remains the darkest ink in this diary. From prolonged wars that have faded from the global spotlight to fresh flashpoints that dominate breaking news, violence continues to redraw borders and bury futures. What is most alarming is not only the persistence of conflict but the normalization of it. Bombings, displacement, and civilian suffering risk becoming routine entries, stripped of the shock they deserve. When tragedy becomes predictable, humanity loses something essential—its capacity to be outraged. Diplomacy, meanwhile, walks a tightrope. Grand speeches promise peace, but negotiations often stall in the shadows of mistrust. The language of international relations has grown cautious, sometimes cynical, shaped more by strategic interests than shared values. Agreements are signed with one hand and undermined with the other. In this climate, dialogue survives not because trust is strong, but because the cost of silence is even greater. Economic tremors ripple across borders with unprecedented speed. Inflation in one region echoes in another, supply chain disruptions become global headaches, and financial markets react to whispers as much as to facts. For millions, these abstract forces translate into higher prices, uncertain jobs, and shrinking security. The promise of globalization—prosperity through interconnection—now competes with its reality, where interdependence also means shared vulnerability. Technology, once hailed as the great equalizer, adds another layer to the world's unease. It connects voices across oceans, yet deepens divides within societies. Information travels instantly, but so does misinformation. Truth struggles to keep pace with viral narratives, and public opinion is shaped as much by algorithms as by evidence. In this digital age, power belongs not only to those who govern territories, but to those who control narratives. Climate change, the most relentless author of our time, continues to write its warnings in heatwaves, floods, and vanishing seasons. Despite years of summits and pledges, action lags behind urgency. The planet's distress is no longer a future threat; it is a present reality felt most acutely by those least responsible for it. Each delayed decision adds another entry to a diary future generations will read with disbelief and regret.Yet amid this turbulence, resilience persists. Communities rebuild after destruction, nations extend hands even while guarding interests, and ordinary people adapt with quiet courage. The world is not only a story of power and conflict; it is also a story of endurance. Acts of solidarity, though less visible than crises, continue to stitch hope into the global fabric. The Dunia Diary ultimately reminds us that the world's story is not written by leaders alone. It is shaped by collective choices—by what societies tolerate, what they demand, and what they refuse to forget. Apathy is as influential as action, silence as consequential as speech. In an age overwhelmed by information, attention itself becomes a moral act. The world cannot afford indifference. Global challenges demand global conscience, not just strategic calculation. The diary of our times is still being written, and its final chapters remain open. Whether they speak of renewal or regret will depend on how honestly we read the present—and how bravely we choose to respond.

# When Humanity Takes a Back Seat: The Quiet Normalisation of Moral Decline




The abandonment of humanity's core values is no longer just a distant fear discussed in philosophical debates or ethical critiques. It is a visible, tangible trend that has steadily infiltrated societies around the world. From growing intolerance and shrinking empathy to the rise of transactional relationships and a disturbing comfort with cruelty, the moral decay that once seemed like a hypothetical concern has become an everyday reality. If left unchecked, this erosion of humanity is likely to deepen and spread, affecting not only our immediate relationships but also the very foundation of the communities and societies we inhabit. Modern life moves at an unrelenting pace. We are all part of a society that demands faster, more efficient solutions to increasingly complex problems. In this rush for productivity, patience has become a burden, and compassion an inconvenience. Success is often defined by power, profit, and personal gain, while qualities like kindness, ethical restraint, and human decency are dismissed as weaknesses or unnecessary hindrances. This subtle but powerful shift in values has redefined what is considered admirable and important. In a world obsessed with outrage, spectacle, and dominance, acts of empathy and understanding struggle to find space in the public consciousness. Technology, while offering countless benefits, has also accelerated this moral distancing. The digital age, with its constant connectivity and digital interfaces, has transformed the way we interact with each other. Screens mediate our connections, reducing complex emotions and human experiences to mere reactions and numbers. In the world of social media, suffering has been commodified as content—shared, liked, and scrolled past with the flick of a thumb. The volume of information has replaced the value of truth, and the pursuit of virality has triumphed over a commitment to authenticity. In this environment, cruelty can be amplified with little to no consequence. The anonymity provided by online platforms means that harmful behavior is often shielded from accountability, allowing words to wound with impunity. The speed at which outrage spreads and the ease with which it can be manufactured has created a society where empathy is not only underappreciated but is often ridiculed. The digital space has encouraged a race for attention, where divisive rhetoric, hurtful comments, and sensationalist content thrive, while thoughtful dialogue and nuanced understanding are sidelined. In such a world, compassion can seem like a luxury, a slow, outdated value in a fast-moving, instant-gratification culture. Politics, too, mirrors the quiet moral decline that is taking place across society. Public discourse has grown increasingly harsh and polarized. The ability to disagree without dehumanizing others is a skill that seems to be vanishing. Rather than engaging in thoughtful debate, individuals and groups often seek ideological victories that come at the cost of basic decency. Political opponents are no longer treated with respect as fellow human beings, but as enemies to be destroyed or reduced to caricatures. The language of politics has become one of us versus them, where the humanity of the other side is erased in favor of demonization. When leaders adopt this approach, it sends a message that cruelty and intolerance are legitimate means to achieving political ends. The rhetoric of division becomes normalized, and the lines between justified debate and dehumanization blur. As this behavior becomes more widespread, intolerance grows, and cruelty gains acceptance. This erosion of humanity in politics does not remain confined to the political arena—it trickles down into the wider society, shaping how ordinary citizens treat one another. If leaders model disrespect and disdain, how can we expect their followers to behave any differently? The economic pressures facing modern societies further complicate the moral landscape. The widening gap between the rich and poor, the intensifying competition for resources, and the emphasis on individual success over collective well-being have all contributed to a society in which survival instincts often overpower empathy. In an increasingly competitive world, vulnerability is seen as a weakness, and solidarity is often sacrificed in favor of self-preservation. In this environment, the most vulnerable members of society—those struggling with poverty, mental illness, or other challenges—are often left behind. Their struggles are reframed as personal failures, rather than societal ones. The narrative of individual responsibility overshadows the need for collective compassion. As people are forced to compete for limited resources, empathy becomes a scarce commodity. The result is a society that values efficiency over human connection, where the pain and suffering of others is often ignored or minimized. What is perhaps most alarming about this decline is how normalized it has become. Outrage has a short shelf life, and moral fatigue sets in quickly. Injustice, once shocking, fades into the background noise of daily life. The extraordinary becomes ordinary, and the unacceptable becomes tolerable. This normalization of cruelty and indifference dulls the conscience, making it harder for people to discern right from wrong. The most dangerous consequence of this trend is the breeding of apathy—the indifference that allows cruelty to thrive unchecked. This moral decay is not always obvious. It often operates in subtle, incremental ways. Small acts of kindness are overshadowed by loud, divisive voices. Compassionate gestures are seen as naive or inefficient in a world that prizes speed and success. The erosion of empathy happens gradually, and because it is not always overt, it is often overlooked. Yet the consequences are clear: fractured communities, a deepening mistrust between individuals, and a generation of young people who may grow up in an emotionally barren world. However, acknowledging this trend is not the same as surrendering to it. History teaches us that humanity's values have always been tested during times of rapid change and uncertainty. What defines a society is not the absence of moral crises but the response to them. The continued abandonment of humanity is not inevitable; it is the result of choices—choices that we make every day, individually and collectively. The decline in moral values is not an irreversible process, but one that can be challenged and reversed. Restoring the quality of humanity requires more than grand gestures or sweeping reforms—it begins with small, deliberate acts of kindness and understanding. It starts with listening without judgment, disagreeing without hatred, and helping without expecting anything in return. Humanity can be reclaimed in the smallest of moments, where empathy replaces apathy and respect takes precedence over dominance. It also demands that institutions—whether political, social, or economic—prioritize human dignity over power and profit. Systems that place value on people beyond their productivity or wealth are crucial to reversing the moral decline we see today. Most importantly, restoring humanity requires courage. It takes courage to remain humane in a world that often rewards the opposite. It takes courage to stand against the tide of indifference and to challenge the growing culture of cruelty and division. It takes courage to act with kindness and empathy in a society that often dismisses these qualities as irrelevant or naive. The choice before us is stark but simple. We can continue down the path of efficiency, ambition, and ideology, allowing these forces to strip away our shared moral core, or we can insist that progress without humanity is no progress at all. The future of our societies, our communities, and our personal relationships will reflect the choice we make—not just in the headlines, but in the everyday texture of how we treat one another. The cost of ignoring humanity's value will be paid in fractured relationships, deepened divides, and a future devoid of compassion. It is not too late to change course. The power to reclaim humanity lies in our hands—in the choices we make every day, in the words we use, in the way we treat others, and in our commitment to maintaining empathy and decency in the face of adversity. The quiet normalization of moral decline is not inevitable, but it is something we must actively resist, if we are to preserve the core of what makes us human.

# "From Republic to Reinvention: The Triumph and Turmoil of India's Changing Identity"



The triumph of India's changing identity and politics at the end of the twentieth century remains one of the most discussed and debated chapters of the nation's modern history. It was a period when India appeared to shed its old skin—sometimes cautiously, sometimes abruptly—and step into a new, uncertain self. The decades leading up to the century's close were not merely about political transitions; they marked a deeper transformation in how India imagined itself, governed itself, and projected its voice to the world. For much of the post-Independence era, India's identity rested on a carefully constructed consensus. The ideals of secularism, planned economic development, non-alignment, and institutional democracy formed the backbone of the republic. Politics, though noisy and competitive, largely revolved around a central narrative shaped by one dominant force. Stability, continuity, and incremental change were prized over disruption. But by the late twentieth century, cracks in this structure became impossible to ignore. Economic realities played a decisive role in reshaping India's political and social consciousness. The balance-of-payments crisis of the early 1990s forced the country to confront the limitations of its inward-looking economic model. Liberalization was not just an economic reform; it was a psychological turning point. Markets opened, private enterprise gained legitimacy, and aspirations expanded beyond the promises of state protection. This economic shift altered the relationship between citizens and the state, replacing dependence with ambition and caution with confidence. Simultaneously, India's political landscape underwent a dramatic churn. The decline of one-party dominance signaled the rise of coalition politics, regional assertiveness, and new power centers. Voices once confined to the margins—regional leaders, caste-based movements, and grassroots parties—entered the national conversation with renewed force. Democracy became messier, louder, and more fragmented, yet also more representative. Power was no longer concentrated; it was negotiated. Identity politics emerged as one of the most defining and controversial elements of this transformation. Questions of religion, caste, and cultural belonging moved from the periphery to the center of political discourse. For some, this was a long-overdue recognition of historical injustices and suppressed identities. For others, it represented a dangerous departure from the pluralist ideals on which the republic was founded. The debate was intense, emotional, and often polarizing, reflecting a society struggling to reconcile unity with diversity. The end of the twentieth century also witnessed a shift in India's global posture. The Cold War's conclusion dismantled old alliances and compelled India to rethink its place in a unipolar world. Economic reforms made the country more outward-looking, while technological advances connected it to global currents at unprecedented speed. India was no longer content to be a moral voice on the sidelines; it sought recognition as an emerging power with strategic and economic weight. Yet this triumph of transformation was not without cost. Rapid change generated anxieties alongside opportunities. Economic growth created new wealth but also sharpened inequalities. Political pluralism empowered many but also fueled instability and opportunism. Identity-based mobilization offered dignity to some while deepening divisions for others. The end of the century left India more confident, yet more conflicted—a nation aware of its potential but uncertain of its path. What made this period truly significant was not the arrival of definitive answers, but the courage to ask uncomfortable questions. What does it mean to be Indian in a rapidly globalizing world? How should tradition coexist with modernity? Can economic progress be balanced with social justice? These questions did not emerge in academic isolation; they played out in elections, protests, courtrooms, and living rooms across the country. The triumph of India's changing identity, therefore, lies not in the absence of struggle, but in the persistence of debate. The late twentieth century reaffirmed that India's strength has always resided in its ability to argue, adapt, and absorb contradictions without abandoning democracy. Change did not dismantle the republic; it tested it—and, in many ways, renewed it. India stood transformed, no longer defined solely by its past or constrained by inherited frameworks. It was a nation in the midst of reinvention, carrying forward its unresolved tensions as part of its democratic DNA. The discussions that began then continue today, reminding us that India's identity is not a fixed monument but a living conversation—one that evolves with time, challenge, and collective will.

# A Scholar of Many Worlds: The Unusual Arc of Professor Dr. Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya, MD in Pathology

A Staff ReporterKolkata :| Professor (Dr.) Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya is a rare luminary whose intellectual journey spans the microscopic world of medical pathology and the boundless expanse of the cosmos. At nearly 70, the retired Professor and former Head of the Department of Pathology at the Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine has redefined the meaning of superannuation, remaining a profoundly influential figure in West Bengal's medical and academic spheres. The Rigour of a Medical StalwartDr. Bhattacharya's career began with academic distinction, completing his M.B.B.S. from Medical College, Kolkata, in 1981 and topping his M.D. (Pathology) at the University of Calcutta in the 1987-89 session. His early expertise in histopathology, immunohistopathology, and in situ hybridization technology laid the foundation for a formidable tenure within the West Bengal Medical Education Service (WBMES), which he joined in 1991.Over 19 years, he held senior academic posts across prestigious institutions—including IPGMER, Medical College, and the School of Tropical Medicine. Recognised by regulatory bodies like the National Medical Commission (NMC), he cultivated a stellar reputation as a examiner and a post-graduate and doctoral-level teacher,Thesis guide and Thesis adjudicator in histo, hemato, and immunopathology. His roles extended to shaping examination patterns and revised curricula (MBBS, DCP, BSc MLT) across the West Bengal University of Health Sciences, cementing his influence over generations of medical professionals. From Pathology to Parallel Universes What sets Dr. Bhattacharya apart is the breathtaking breadth of his scholarly ambition. With over 350 publications in indexed, high-impact factor journals and thousands of Google Scholar citations, his scholarly output is extraordinarily diverse. While maintaining core research in classical histopathology, immunohistopathology haematology, and tropical medicine, he simultaneously pursued a second, parallel academic life in theoretical physics and cosmology.His writings on complex concepts—from tachyons and dark matter to the Big Bounce model, cosmic strings, and the Bhattacharya model of the universe and anti-universe—have been published in world commentary platforms associated with premier international scientific journals, including The Lancet group, The BMJ groups, JCP, RSBMT, Medcrave , plos , STM group , ATMPH, Science magazine of AAAS, and Springer Nature group journals . Remarkably, his explorations into these theoretical realms frequently feature his family, including his brothers , sister only daughter, Upasana, as co-authors, highlighting a unique, shared intellectual curiosity. The Indispensable Post-Retirement Force Since retiring from WBMES in March 2021, Dr. Bhattacharya had become an indispensable asset to new private and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models medical colleges in West Bengal. Institutions seeking the crucial Letter of Permission (LOP) for MBBS admissions from the NMC have relied on his experience, evidenced by his recent tenures as Principal and Dean at JMN Medical College, Chakdha, and Krishnanagar Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS). He also served as Academic Adviser of Raniganj institute of medical sciences for short periods in 2025,and presently as a special advisor to the Vice Chancellor of the AHRO Open University in London, UK.His terms of engagement reflect a new, un compromising stance—a direct result of past experiences, including instances of non-payment of salary. He now demands legally binding appointment contracts from the court of law and substantial upfront remuneration. For colleges navigating the high-stakes NMC regulatory maze, Dr. Bhattacharya has become both a highly coveted and financially significant commodity. Honours and Intellectual Integrity Dr. Bhattacharya's contributions have garnered a wealth of honours, including his recent nomination for Associate Membership of the prestigious Sigma Xi—the Cornell University-founded scientific honour society which counts over 200 Nobel Laureates among its members. This recognition adds to a long list of accolades, including the Nation Building Award (2025) of I2OR and the Bharat Gaurav Puraskar (2025). His presence in global scientific discourse is further underscored by his participation in programs associated with the Nobel Foundation AB, such as the Nobel Prize Dialogues.Beyond his professional life, the Professor is also a "crawling author," publishing 58 Bengali poems and several short stories on online platforms like 'story mirror' and 'Pratilipi'. Throughout all his work, he maintains stringent intellectual property rights declarations, insisting on proprietary control—a sign of his high intellectual stance and commitment to scholarly integrity.The story of Professor Dr. Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya is ultimately that of a scholar who has moved fluidly across disciplines—from the precision of pathology to the profound questions of cosmic models—without sacrificing rigour. Even after government service, his unique blend of "old-school rigour and new-age multidisciplinary ambition" ensures his influence remains firmly stitched into the academic fabric of West Bengal and, increasingly, the global scientific community.

# "Zepto Sets Sights on Big Debut: Files Confidential IPO Papers with SEBI, Eyes 11,000 Crore"

Instant grocery delivery unicorn Zepto has filed confidential Initial Public Offering (IPO) papers with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), signaling its intent to raise approximately □11,000 crore through the share sale. The move marks a significant milestone for the company, which has rapidly scaled operations across multiple cities and is now poised to enter the public markets. Founded in 2021, Zepto has carved a niche in the fast-growing instant delivery segment, offering groceries and essentials within minutes of order placement. The company's business model, which combines cutting-edge technology with hyperlocal delivery logistics, has resonated strongly with urban consumers, fueling rapid growth and attracting investor attention. With the IPO filing, Zepto is now looking to consolidate its market position and secure the capital necessary to expand its footprint further. Industry experts view the filing as a bold step, given the challenging environment for new-age companies entering public markets. "An IPO of this scale reflects not just Zepto's ambition, but also investor confidence in the fast-delivery sector, which has seen tremendous traction in recent years," said a market analyst. The company plans to utilize the funds raised to strengthen its technology infrastructure, expand into tier-2 and tier-3 cities, and explore strategic acquisitions that can enhance service offerings. The confidential nature of the SEBI filing means that detailed financials and valuation metrics are yet to be disclosed publicly. However, market sources suggest that Zepto is seeking a valuation that could place it among India's most valuable tech startups. The company's aggressive expansion strategy, combined with its focus on operational efficiency, is expected to make it an attractive proposition for institutional and retail investors alike. The IPO announcement comes at a time when investor sentiment is cautiously optimistic. While capital markets have experienced volatility, sectors like instant delivery, fintech, and e-commerce continue to attract attention due to high growth potential. Zepto's entry into the public arena is likely to generate significant market buzz, particularly among retail investors eager to participate in the growth story of India's next-generation tech startups. Zepto's founders have emphasized that the IPO is part of a long-term strategy to build a sustainable, technology-driven delivery platform that addresses evolving consumer needs. The company has reported strong unit economics in key cities and claims a growing base of loyal customers who rely on its ultra-fast delivery services. Analysts believe that the IPO will also provide a benchmark for other Indian startups contemplating public listing in the near future. Financial observers note that the success of Zepto's IPO could have ripple effects across the startup ecosystem, potentially influencing funding, valuations, and strategic decisions for other high-growth companies. The move also reflects a maturation of India's tech landscape, where startups are increasingly transitioning from venture-backed private entities to publicly listed companies with broader accountability and market scrutiny. With the SEBI filing now complete, market participants are keenly awaiting formal approval and public disclosures, which will provide a clearer picture of the issue size, pricing, and allocation strategy. Analysts expect that Zepto's IPO could be one of the largest tech listings in recent years, attracting participation from domestic and international investors. As Zepto prepares to make its public debut, the eyes of investors, industry watchers, and competitors are firmly fixed on the company. The outcome of this IPO will not only determine Zepto's next phase of growth but also signal the evolving dynamics of India's tech startup ecosystem, highlighting the appetite for innovation-driven businesses in the public market. In a sector defined by speed, convenience, and technological sophistication, Zepto's IPO could very well become a landmark moment for Indian capital markets.

## "Smallcaps on Fire: 10 Stocks Post Up to 35% Weekly Gains from Rail to Tech"

India's smallcap segment is witnessing an electrifying week, as ten select stocks across diverse sectors, from railways to technology, have delivered remarkable gains of up to 35% in just seven trading days. The sudden surge has captured investor attention, highlighting the high-growth potential and volatility of the smallcap universe, while prompting renewed interest in sectors poised for robust recovery and expansion. Smallcap stocks, typically representing companies with market capitalizations below □5,000 crore, are known for their dynamic price movements and ability to deliver outsized returns. Unlike larger, more established firms, smallcaps are often driven by sector-specific catalysts, policy support, or operational breakthroughs, making them a favorite among traders and growth-oriented investors seeking high-reward opportunities. The week's top performers span multiple industries, underscoring the breadth of opportunities in the smallcap space. Railway-related stocks have benefited from government infrastructure initiatives and increased freight activity, while technology-focused smallcaps are capitalizing on digital transformation trends, enterprise software adoption, and rising demand for innovative tech solutions. Consumer-focused and industrial smallcaps have also contributed to the rally, reflecting shifts in domestic consumption patterns and strategic investments in manufacturing and services.Analysts point out that the gains are being fueled by a combination of strong quarterly earnings, optimistic guidance,

# "Foreign Investors Pull Out 1.6 Lakh Crore from Indian Stocks in 2025, Setting Record Outflow"

Indian equity markets have witnessed an unprecedented capital exodus in 2025, as foreign investors withdrew a staggering □1.6 lakh crore from the country's stock markets, marking the highest outflow in recent history. Analysts attribute this massive exit to a combination of global economic uncertainty, rising interest rates abroad, and domestic market volatility, raising concerns about the short-term stability of financial markets and investor sentiment. The record outflow underscores the growing sensitivity of foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to global macroeconomic developments. With central banks worldwide tightening monetary policies to combat inflation, and the U.S. dollar strengthening, investors have increasingly shifted capital away from emerging markets like India in search of safer returns. This trend has been amplified by geopolitical tensions and market unpredictability, which have heightened risk aversion among overseas investors. The impact of the massive withdrawal has been felt across Indian equity indices, particularly in mid-cap and small-cap stocks, which tend to be more sensitive to foreign capital flows. Market participants observed heightened volatility, with sharp swings in share prices and reduced liquidity in certain segments. Experts warn that continued pressure from global factors could keep sentiment subdued in the near term, even as domestic economic indicators remain robust. Despite the outflows, India's long-term investment fundamentals remain strong. The country continues to benefit from a large and growing domestic market, technological innovation, and policy reforms aimed at easing business operations and attracting long-term investments. However, the record FPI withdrawal highlights the challenges of reliance on foreign capital for market stability and the importance of cultivating resilient domestic investor participation. Financial analysts emphasize that while the scale of the outflow is significant, it should be viewed in the context of normal cyclical trends in global investment behavior. "Foreign investors are highly sensitive to global interest rates and geopolitical developments. While the □1.6 lakh crore exit is record-breaking, it is part of broader portfolio adjustments seen in emerging markets worldwide," noted a market strategist. The sectors most affected by the outflow include technology, financial services, and consumer discretionary, where foreign ownership is typically high. These sectors experienced sharper declines in valuations, prompting companies to reassure investors about underlying growth prospects and long-term resilience. Market regulators, meanwhile, have been closely monitoring capital movements, ensuring that volatility does not disrupt orderly trading or undermine investor confidence. Domestic institutional investors and retail participants have stepped in to partially cushion the impact, buying selectively in sectors and stocks that showed attractive valuations. Analysts suggest that stronger domestic participation could mitigate the adverse effects of foreign withdrawals in the coming months, providing a stabilizing influence on markets. The massive FPI exit also raises questions about India's positioning in the global investment landscape. While India remains an attractive long-term destination for growth-oriented investors, short-term capital flows remain highly susceptible to global cues. Policy measures, such as easing liquidity constraints, supporting market infrastructure, and enhancing transparency, are seen as critical to sustaining investor confidence amid periods of volatility.Looking ahead, market observers expect a more balanced investment environment as global interest rates stabilize and geopolitical uncertainties ease. Analysts believe that India's domestic growth story, driven by consumption, digital adoption, and industrial expansion, will continue to attract patient, long-term investors, even as short-term foreign outflows persist.The record □1.6 lakh crore exit of foreign investors in 2025 underscores both the vulnerability and resilience of Indian capital markets. While short-term volatility is inevitable, India's robust economic fundamentals, growing domestic investor base, and strategic reforms provide a strong foundation for recovery. The episode serves as a reminder of the delicate balance between global investment flows and domestic market stability in an increasingly interconnected financial world."Foreign Investors Pull Out □1.6 Lakh Crore from Indian Stocks in 2025, Setting Record Outflow" Indian equity markets have witnessed an unprecedented capital exodus in 2025, as foreign investors withdrew a staggering □1.6 lakh crore from the country's stock markets, marking the highest outflow in recent history. Analysts attribute this massive exit to a combination of global economic uncertainty, rising interest rates abroad, and domestic market volatility, raising concerns about the short-term stability of financial markets and investor sentiment. The record outflow underscores the growing sensitivity of foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to global macroeconomic developments. 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# "India's Forex Reserves Soar to $693.3 Billion on Rising Gold Holdings"

India's foreign exchange reserves witnessed a robust surge, climbing by $4.36 billion to reach a formidable $693.3 billion, driven largely by a sharp increase in gold holdings, according to the latest data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The uptick in reserves signals strengthened financial stability and enhanced buffer against global economic uncertainties, reflecting India's resilient macroeconomic fundamentals. The rise in reserves comes at a time of heightened volatility in global markets, with fluctuations in commodity prices, geopolitical tensions, and currency movements influencing capital flows worldwide. The central bank's strategic management of reserves, including foreign currency assets, gold, Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), and IMF reserve positions, has helped India maintain a comfortable cushion to support the rupee and ensure external sector stability. Breaking down the components, gold holdings played a key role in the overall increase, climbing significantly amid rising global demand and price appreciation. Analysts note that gold, traditionally considered a safe-haven asset, has added resilience to India's reserve portfolio, providing both security and liquidity. Foreign currency assets, which constitute the bulk of reserves, also contributed to the growth, reflecting healthy inflows from trade, foreign investment, and remittances. Economists view the rise in forex reserves as a positive indicator for India's macroeconomic health. "A reserve level approaching $700 billion is a strong buffer against external shocks, currency volatility, and global financial turbulence. It enhances investor confidence and signals that India can manage its external obligations with ease," said a leading market analyst. The increase also comes at a time when the rupee has faced pressure due to global dollar strength and fluctuating crude oil prices. A robust reserve position provides the central bank with additional firepower to intervene .



**AFFIDAVIT**

I, Santosh Hazra S/O Tamal Hazra, resident of Vill. Dadhia Ehiapur, Barddhaman 713129. Declare vide affidavit dated 01.07.2025, before the court of Notary public, Rampurhat, Birbhum that my father DOB is 28.10.1955, and mother Bhagabati Hazra her DOB 12.09.1961.

**AFFIDAVIT**

I, Binod Let S/O Manik Chandra Let, resident of Vill. Siura, P.O. Chakaipur, P.S. Rampurhat, Dist. Birbhum. Declare vide affidavit dated 01.07.2025, before the court of Notary public, Rampurhat, Birbhum that my father DOB is 08.10.1950, and mother Anali Let her DOB 01.01.1953.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Mehdi Hassan Biswas , my mother's (Old Name) Hasina Bibi resident of Vill-Hatkhola , Po-Mahakhola , Ps-Chapra , Dist-Nadia , West Bengal, Pin-741123 do hereby declared that I have changed my mother's name from Hasina Bibi to Hachena Biswas and henceforth my mother's shall be known as Hachena Biswas (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the Magistrate affidavit Krishnagar court on 24/12/2025. My mother's name Hachena Biswas & Hasina Bibi both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Mehdi Hassan Biswas, my father's (Old Name) Noor Mohammed resident of Vill-Hatkhola , Po-Mahakhola , Ps-Chapra , Dist-Nadia , West Bengal, Pin-741123 do hereby declared that I have changed my father's name from Noor Mohammed to Nurmahammad Biswas and henceforth my father's shall be known as Nurmahammad Biswas (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the Magistrate affidavit Krishnagar court on 24/12/2025. My father's name Nurmahammad Biswas & Noor Mohammed both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Samima Akhter (Old Name) W/O–Mehdi Hassan Biswas resident of Vill-Hatkhola , Po-Mahakhola , Ps-Chapra , Dist-Nadia , West Bengal, Pin-741123 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Samima Akhter to Samima Aktar Biswas and henceforth I shall be known as Samima Aktar Biswas (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the Magistrate affidavit Krishnagar court on 24/12/2025. My name Samima Aktar Biswas & Samima Akhter both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Najbul Mandal (Old Name) S/O–Osman Mondal resident of Vill- Jotpara Manandapur , Po- Sadikhans Dearh , Ps-Jalangi , Dist-Murshidabad , West Bengal, Pin-742303 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Najbul Mandal to Najmul Mandal and henceforth I shall be known as Najmul Mandal (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 26/12/2025. My name Najmul Mandal & Najbul Mandal both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Maha Jalaluddin (Old Name) S/O–Idmahammad resident of Vill-Madhaipur , Po-Malihati , Ps-Salar , Dist-Murshidabad , West Bengal, Pin-742401 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Maha Jalaluddin to Mohammad Jalal Uddin and henceforth I shall be known as Mohammad Jalal Uddin (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the Magistrate affidavit Kandi court on 03/12/2025. My name Mohammad Jalal Uddin & Maha Jalaluddin both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Jainab Bibi, W/O- Karim Sk , declared that my son's (Old Name) Sarwar Sk residing at Vill-Bagachhara , PO-Benipur , PS-Kandi , Murshidabad, West Bengal 742140 do hereby declared that I have changed my son's name from Sarwar Sk to Maruwar Alam and henceforth my my son's name shall be known as Maruwar Alam (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 26/12/2025. My son's name Maruwar Alam & Sarwar Sk both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Karuna (Old Name) W/O–Hajrat Sekh residing at Jalsukha , Bad Billagram , Nakashipara , Nadia , West Bengal 741126 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Karuna to Karina Sekh and henceforth I shall be known as Karina Sekh (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 26/12/2025. My name Karina Sekh & Karuna both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Mafijul Molla (Old Name) S/O–Sonaruddin Molla residing at Vill-Balirmathpara , PO-Bangaljhi , PS-Chapra , Nadia , West Bengal 741123 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Mafijul Molla to Mofizul Mollah and henceforth I shall be known as Mofizul Mollah (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 26/12/2025. My name Mofizul Mollah & Mafijul Molla both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Mohammed Piarul Haque (Old Name) S/O–Abdur Rahim residing at Vill-Surkhali , PO-Sankarpur , PS-Khargram , Murshidabad, West Bengal 742157 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Mohammed Piarul Haque to Piyar Ali Sk and henceforth I shall be known as Piyar Ali Sk (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 26/12/2025. My name Piyar Ali Sk & Mohammed Piarul Haque both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Ummehani Begam (Old Name) W/O–Mohammad Jalal Uddin resident of Vill-Madhaipur , Po-Malihati , Ps-Salar , Dist-Murshidabad , West Bengal, Pin-742401 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Ummehani Begam to Ummahani Bagem and henceforth I shall be known as Ummahani Bagem (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the Magistrate affidavit Kandi court on 23/12/2025. My name Ummahani Bagem & Ummehani Begam both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Mohosen Ali (Old name) D/o-Ajija Parvin, Resident at, Post office para, Po-Masimpur, Ps-Kaliachak, Dist-Malda, 732206 West Bengal, I have changed my name Mohosen Ali to Md Mohosen Ali (New name) I shall be known as Md Mohosen Ali vide affidavit before the Na at Berhampore on 26/12/2025 Mohosen Ali & Md Mohosen Ali same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I , Sekh Kamaluddin S/O- Sekh Mohbub Alam @ SK Mehebub Alam resident of Chhatimpur, P.O.- Huria, P.S.- Khandaghosh, Dist- Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal, PIN-713424, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as 'SK KAMAL UDDIN' vide an affidavit before the Notary Public at Purba Bardhaman on 26/12/2025. That Sekh Kamaluddin and SK Kamal Uddin both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I , Pranabesh Biswas S/O- Dhirendra Nath Biswas resident of Saheb Bagan, Daluibazar, P.O.- Rasulpur, P.S.- Memari, Dist- Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal, PIN-713151, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as 'PRANAB BISWAS' vide an affidavit before the Notary Public at Purba Bardhaman on 20/12/2025. That Pranabesh Biswas and Pranab Biswas both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I , Chowdhuri Parvin Begam W/O-Chodhury Habibur Rahaman @ Choudhury Habibur Rahaman resident of Vill- Mathnurpur, P.O.- Palashan, P.S.- Raina, Dist- Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal, PIN-713424, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as 'CHOUDHURY PARVIN BEGAM' vide an affidavit before the Notary Public at Purba Bardhaman on 20/12/2025. That Chowdhuri Parvin Begam and Choudhury Parvin Begam both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I , Hafijur Rahaman Chowdhuri S/O-Chaudhuri Fajalur Rahaman @ Chaudhuri Fajarulahaman resident of Vill- Mathnurpur, P.O.- Palashan, P.S.- Raina, Dist- Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal, PIN-713424, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as 'CHOUDHURY HAFIJUR RAHAMAN' vide an affidavit before the Notary Public at Purba Bardhaman on 20/12/2025. That Hafijur Rahaman Chowdhuri and Choudhury Hafijur Rahaman both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I , Habibur Rahaman Chowduri S/O-Choudhury Hafijur Rahaman@ Hafijur Rahaman Chowdhuri resident of Vill-Mathnurpur, P.O.- Palashan, P.S.- Raina, Dist- Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal, PIN-713424, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as 'CHOUDHURY HABIBUR RAHAMAN' vide an affidavit before the Notary Public at Purba Bardhaman on 20/12/2025. That Habibur Rahaman Chowduri and Choudhury Habibur Rahaman both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Anjumanowara Bibi (old name) residing at Khosbaaspur, khosbaaspur, Kandi, Dist-Murshidabad, Pin-742136 West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from ANJUMANOWARA BIBI to ANJUWARA BIBI and henceforth I shall be known as ANJUWARA BIBI (new name) in all purpose vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public at Murshidabad dated 27/12/2025. ANJUMANOWARA BIBI and ANJUWARA BIBI both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Mura Sekh (old name) residing at Khosbaaspur, khosbaaspur, Kandi, Dist-Murshidabad, Pin-742136 West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from MURA SEKH to MURSED SK and henceforth I shall be known as MURSED SK (new name) in all purpose vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public at Murshidabad dated 27/12/2025. MURA SEKH and MURSED SK both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Yunuch Molya (old name) residing at Kathuriyapara, Chimtakachari, Hasnabad, Dist-North 24 parganas, Pin-743456 West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from YUNUCH MOLYA to YUNUCH MOLLA and henceforth I shall be known as YUNUCH MOLLA (new name) in all purpose vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public at Murshidabad dated 27/12/2025. YUNUCH MOLYA and YUNUCH MOLLA both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Md Bodiuzzaman (old name) residing at Bdo office para, Nashipur, Balagachi, Ranitala, Dist-Murshidabad, Pin-742135 West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from MD BODIUZZAMAN to BADIUJJAMAN SK and henceforth I shall be known as BADIUJJAMAN SK (new name) in all purpose vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public at Murshidabad dated 27/12/2025. MD BODIUZZAMAN and BADIUJJAMAN SK both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

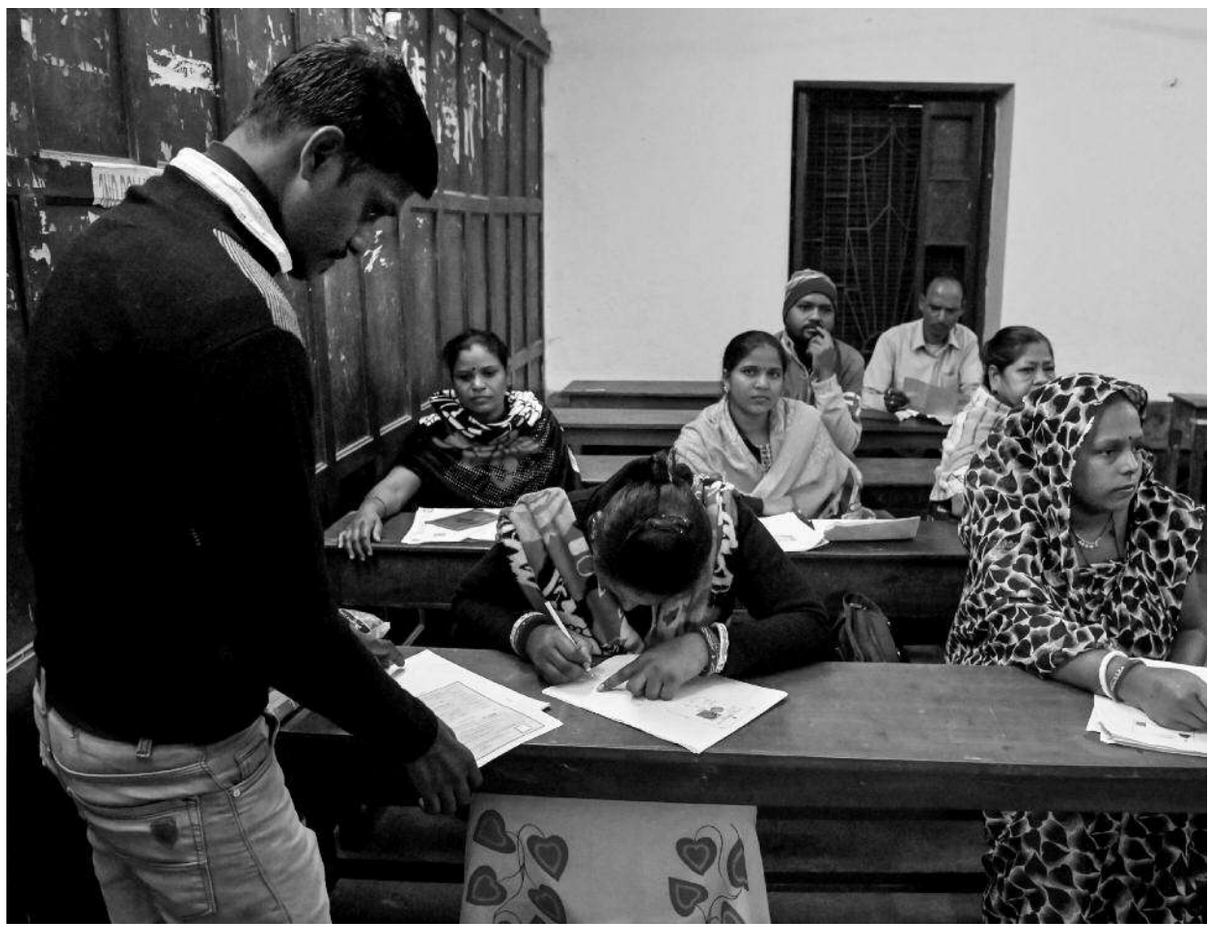
I, Ajit Kumar Biswas (old name) residing at Kurmitala, Kurmitala, Murshidabad, Dist-Murshidabad, Pin-742150 West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from AJIT KUMAR BISWAS to AJIT BISWAS and henceforth I shall be known as AJIT BISWAS (new name) in all purpose vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public at Murshidabad dated 27/12/2025. AJIT KUMAR BISWAS and AJIT BISWAS both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Ejalek Dafadar (old name) residing at Padmamala, Padmamala, Chapra, Dist-Nadia, Pin-741123 West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from EJALEK DAFADAR to EJLEK DAFADAR and henceforth I shall be known as EJLEK DAFADAR (new name) in all purpose vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public at Murshidabad dated 27/12/2025. EJALEK DAFADAR and EJLEK DAFADAR both are same and one identical person.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Rabiul Dafadar (old name) residing at Padmamala, Padmamala, Chapra, Dist-Nadia, Pin-741123 West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from RABIUL DAFADAR to ROBIUL DAFADAR and henceforth I shall be known as ROBIUL DAFADAR (new name) in all purpose vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public at Murshidabad dated 27/12/2025. RABIUL DAFADAR and ROBIUL DAFADAR both are same and one identical person.



People gather at a school during a hearing under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, in Kolkata, West Bengal, Sunday.

## Celebration Turns Chaotic: Jeet's Event Descends into Mayhem Amid Alleged Police Lapses

**Staff reporter, Kolkata, 28 December:** What was meant to be a grand public celebration featuring popular actor Jeet spiralled into scenes of extreme chaos, as an overwhelming crowd allegedly slipped out of control, leading to vandalism, panic, and reports of looting. The incident has raised serious questions about crowd management and police preparedness, casting a shadow over an event that began with excitement but ended in disorder.

From the early hours, thousands of fans began gathering at the venue, far exceeding initial estimates. Enthusiasm quickly turned into restlessness as barricades buckled under pressure and entry points became chokeholds. Eyewitnesses described a situation where excitement tipped into frenzy, with people pushing, shouting, and scrambling to get closer to the stage. As the crowd swelled, control appeared to weaken rapidly.

According to multiple accounts, the police presence on the ground was inadequate for the scale of the gathering. While personnel were deployed, they allegedly struggled to regulate the surging crowd. Confusion reigned as instructions were either unheard or ignored, and coordination among security agencies reportedly broke down. Within moments, the tightly packed gathering became unmanageable.

The situation deteriorated further when sections of the crowd began damaging property near the venue. Shops and temporary stalls were reportedly vandalised, with some owners claiming that items were looted amid the chaos. Visuals from the scene showed broken barriers, overturned structures, and scattered belongings, painting a grim picture of how quickly order collapsed.

Panic spread as people tried to flee the congested area, fearing stampede-like conditions. Parents were seen searching desperately for children, while elderly attendees struggled to move through the crowd. Though no official confirmation of serious injuries was immediately available, several people were reportedly hurt in the rush and chaos, prompting urgent calls for medical assistance.

Organisers faced criticism for allegedly underestimating the turnout and failing to put adequate safety measures in place. Questions are being raised about permissions, planning, and whether crowd-control protocols were followed. Sources suggest that warnings about the massive expected turnout may not have been acted upon with the seriousness they demanded.

The police, meanwhile, have come under sharp scrutiny. Allegations of failure to control the crowd have sparked public anger, with many questioning why reinforcements were not deployed sooner or why access points were not better regulated. Senior officials have reportedly sought preliminary reports, and assurances have been given that the incident will be reviewed to identify lapses and fix accountability.

Jeet, whose appearance had drawn the massive crowd, expressed concern over the incident through close sources, emphasising that public safety must always come first. Fans and well-wishers echoed this sentiment, stating that admiration should never come at the cost of lives or public order.

The episode has reignited a larger debate on the management of celebrity events in densely populated urban spaces. As public gatherings grow in scale and intensity, experts warn that outdated crowd-control methods can no longer suffice. Proper planning, realistic assessments, and swift response mechanisms are essential to prevent celebrations from turning into crises.The aftermath left behind damaged property, shaken attendees, and a trail of unanswered questions.

## Gita in Hand, Eyes on Justice: Shatadru Dutta Appears in Court in Yuva Bharati Vandalism Case

**Staff reporter, Kolkata, 28 December:** Holding a copy of the Bhagavad Gita in his hand, Shatadru Dutta, the arrested accused in the Yuva Bharati vandalism case, appeared before the court on a day that blended symbolism with legal gravity. The image of the sacred text clutched firmly as he was produced before the judge quickly became the most striking moment of the proceedings, sparking sharp reactions across political and social circles.

Shatadru Dutta, whose name surfaced prominently in the investigation into the vandalism incident at Yuva Bharati Krirangan, was brought to court amid tight security. As cameras flashed and voices rose outside the courtroom, his silent gesture—holding the Gita—stood out, inviting interpretation and controversy. Supporters viewed it as a declaration of faith and moral resolve, while critics questioned the intent behind bringing religious symbolism into a legal battle.

The case itself has already drawn significant attention. The alleged vandalism at one of the state's most iconic sporting venues had triggered widespread condemnation, prompting swift police action. Authorities have maintained that the damage to public property could not be taken lightly and that those responsible would be dealt with strictly under the law. Dutta's arrest marked a crucial turn in the investigation, intensifying political tension around the incident.

Inside the courtroom, proceedings followed the expected legal course, but outside, the atmosphere was charged. Party workers, supporters, and onlookers gathered in large numbers, raising slogans and engaging in heated arguments. The presence of the Gita added an emotional layer to an already volatile situation, transforming a routine court appearance into a moment heavy with symbolism and debate.

Legal experts observing the case emphasized that faith and personal belief, however deeply held, do not influence judicial scrutiny. They stressed that the court's focus would remain firmly on evidence, intent, and the rule of law. At the same time, they acknowledged that public perception often extends beyond legal facts, especially when religion and politics intersect so visibly.

Political reactions poured in soon after the court appearance. Supporters of Dutta described the gesture as a reminder of cultural identity and spiritual strength in the face of adversity. Opposing voices accused him of attempting to divert attention from serious allegations by invoking religious sentiment.

## Sacred Surge by the Sea: Digha Jagannath Dham Draws One Crore Devotees in Just Eight Months

**Staff reporter, Kolkata, 28 December:** Digha's spiritual skyline has been forever transformed, and the numbers tell a story as powerful as faith itself. Within just eight months of its inauguration, the Jagannath Dham at the coastal town of Digha has recorded an extraordinary footfall of one crore devotees, marking one of the fastest and most remarkable pilgrim surges witnessed in recent times. The figure stands not merely as a statistic, but as testimony to the deep emotional, cultural, and religious resonance the shrine has already carved across the country. Nestled close to the Bay of Bengal, the Digha Jagannath Dham has emerged as a vibrant spiritual magnet, drawing devotees from West Bengal and far beyond. From dawn prayers to late-evening aartis, the temple complex now remains alive with chants, conch shells, and the steady rhythm of belief. What was once primarily known as a seaside tourist destination has, in less than a year, evolved into a major centre of pilgrimage. Officials associated with the temple administration describe the one-crore milestone as unprecedented. Pilgrims have arrived in waves—families, elderly devotees, groups of monks, and young visitors—many undertaking long journeys to seek the blessings of Lord Jagannath. Festivals, weekends, and auspicious days have seen massive crowds, with footfall often surpassing expectations and stretching local infrastructure to its limits. The surge has also reshaped Digha's socio-economic landscape. Hotels, lodges, eateries, transport operators, and local vendors have experienced a dramatic upswing in activity. Streets once bustling only during peak tourist seasons now remain busy throughout the year. For many locals, the temple has become a source of livelihood and renewed hope, blending spiritual growth with economic opportunity. Security arrangements, crowd management systems, and civic services have been continuously upgraded to keep pace with the growing numbers. Authorities have deployed additional personnel, improved traffic regulation, and expanded public amenities to ensure smooth darshan and safety. Despite the overwhelming crowds, the overall management has been widely appreciated by devotees, many of whom have praised the discipline and cleanliness maintained within the temple premises. Religious scholars and observers see the success of Digha Jagannath Dham as a reflection of a broader spiritual revival. In uncertain times, faith continues to offer comfort and collective strength. The temple's architectural grandeur, combined with its serene coastal setting, has created a unique spiritual experience that resonates deeply with visitors. For many, the journey is not just a ritual but a moment of inner pause amid fast-paced modern life. The emotional connect has been especially strong among devotees who see the Digha shrine as an extension of the Jagannath tradition, making the divine accessible closer to home. Testimonials from visitors speak of long queues endured patiently, prayers whispered with tears, and a sense of peace that lingers long after leaving the temple grounds. Cultural events, religious discourses, and community gatherings hosted at the Dham have further strengthened its role as a living spiritual hub rather than a static monument. Each passing month has added to its stature, turning initial curiosity into lasting devotion. As the Jagannath Dham at Digha completes eight months of its journey, crossing the one-crore footfall mark stands as a defining moment. It signals not only the success of a religious project but the birth of a new chapter in Bengal's spiritual and cultural narrative. With devotion continuing to swell like the tides beside it, Digha's sacred shore now echoes with a message both timeless and powerful—faith, when nurtured, knows no bounds.



## Burdwan Hosts Its First-Ever Lawn Tennis Tournament with Grand Success

SUJIT DUTTA

**Burdwan, 28 December:** Burdwan witnessed immense excitement and enthusiasm as its first-ever Lawn Tennis Tournament was successfully held on December 26 and 27. The two-day tournament was organized on the initiative of East Burdwan Superintendent of Police Sayak Das, with active support from District Magistrate Ayesha Rani A, marking a significant milestone in the district's sporting landscape.



On the final day, matches were held in three categories—Open Singles, Girls' Singles, and Boys' Singles. In the Girls' Singles category, Srinanda Gupta from Hooghly emerged as the champion, while Shradha Mondal, a trainee of the Purba Bardhaman Police Tennis Club, finished as the runner-up. Hooghly's Chuchura-based player Aeshan Kundu dominated the tournament by clinching titles in both the Open Singles and Boys' Singles categories. In Open Singles, Indiana Pathak from Chuchura secured the runner-up position, while Swapnanil Dutta of Purba Bardhaman Police Tennis Club finished runner-up in the Boys' Singles event. The prize distribution ceremony held on Saturday evening was graced by the presence of District Magistrate Ayesha Rani A (IAS), Superintendent of Police Sayak Das (IPS), DSP (AP) Partha Roy, RI Sudip Guha Niyogi, coaches of the East Burdwan Police Tennis Club—Saptarshi Sen and Namita Das—fitness manager Mrinmoy Das, along with other dignitaries. Winners and runners-up were awarded attractive trophies, certificates, and cash prizes. All participating players received participation certificates and medals in recognition of their efforts.

Addressing the gathering, District Magistrate Ayesha Rani A praised the initiative taken by the district police, stating that the tournament provided opportunities for young tennis players not only from purba bardhaman but also from neighboring districts. She expressed hope that such initiatives would nurture future tennis talents who would represent the country on the global stage and urged that similar tournaments be organized every year.

Superintendent of Police Sayak Das highlighted that earlier there was only one tennis court in the district, and with the support of the District Magistrate, an additional modern tennis court has now been developed. He said the tournament received an overwhelming response, with registrations capped at around 99 participants due to time constraints. Efforts would be made to organize regular tennis tournaments in the future. Emphasizing tennis as a globally popular sport, he expressed optimism that talented players would emerge from Burdwan. He also extended his best wishes to all participants.

## Fury Over SIR Process Sparks Explosive Rhetoric, Anant Maharaj's Remarks Ignite Political Storm

**Staff reporter, Kolkata, 28 December:** The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process, after Anant Maharaj publicly expressed sharp anger and used provocative language that has sent ripples across the political landscape. His remarks, in which he alleged that even the highest constitutional and political figures were being branded as "Bangladeshi" under the ongoing scrutiny, have intensified an already heated debate surrounding citizenship, identity, and administrative intent.

Speaking in an emotionally charged tone, Anant Maharaj lashed out at the SIR process, claiming it had descended into farce and humiliation. Referring to the sweeping nature of the verification exercise, he argued that the logic being applied was so flawed that, by extension, it could label anyone as an outsider. His comments, invoking the names of the Prime Minister and the President to underline his point, were intended as a sharp critique of what he described as administrative excess and political targeting.

The remarks immediately triggered widespread reactions. Supporters of Anant Maharaj defended his outburst as an expression of frustration shared by many who fear harassment and uncertainty under the SIR process. They argue that genuine citizens are being subjected to anxiety, repeated documentation demands, and social stigma, all in the name of verification. According to them, the anger voiced reflects ground-level resentment that has been building quietly for months.

On the other hand, political opponents condemned the language used, calling it irresponsible and inflammatory. They accused Anant Maharaj of dragging constitutional offices into controversy and trivialising sensitive issues of nationality and identity. Several leaders demanded clarification, stressing that criticism of administrative processes must not cross the line into rhetoric that could mislead the public or erode institutional respect.

The SIR process itself has been at the centre of intense discussion. Authorities maintain that the exercise is designed to ensure accuracy in official records and to prevent illegal inclusions, insisting that it follows established rules and safeguards. However, reports of confusion, long queues, repeated notices, and fear among ordinary citizens have kept the issue alive in public discourse. In border-sensitive regions especially, the process has become emotionally charged, intertwining bureaucratic procedure with questions of dignity and belonging.



Anant Maharaj's outburst has now pushed the debate into sharper national focus. His choice of words, though defended by supporters as symbolic and sarcastic, has amplified tensions and drawn media attention far beyond the immediate administrative issue. What might have remained a procedural controversy has turned into a political flashpoint, exposing deep mistrust between sections of the population and the system meant to govern them.

Political analysts note that such statements reflect a broader climate of polarization, where identity-related processes quickly acquire political colour. In an atmosphere already fraught with suspicion, strong language travels faster than nuance, often hardening positions instead of encouraging dialogue. The episode underscores how sensitive citizenship-related exercises remain in a diverse democracy, where historical anxieties and present-day politics frequently collide.

As reactions continue to pour in, calls are growing for restraint and clarity. Civil society voices have urged authorities to communicate the purpose and safeguards of the SIR process more transparently, while political leaders are being asked to express dissent without inflaming public sentiment. The emphasis, many argue, should remain on ensuring fairness, accuracy, and dignity for all citizens.

Anant Maharaj's remarks have ensured that the SIR process remains firmly in the spotlight. Whether this controversy leads to meaningful review and reform, or simply deepens political fault lines, will depend on how responsibly both administrators and leaders choose to respond in the days ahead.

## 'Will Not Let Bengal Burn': Mithun Chakraborty Invokes Bangladesh Crisis, Issues Stern Warning Amid Political Heat

**Staff reporter, Kolkata, 28 December:** Mithun Chakraborty has once again set the political temperature soaring in West Bengal, delivering a sharp and emotionally charged statement while referring to the current situation in Bangladesh and vowing to "save Bengal" from what he described as a looming threat. His remarks, dramatic in tone and uncompromising in message, have sparked intense reactions across the political spectrum, drawing both applause and alarm.

Speaking at a public gathering, Chakraborty painted a grim picture of instability, invoking developments across the border in Bangladesh as a cautionary example. Without mincing words, he warned that West Bengal must not be allowed to slip into disorder or violence. His language, laced with urgency and anger, carried a clear message: Bengal, he said, stands at a crossroads, and inaction could prove disastrous.

The actor-turned-politician, known for his larger-than-life screen persona, brought the same intensity to the stage. He asserted that he would not remain a silent spectator if Bengal's social fabric came under threat. Referring to chaos, unrest, and fear, he suggested that the warning signs were already visible and that decisive action was necessary to prevent a repeat of instability seen elsewhere. His vow to "save West Bengal" was framed as both a political commitment and a personal mission.

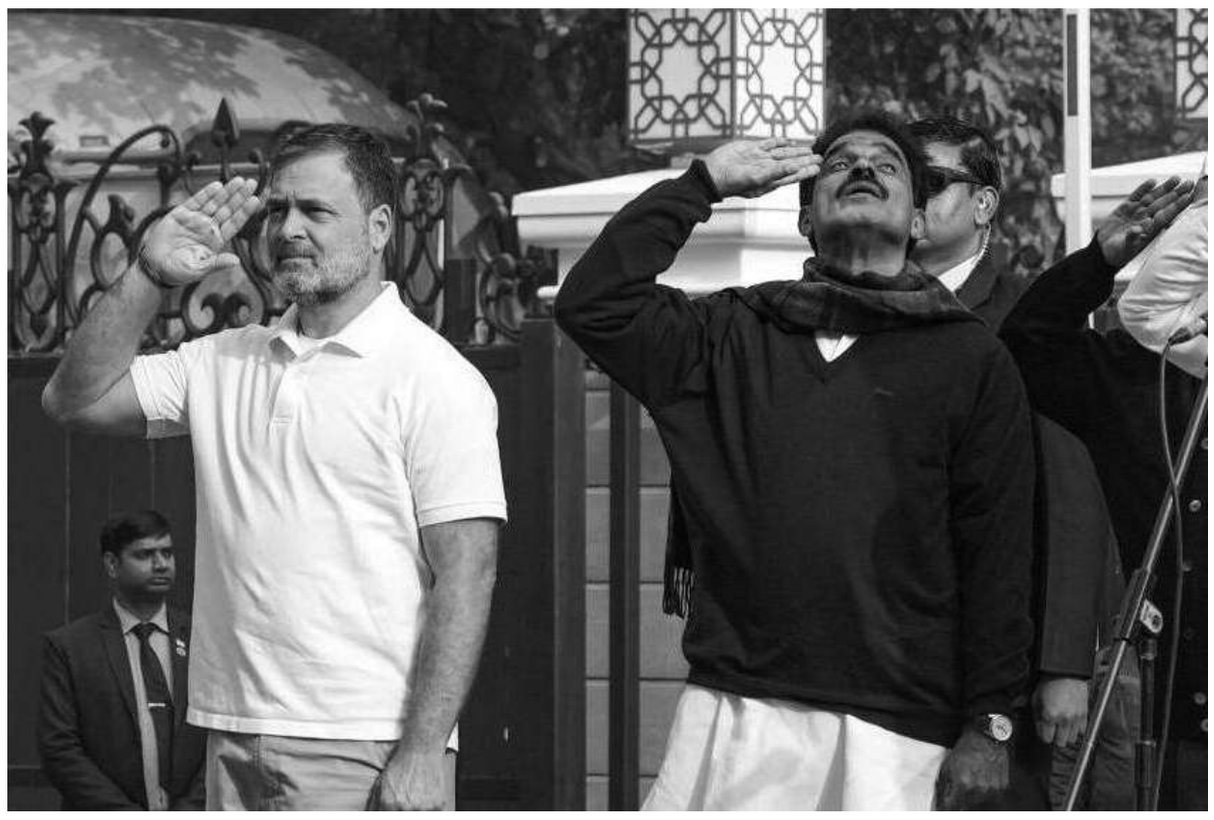
Supporters hailed the statement as fearless and timely. Many in the crowd responded with loud cheers, interpreting his words as a call to protect law, order, and cultural identity. To them, Chakraborty's reference to Bangladesh was not provocation but a stark reminder of how quickly situations can spiral if governance fails. They argue that his blunt tone reflects public frustration and a demand for stronger leadership.

However, the remarks also triggered sharp criticism. Opposition leaders accused Chakraborty of spreading fear and using cross-border comparisons to inflame sentiments. They warned that such rhetoric could deepen polarization and create unnecessary panic. Some leaders described the comments as irresponsible, arguing that West Bengal's challenges should be addressed through dialogue and policy, not threats and dramatic warnings.

Political analysts note that Chakraborty's statements come at a time of heightened tension in the state, where issues of violence, governance, and identity dominate public discourse. By invoking the situation in Bangladesh, he tapped into regional anxieties and historical sensitivities, ensuring maximum impact. Analysts also point out that his celebrity status amplifies every word he speaks, transforming political commentary into headline-grabbing moments.

Despite the controversy, Chakraborty showed no signs of retreat. He reiterated his stance, emphasizing that his words were born out of concern, not hostility. According to him, silence in the face of danger is a greater crime than speaking harsh truths. His supporters insist that he merely articulated what many feel but hesitate to say aloud.

The ruling establishment, meanwhile, sought to downplay the remarks, urging citizens not to be swayed by what they termed "provocative statements." They reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining peace and stability in the state, stressing that Bengal remains safe and resilient.



From left, LoP in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, party MP KC Venugopal during the flag-hoisting ceremony marking the 140th Foundation Day of the party, at Indira Bhawan in New Delhi, Sunday.

# Unnao rape case: SC to hear CBI plea against suspension of Kuldeep Sengar's life term on Monday

**Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 28 December:** The Supreme Court is slated to hear on Monday a plea by the CBI challenging the Delhi High Court order suspending the life sentence of expelled BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar in the Unnao rape case.According to the cause list, a three-judge vacation bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices JK Maheshwari and Augustine George Masih is likely to hear the matter.The top court would also hear a separate petition filed by advocates Anjale Patel and Pooja Shilpkar, which has challenged the high court order and has sought a stay on it.

The CBI, in its appeal before the apex court, referred to its verdict in the L K Advani case in which it held that anyone who holds public office, like MPs or MLAs, would be deemed a public servant. The agency has contended that the high court erred by declaring that Sengar, an MLA when the offence was committed, was not a public servant to be prosecuted under POCSO and granted him bail.

"The high court failed to consider that a sitting MLA, by virtue of holding a constitutional office, is vested with public trust and authority over the electorate and that such a position carries heightened responsibility arising from duties owed to the state and society." "It has erred in law by failing to adopt a purposive interpretation that advances the object and intent of the POCSO Act," the CBI said.

On December 23, the high court suspended the jail term of Sengar, who is serving life imprisonment in the Unnao rape case, saying he has already served seven years and five months in prison. Sengar's sentence has been suspended by the high court till the pendency of his appeal challenging his conviction and sentence in the rape case. He has challenged a December 2019 trial court verdict in the case. He will, however, remain in jail since he is also serving 10 years' imprisonment in the custodial death case of the victim's father and has not been granted bail in that case.Imposing several conditions, the high court directed Sengar, who kidnapped and raped the survivor when she was a minor, to furnish a personal bond of Rs 15 lakh with three sureties of the like amount.



It also directed him not to come within a 5-km radius of the survivor's residence in Delhi and not to threaten her or her mother. Violation of any of the conditions would lead to the cancellation of bail, the HC said.The rape case and other connected cases were transferred to Delhi from a trial court in Uttar Pradesh on the directions of the Supreme Court on August 1, 2019.Sengar's appeal against his conviction in the case of the custodial death of the survivor's father is also pending, where he has sought suspension of sentence on the ground that he has already spent a substantial time in jail.

The survivor of the 2017 Unnao rape case, in which former BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar was convicted, has approached the Central Bureau of Investigation seeking the registration of a First Information Report against the then-investigating officer.

She alleged that the officer was "hand in glove" with Sengar.The woman also claimed that she and her family were facing threats from various quarters.In her six-page complaint, the survivor alleged that the investigating officer conducted the probe dishonestly, with mala fides, in a manner that could benefit Sengar and the other accused through "deliberate lapses and manipulation of facts introduced, and secure a favourable outcome".

She claimed that the officer used forged school documents in the chargesheet, showing her as a student of a government school with a different date of birth, whereas she never took admission in that school.The survivor further alleged that the officer mentioned in the chargesheet that she was using the mobile phone of a woman named Heera Singh, even though she never used that phone.

She also stated that several statements were falsely attributed to her in the chargesheet. The survivor, who was a minor at the time of her rape in 2017, said she had filed a complaint earlier as well, but no action was taken against the officer.Citing the trial court order convicting Sengar, where the court questioned the recording of her statement by the investigating officer, she accused the officer of being "hand in glove" with the accused to save them from prosecution.The CBI had challenged the observations of the trial court in the Delhi High Court.During the trial, the CBI had said that the investigating officer's claims regarding the mobile phone used by the survivor were "mere opinion" and not a "conclusive proof".

## Himanta Sarma's Concern Over Growing 'Bangladeshi-Origin Muslim' Population In Assam



**Staff Reporter, Guwahati, 28 December:** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma sparked controversy on Saturday after he raised concern over the growing population of Bangladeshi-origin Muslims in the state. Chief Minister Sarma raised this concern while addressing the two-day-long state government executive of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Guwahati.

Sarma said, "As per the 2011 census, there was a 34 per cent Muslim population in Assam. If we give away three per cent of Assamese Muslims, then the Bangladeshi-origin Muslim population was 31 per cent in Assam."

"No census was conducted in 2021. When the census report comes out in 2027, the Bangladesh-origin Muslim population will be around 40%," he added.

Sarma's remarks underscore the ongoing political and social debate in Assam over migration, identity and citizenship, particularly in the context of past controversies linked to undocumented immigration from Bangladesh. The state has witnessed a sustained discussion on the demographic change, with differing views on its social and political implications.

"A false narrative has been created in Assam by the previous government by saying Shankar-Azan desh. We have heard about Shankar-Madhav from our childhood but not heard about Shankar-Azan, but a false narrative has been created," Sarma said during the two-day-long event of the BJP.

"This was forcefully created in our mind by creating a false narrative. Madhavadeva was the disciple of Shankardeva. Azan Faqir was there but not with Shankardeva. Lachit Barphukan has also been linked to Bag Hazarika, but there is no mention of Bag Hazarika in the history. The previous government tried to create a false narrative to appease the other communities," the chief minister further said.

Sarma's remarks come as Assam's next census data, expected to be released after the delayed 2021 enumeration, will provide updated population figures and is anticipated to be closely watched by policymakers and analysts focusing on the region's socio-political dynamics.

## "Is KC Venugopal Super CM?" BJP vs Congress Over Bengaluru Demolition



**Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 28 December:** A controversy has erupted over the demolition of unauthorised constructions in Bengaluru, with the BJP accusing the Congress's central leadership of superseding the state's elected government over an issue that comes under the state administration.

The BJP's charges followed a post by Congress general secretary KC Venugopal over the demolitions in Kogilu village. In his online post, Venugopal had said that he had conveyed the Congress leadership's "serious concern" over the demolitions, with the BJP questioning if the Congress-run government in Karnataka functions on directives of the party's high command.

"Who is KC Venugopal to "intervene" in the administration of Karnataka? Is he a Super CM, or does the Congress high command believe elected state governments function on Delhi diktats?" asked R Ashoka, Leader of the Opposition in Karnataka Assembly.

The state is governed by a constitutionally elected chief minister and cabinet, not by an AICC general secretary, the BJP leader said, asserting that such "pressure tactics" on a state government is "blatant overreach and an insult to federalism.""Karnataka's dignity, self-respect, and administrative authority cannot be compromised to please party managers sitting in Delhi. The people of this state did not vote for a remote-control government,: he added.

Ashoka also accused Venugopal of "hypocrisy," questioning his silence of several other issues in Karnataka, including those relating to the farmers in the state. "Karnataka is not a colony of Rahul Gandhi and his coterie," he asserted, stating that the state deserves respect, autonomy, and honest governance, and not "high-command theatrics."

Last evening, Venugopal had said he had a talk with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar over the demolitions in Bengaluru and conveyed to them the concern of the Congress high command.

"(I) conveyed the AICC's serious concern that such actions should have been undertaken with far greater caution, sensitivity, and compassion, keeping the human impact at the centre. They have assured that they will personally engage with the affected families, put in place an appropriate mechanism for addressing grievances, and ensure rehabilitation and relief for those impacted," he said.

His remark had come in the wake of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan branding the demolition drive the "brutal normalisation of the bulldozer raj."

Congress general secretary KC Venugopal on Wednesday dismissed reports of a rift within the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)'s Hemant Soren-led INDIA bloc government in the state.Venugopal said the alliance is "rock-solid, cohesive" and committed to people-centric policies.In a post on X, Venugopal wrote, "Spoke to Jharkhand CM Shri Hemant Soren today. Let there be no doubts - our INDIA alliance in Jharkhand is rock-solid, cohesive, and fully committed to advancing people-centric welfare policies that reflect the aspirations of every citizen of Jharkhand."

He also accused right-wing networks of spreading rumours and said the unity of the alliance remains intact.

"The malicious narrative and coordinated rumour mongering being propagated by right-wing troll networks are but signs of their growing desperation and political insecurity. We are not affected by such cheap trolling, and it can never dilute the trust people have placed in us. Our unity is intact, our purpose is clear, and our alliance remains stronger than ever," the post read.

Last year, Hemant Soren-led JMM steered the INDIA bloc to victory with 56 seats in the 81-member Jharkhand assembly. The JMM won 34 seats, while its allies secured 22 seats. Among the allies, the Congress won 16 seats, the RJD won four, and the CPI-ML won two seats.

The BJP-led NDA won only 24 seats in Jharkhand. The BJP secured 21 seats, while its allies, the AJSU party, Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), and JD-U, won one seat each.The contest was between the JMM-led alliance, comprising Congress, RJD, and CPI(ML), and the BJP-led NDA alliance, which includes AJSU, JD(U), and LJP.A day earlier, Congress MP KC Venugopal criticised the Sanchar Saathi application, calling it "an attack on privacy."

Speaking to ANI, Venugopal said, "It is an attack on privacy. This is what it seems to be. In the name of helping, the BJP is trying to attack the privacy of the common people. We had an experience with Pegasus here in India. The government is trying to put surveillance on all the people of the country through this app..."

## Delhi air quality remains 'very poor'; minimum temperature 6.3 degrees Celsius, flights delayed

**Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 28 December:** The air quality in the national capital was in the "very poor" category on Sunday morning with an overall Air Quality Index reading of 392, according to the Central Pollution Control Board.

Data from the Central Pollution Control Board's Sameer app showed that 19 monitoring stations in the city reported air quality in the "severe" category, with Anand Vihar recording the highest reading of 444, while the remaining recorded "very poor" levels.More than 150 flights have been delayed at Delhi's IGI airport, FlightRadar24 data showed.

In its latest advisory as of 9 am, Delhi's IGI airport said that the flight operations are running smoothly. It also advised passengers to contact their airline or visit the official airport website for latest updates.

"Flight operations are running smoothly as visibility at the airport has improved. Please be assured that our on-ground staff is available across terminals to assist passengers and provide necessary support," it said.

An AQI between 0 and 50 is considered "good", 51 to 100 "satisfactory", 101 to 200 "moderate", 201 to 300 "poor", 301 to 400 "very poor", and 401 to 500 "severe", according to CPCB standards.

The minimum temperature settled at 6.3 degrees Celsius, 0.5 notches below the season's average, while the humidity was recorded at 71 per cent at 8.30 am, according to the India Meteorological Department.

The Delhi High Court on Friday directed the Centre to file a detailed response to a petition seeking lowering of goods and services tax on air purifiers in view of worsening air quality in the national capital.



A vacation bench of Justices Vikas Mahajan and Vinod Kumar granted 10 days' time to the central government to file its reply to the petition and listed the matter for further hearing on January 9.

The court was informed by the Centre's counsel that the meeting of GST Council has to take place physically only and it is not possible to convene the meeting through video conferencing.

Additional Solicitor General N Venkataraman, representing the Centre, sought time to file a detailed reply.

Venkataraman, representing the Centre, added that if the GST Council mechanism is bypassed in this case, it could open a Pandora's Box whereby more GST exemptions may be sought without following the proper procedure.

"This will open a Pandora's Box. Parliamentary committee has recommended something to us. It will be considered. There is a process. We are not saying anything. We are not saying whether it will be done or not. Constitution issue is involved," Live Law quoted the ASG Venkataraman as saying.

The ASG went on to assure the court that the government will inform by its counter-affidavit as to when a GST Council meeting can be scheduled."The issue is such that everybody is concerned," the court then remarked.

The court was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking directions to the central government to classify air purifiers as "medical devices" and reduce the goods and services tax (GST) to the five per cent slab. Air purifiers are currently taxed at 18 per cent.

The petition by advocate Kapil Madan said that purifiers cannot be treated as luxury items in view of the "extreme emergency crisis" caused by severe air pollution in Delhi.

The high court maintained that something should be done to bring down the cost of air purifiers in Delhi, given the air pollution crisis that has hit the national capital.

"The Court's concern was given the situation in Delhi and the surrounding areas. Why can't it be done? Do whatever you have to do. Right now, an air purifier costs 10-15K. Why not bring down the GST to a reasonable level where even a common man can afford an air purifier?" Live Law quoted the bench as saying.On December 24, the court had directed the GST Council to meet at the earliest and consider lowering or abolishing GST on air purifiers.

The matter was listed today to inform the court as to when the Council can meet and whether it was possible for the Council to meet virtually, if not physically.The air quality in the city slipped into the 'very poor' category on Friday after witnessing marginal improvement for two days.

The overall Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 310. The air quality was recorded as 'moderate' at Lodhi road station with an AQI of 185, while it was 'very poor' in at least 24 stations.Delhi recorded 'poor' air quality in the last two day. According to the Air Quality Early Warning System (AQEWS), the air quality is likely be in the 'very poor' category for the next six days.

## Shashi Tharoor Was Asked About Digvijaya Singh Amid Row, What He Said

**Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 28 December:** Congress MP Shashi Tharoor has backed senior colleague Digvijaya Singh's call for reforms within the party, asserting the need to strengthen the organisation, in the backdrop of a spiralling controversy over the latter's apparent praises for the BJP and its ideological parent, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

Singh had last week highlighted the need for reforms and the decentralisation of power within the Congress in a public post, tagging Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi. While the public remark from a senior leader left the Congress embarrassed, it also underlined the growing discontent among veteran leaders.

The controversy erupted after Singh praised the RSS and BJP in an online post yesterday. Sharing a photo of Prime Minister Narendra Modi sitting on the floor near BJP veteran LK Advani, the Rajya Sabha MP said that a grassroots worker can grow within the BJP-RSS ecosystem to top posts like chief minister and prime minister.

Though Singh later clarified that he remained a staunch opponent of the RSS-BJP, the damage was already done. Struggling after multiple electoral setbacks, the party appeared divided, with a large section of leaders emerging in the favour of Singh. The Congress, however, asserted it differed with the Sangh ideology and the "killers of Gandhi".



Tharoor, who has often been in the news over differences with his leaders, was asked this morning if he had a word with Singh and if he supported his calls for reforms within the party. The Thiruvananthapuram MP, who has posted a photo of him sitting next to Singh at the 140th foundation day event of the Congress, remarked, "We are friends, and having a conversation is natural. The organisation must be strengthened - there is no question about it."

Pointing to the party's century-old history, he further told reporters that there's a lot to learn from it. "We have a 140-year history; there's a lot we can learn. I also want the organization to be strong. Discipline is essential. That's logical. There must be discipline within our organization," he added.

Meanwhile, the controversy over Singh's post sparked a debate over whether a section of Congress leaders believed that the RSS's discipline was its strength that offered a learning opportunity. Singh clarified this morning he doesn't believe so."There's no need to learn anything from Gandhi's killers. I have been in the Congress and fought the communal forces in the Assembly or Parliament. I oppose their (RSS and BJP) ideology. I have been completely opposed to their ideology," he said, but asserted that every organisation needs strengthening.

A majority of his colleagues came out in his support and snubbed the RSS and BJP in an attempt to put up a united front.

Senior leader Supriya Shrinate said there is no need for the Congress to learn from RSS. "They should learn from us. We don't need to learn anything from (Nathuram) Godse's organisation," she said, referring to Mahatma Gandhi's killer.Salman Khurshid, a Congress veteran, however, asserted that Singh is "completely" with the party leadership and that Singh and the Congress are on the same page on rejecting the RSS ideology.

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, who had earlier called for a ban on the RSS, pointed out the difference between his party and the RSS-BJP combine, claiming that the Congress never does politics of religion. He didn't name Singh in his post, but his target was clear: raising the allegations against the RSS that his party has lately been highlighting.

"We may have less power, but our backbone is not weak. Whether we are in power or not, we do not seek votes in the name of religion. We believe in religion, but some have turned religion into politics. The BJP has power, but it lacks truth. RSS leaders had once refused to accept even the Tricolour and Vande Mataram, and they are now crushing the rights of the people. We must stand firmly and resist such attempts," he said.

Pawan Khera, a member of the highest decision-making body of the Congress, chose to differ with Singh's earlier remark, stating, "Godse's supporters cannot be Gandhi's supporters."

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INDIAN INFO EXCHANGE

# Did India's home Test loss to South Africa trigger talks on Gambhir's red-ball role?



**Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 28 December:** Gautam Gambhir's record as India's white-ball coach has been impressive, marked by one ICC and one ACC trophy in each of the two limited-overs formats. However, the same success has not translated into Test cricket, where India have suffered 10 defeats against SENA countries during his tenure.

It is understood that following India's abject surrender against South Africa in the two-Test home series last month, a senior figure within the Board of Control for Cricket in India once again informally approached VVS Laxman to gauge his interest in taking charge of the red-ball side.The move, however, did not progress as the former India batter is reportedly content in his current role as Head of Cricket at the Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru.

While Gambhir's contract with the BCCI runs until the end of the 2027 ODI World Cup, there is a strong possibility that it could be revisited depending on India's performance at the upcoming T20 World Cup, which begins in five weeks' time. Within BCCI circles, the jury is still out on whether Gambhir is the right choice to continue as the head coach of the Test side for the remaining nine matches of the World Test Championship 2025-27 cycle.

India, who drew 2-2 in the recent five-Test away series in England, have two overseas red-ball assignments coming up.These include two Tests against Sri Lanka in August 2026 and another two-Test series in New Zealand in October, before hosting Australia for a five-Test series in January-February 2027.

"Gambhir does have (a) strong backing within the power corridors of Indian cricket and obviously, if India retain the T20 World Cup or at least reach the final, he would be seamlessly continuing with his assignment. However, it would be interesting if Gambhir continues in Tests too," a BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

"His advantage being (that there) aren't too many alternate options in red ball format since VVS Laxman isn't interested in coaching senior Test team," the source added. The Indian dressing room, it is learnt, has become a space of uncertainty, with several players not feeling as secure under the Gambhir regime as they did during Rahul Dravid's tenure.

During Dravid's three years in charge, roles were clearly defined and players were given extended opportunities to prove themselves. The exclusion of Shubman Gill from the T20 World Cup squad is believed to have Gambhir's clear influence, and the decision has reinforced the perception among players that no one's place is guaranteed.

If Indian cricket's next poster boy can be sidelined, many believe that any player could be next. The BCCI has traditionally taken time before arriving at major policy decisions.

With the T20 World Cup followed by two months of the Indian Premier League, the board will have sufficient space to assess India's performance at the global event before deciding whether to opt for split coaching roles or continue with a single head coach across formats. The coming months are expected to be crucial for Gambhir's future, particularly in Test cricket, even though he continues to enjoy support from influential quarters within the BCCI.

# Dhaka Capitals coach Mahbub Ali Zaki dies after collapsing on field ahead of BPL match

**Staff Reporter, Dhaka, 28 December:** Dhaka Capitals assistant coach Mahbub Ali Zaki died on Saturday after collapsing on the field ahead of his team's Bangladesh Premier League game against Rajshahi Warriors in Sylhet, with



local media reporting he suffered a heart attack.

Zaki, 59, fell while the teams were warming up. He was rushed to hospital, but news of his death reached the ground after the match had already kicked off."Mahbub Ali Zaki's dedication and invaluable contribution to the development of fast bowling and Bangladesh cricket will be remembered with profound respect and gratitude," the Bangladesh Cricket Board posted on X.

Players of both teams observed a minute's silence during the innings break to pay respect. "We are deeply saddened by this irreparable loss. May his soul rest in peace and heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family," Dhaka Capitals posted on Instagram.

Mahbub Ali Zaki, a renowned fast-bowling coach in Bangladesh, died on Saturday after suffering a heart attack before Dhaka Capitals' BPL game against Rajshahi Warriors at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.

Zaki, who was the Capitals assistant coach, collapsed during his team's pre-match routines. He was taken to hospital, where authorities pronounced him dead shortly afterwards. He was 59.The match went ahead as scheduled, with the players, coaches and match officials observing a minute's silence for Zaki.

The BCB, where Zaki was employed for the last 17 years, posted on social media: "Following his playing career, Mahbub Ali Zaki dedicated himself to coaching and player development. He joined the BCB in 2008 as a High Performance coach and went on to make a significant contribution to the growth of pace bowling in the country through his work."



SG Pipers players during a practice session ahead of the start of Women's Hockey India League, at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Astro Turf Hockey Stadium, in Ranchi, Jharkhand.

# High Court directs CSA to let Shamsi complete ILT20 season

**Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 28 December:** The Johannesburg High Court has ruled against Cricket South Africa (CSA) and in favour of Tabraiz Shamsi in a landmark judgment which will be pored over with interest around the global game for its potential implications for freelance cricketers. Shamsi, the left-arm wristspinner who has played 127 international matches across formats, withdrew from his contract with MI Cape Town in the SA20 earlier this year in order to take up offers in other T20 leagues overseas, specifically the ILT20 in the UAE, and the Big Bash League in Australia.

Shamsi was signed by MI Cape Town for R500,000 (USD 29,000 approx) in September's SA20 auction but successfully sought a release from his contract, citing personal reasons, and breached the terms of his auction agreement in doing so. The SA20 formally accepted the repudiation of his contract in November, and he was replaced in MI Cape Town's squad.

Shamsi then signed for Gulf Giants, and was granted an initial No-Objection Certificate (NOC) by CSA which only ran until December 19, midway through the ILT20 and before the start of the SA20's competition window. As a result, he sought "urgent interim relief" in the High Court of South Africa after talks for an extension stalled, and the court ruled in his favour.



The court directed CSA to issue Shamsi with an extended NOC for the ILT20 until January 4, the date of the final, and ordered the board to pay his legal costs, and CSA has since granted him a separate NOC to cover his BBL contract. Shamsi has taken four wickets in four appearances for Gulf Giants in the ongoing ILT20, and will arrive in Australia to play for Adelaide Strikers in January.

"I am grateful that the Court recognized the urgency of my situation and granted interim relief," Shamsi said in a statement issued by his management company, Global Sports Ventures.

"I was reluctant to take this matter to court, but it became necessary to bring certainty and resolve a situation that could not be resolved in any other way. This was never about maximising opportunities, but being able to approach my career in a considered and sustainable way. "As a husband and a father, I also had to do what was right for my wife and our young child, and ensure stability for my family alongside the demands of a global cricket career.

"Looking ahead, my focus is firmly on cricket. I want to continue performing at the highest level, contributing positively wherever I play, and remaining available to represent South Africa whenever the opportunity arises."

The issuing of NOCs has become an increasingly contentious subject in recent years with the proliferation of franchise tournaments around the world, and the judgement creates a precedent that could embolden other players to seek permission to play overseas during their respective home seasons.

The ICC requires players to obtain an NOC from their relevant national governing body before they are permitted to appear in a domestic tournament or franchise league overseas. Boards have generally been reluctant to offer NOCs to players who would otherwise be available to play in domestic cricket in their own country. Shamsi, 35, opted out of his national contract with CSA last year to "explore all opportunities" available to him. He remains available for international cricket, though he has not featured for South Africa in any format since February and no longer holds a domestic contract in the country.

# Joe Root admits 'weird' feeling after victory that ends Australian drought

**Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 28 December:** It came at the 18th attempt. More than 12 years after his first Ashes Test in Australia, Joe Root has finally tasted victory.There have been 15 defeats along the way before this win at the MCG in the fourth match of the 2025-26 series. It was at this stage in the previous two tours that England were able to hold on for draws - Melbourne 2017-18 and Sydney 2021-2022 - that prevented a whitewash. Now, for the first time since 2010-11, they are on the board, and head into the New Year's Test 3-1 down.



Root admitted victory was bittersweet. Though he was able to pocket his first Australian century during the second Test in Brisbane, another overseas Ashes have passed him and England by. His own returns have been poor by his high standards; that breakthrough 138 not out doing a lot of heavy lifting for a series average of 33.42, kept low by familiar issues outside off stump. On a spicy MCG surface that resulted in a two-day finish - "I wouldn't want to bat on it every week, put it that way" - Root bagged his second duck of the tour in the first innings, then 15 in the victorious pursuit of 175.

Root is far from the problem, of course. Since the Ashes were spurned inside 11 days, the duo of head coach Brendon McCullum and managing director Rob Key have come under fierce criticism on matters ranging from a lack of adequate pre-series preparation and coaching issues.

Neither McCullum nor Key know what their futures might hold, that decision ultimately in the hands of chair Richard Thompson and chief executive Richard Gould, who returns to the tour in Sydney. But Root believes the management have the full backing of the team and have the track record to continue in their roles. Particularly after rousing the team to notch this consolation win.

"In terms of the playing group, we're absolutely committed to the management," said Root. "They've been outstanding."You look at the group of players that we've got and you look at the guys that were involved in the team when I was captain, four years ago, and you look at their records individually, and every single one of them has improved as a player. This team has improved as a team. So I think it would be silly for the amount of hard work and things that have been done."

The record Root speaks of has flattened out after a strong start. Since McCullum took over, aligned with Ben Stokes as captain from the start of the 2022 English summer, the Test side have won 26 and lost 17 of their 45 matches. Since the start of the 2024 season - when there was a change of personnel within the team - there have been 12 wins and nine losses across 22. This Ashes defeat means McCullum and Stokes have yet to win a five-match series in four attempts. They are languishing seventh in the World Test Championship.

"Clearly it's been a very different approach and different way of doing things, but there's been a considerable move forward in terms of how we've played throughout that period," Root insisted. "And clearly, there's always going to be things to do and things to work on. "Yes, we can be better and there's certain areas that we'll continue to keep working at but that management work extremely hard.

# AIFF's 20-year plan gives base and hope for the long-term ISL stability

**Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 28 December:** The All India Football Federation (AIFF) tabled the 'National League Participation Model ISL' during a virtual meeting with the clubs on Friday. The 20-year structure proposal for the country's No. 1 league, prepared by the federation itself, brings a ray of light at the end of the tunnel.

"The league will be owned and operated by the AIFF under the aegis of its new constitution," the nine-page document said.Two meetings have been lined up for Sunday and Monday. Sunday's virtual meeting will be about the short-term plan, that is, for the 2025-26 season, where the AIFF committee, formed on December 20, will lob two formats.

Monday's will be in-person in New Delhi."Hopefully, we will be able to announce something concrete by Monday. If Sunday's meeting hits a roadblock we will straightaway announce that the federation will have a league on its own, without the clubs who are not on the same table with our plans," a top AIFF official told The Telegraph.

The 20-year plan suggests that the ISL will have a predetermined 'central operational budget' for every year that would come from yearly contributions from all 'revenue share holders' proportionate to their revenue share in the league.



"This would be known as the League Membership Contribution. Any operational expenses required for the league to be conducted and for clubs to comply with their applicable licensing criteria with the addition of prize money distribution, would be capped and borne out of this budget," the proposal said.

"Governance would be overseen by a Board that would be empowered by the AIFF general body with certain operational autonomy over commercial matters of the League. The jurisdiction of the board would be limited to the utilisation of unrestricted funds within the yearly operational budget earmarked for the same."

Each club, under the proposal, will pay the AIFF a 'standard participating fee' of ₹1 crore per year at the beginning of the season. This would, however, be independent of any calculations of the 'Central Operating Expenditure'.

"This amount would be fully reimbursable from the central revenue prior to distribution of 'Net Revenue'. The total participation fee for all clubs would be at 20% of the 'central operational budget' of the League. In case the Board decides to raise the 'central operational budget' by 10% in the future, the 'standard participation fee' would proportionately increase."

"Friday's development, where AIFF gave its long-term proposal for ISL would need fine-tuning, but the positive part is that now, we have a base to work on. We have to keep in mind two things, the interest of Indian football as well as of the owners who collectively are the biggest investors of the game in the country," North-East United CEO Mandar Tamhane told .

The total outlay of the first season of the ISL will be ₹70 crore with the AIFF's revenue share pegged at 10 per cent in the first season, while 50 per cent (₹35 crore) will come from the clubs — 14 as of now.

However, the revenue share of 30 per cent reserved for a potential commercial partner gives a lot to ponder about, as the AIFF is yet to get a commercial partner.

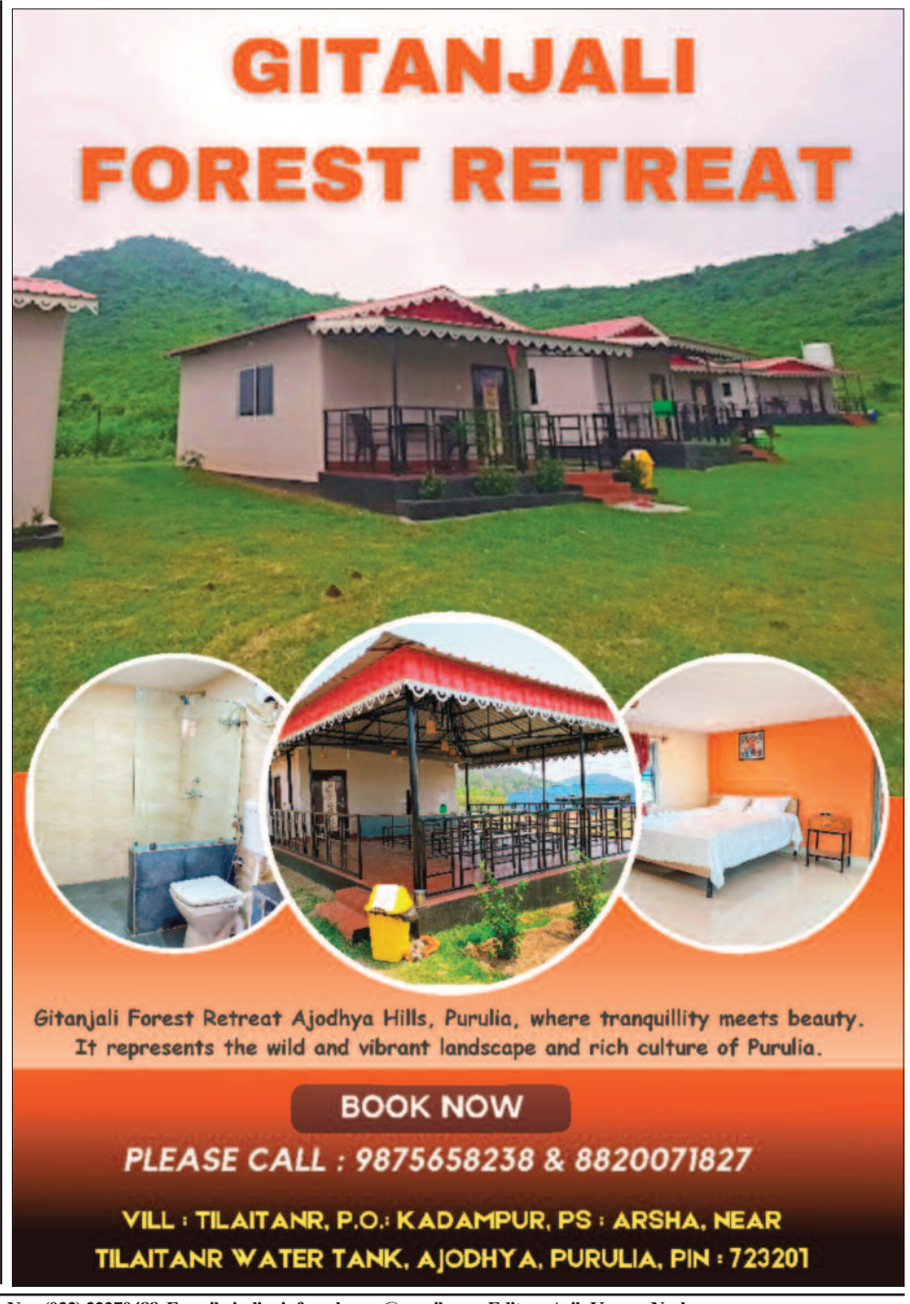
"The number of matches could be less than previous years since it's a truncated season. The ISL can be run with an operating budget of less than the proposed Rs 70 crore," an AIFF official felt.

For the first time in several months, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) and clubs appear to be looking in the same direction, raising hopes that the top league could now kick off in early February.

The AIFF has presented a 20-season plan for the top-tier Indian Super League (ISL) to be owned and operated by the federation – as per its new constitution -- with participating clubs paying Rs 1 crore as participation fee and revenue shareholders contributing annually to the league's operational budget proportionately as per their percentage of shares.

As per the proposal shared with participating clubs in a virtual meeting on Friday, the participating clubs will be majority shareholders at 50%, contributing Rs 35 crore to the general revenue pool, while the commercial partner can take up 30% share for Rs 21 crore.

The AIFF has a 10% stake for a contribution of Rs 7 crore while the other 10% share is earmarked for club allocation for 'fixed revenue share'.The central operations budget for next season has been pegged at Rs 70 crore.




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