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NEW YEAR IN KASHMIR
Hotels 100% booked
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THRILLING CONTEXT
Tigers have the last
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INSIDE



Riots in Iran over costs of essentials leave six dead

TEHRAN Protesters and security forces clashed in three Iranian cities on Thursday, with six people reported killed, the first deaths since the end of being demonstrations broke out. The violence on Sunday by shopkeepers over high prices spread to other parts of the country. **» PAGE 14**



New Vice Chief of the Air Staff assumes charge

NEW DELHI Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor on Thursday assumed charge as the vice chief of the Air Staff, succeeding Air Marshal Narendreshwar Tiwari, who superannuated after 40 years of service. He is an accomplished fighter pilot with over 3,000 flying hours on MiG-21 and MiG-29 aircraft. **» PAGE 4**

India, Pakistan exchange lists of nuclear facilities

NEW DELHI Continuing an over three-decade practice, India and Pakistan on Thursday exchanged a list of their nuclear installations under a bilateral pact that prohibits the two sides from attacking each other's facilities. The two countries also exchanged a list of prisoners under the consular access agreement. **» PAGE 4**

Tobacco tax rejig to take effect from Feb. 1

Compensation cess ends; introduced to make up States' losses from implementation of GST
Bid to 'ensure cigarette prices rise faster than income', as per global public health guidance
New cess will create a non-lapsable, predictable financial stream to fund security preparedness

T.C.A. Sharad Hashwan
NEW DELHI

The Union Finance Ministry on Thursday issued a series of notifications that will give effect to the new taxation regime for tobacco products from February 1. The Central Excise (Amendment) Act, 2023, passed in the recently concluded Winter Session of Parliament, specifies new rates of excise duty on tobacco products. The Finance Ministry also notified that provisions of the Health Security or National Security Act, 2023, which intend to levy a cess on pan masala units, will come into force from February 1.

Tax reset

The Central Excise (Amendment) Act, 2023, specifies new rates of excise duty on tobacco products. The Finance Ministry has notified that provisions of the Health Security or National Security Act, 2023, which intend to levy a cess on pan masala units, will come into force from February 1.

Levy on pan units

The Finance Ministry also notified that provisions of the Health Security or National Security Act, 2023, which intend to levy a cess on pan masala units, will come into force from February 1.

Pop goes Pappanji



An effigy of Pappanji is burnt at the Parade ground in Fort Kochi, as part of an annual tradition, to usher in the New Year. Thousands from across the globe converged to witness the iconic event on Wednesday night. (Hindu Express)

Fire at bar in Swiss Alpine resort leaves 40 New Year revellers dead

Associated Press
GRAND MONTANA

Nearly 40 people were killed and another 18 injured, most of them seriously, after a fire ripped through a bar's New Year celebration in a Swiss Alpine resort in the intervening night between Wednesday and Thursday, the police said.



The explosion ripped through a bar where New Year revelry was on in the intervening night between Wednesday and Thursday.

Authorities did not immediately have an exact count of the deceased. The Grand Montana resort is an international ski and golf venue, and over-night, its crowded Le Comptoir bar morphed from a scene of revelry into the site of one of Switzerland's worst tragedies.

flashover or backdraft.

This evening should have been a moment of celebration and coming together, but it turned into a nightmare, said Matthias Keyraud, head of the regional government of the Valais Canton. The injured were so numerous that the intensive care unit and operating theatre at the regional hospital quickly hit full capacity, he said.

Ukrainian drone strike in Kherson kills 24, wounds at least 50: Russia

Associated Press
KYIV

Russian officials on Thursday said a Ukrainian drone strike killed 24 people and wounded at least 50 as they celebrated the New Year in a Russian-held village in Ukraine's Kherson region, as tensions between the two nations continue to spike despite diplomatic peace talks.

The attack could not be independently verified, The Associated Press.

The strike, "once again" condemned by a number of Russian officials, Valentina Matviyenko, the chair of Russia's Upper House of Parliament, the Federation Council, said that the strike "strengthened" Russia's resolve to quickly achieve its goals in its almost four-year invasion of Ukraine.



War wreckage: The damaged hotel after the drone attack on Thursday in Russian-held village in Ukraine's Kherson region.

aged drone lying in snow. The man, his face covered, talks about the drone. Neither the man nor the Defense Ministry provided any location or date and neither the video nor its claims could be independently verified.

Kyiv has called the allegations of an attack on Mr. Putin's residence a "hoax" and said it was too early to determine the cause of the fire. "At no moment was there a question of any kind of attack," she said.

Two women told French broadcaster BFMTV they were inside when they saw a male bartender lifting a female bartender on his shoulders as she held a lit candle in a bottle. The flames spread, collapsing the wooden ceiling, they told the broadcaster.

Lokpal scraps plan to buy 7 BMW cars for 25 crore

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Anti-graft ombudsman Lokpal has cancelled its controversial tender to procure seven BMW cars collectively worth around 25 crore, two months after it was floated, officials said on Thursday.

Tobacco tax rejig to take effect from Feb. 1

Compensation cess ends; introduced to make up States' losses from implementation of GST

Bid to 'ensure cigarette prices rise faster than income', as per global public health guidance

New cess will create a non-lapsable, predictable financial stream to fund security preparedness

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The Union Finance Ministry on Thursday issued a series of notifications that will give effect to the new taxation regime for tobacco products from February 1.

The Central Excise (Amendment) Act, 2025, passed in the recently concluded Winter Session of Parliament, specifies new rates of excise duty on tobacco products.

Levy on pan units

The Finance Ministry also notified that provisions of the Health Security *se* National Security Act, 2025, which intends to levy a cess on pan masala units, will come into force from

February 1.

In an accompanying FAQ note, the Ministry explained that under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, the excise duty on cigarettes had so far been rendered a nominal amount of a "fraction of a paisa" per cigarette stick, and the GST compensation cess rate on tobacco products had not been increased since it was implemented in July 2017.

"For India, affordability has either stagnated or increased in the past decade, meaning cigarettes have not become more expensive relative to consumers' purchasing power," the note said.

"This is contrary to global public health guidance, which emphasises annual

Tax reset

The Central Excise (Amendment) Act, 2025 specifies new rates of excise duty on tobacco products

■ The Finance Ministry has notified that provisions of the Health Security *se* National Security Act, 2025, which intends to levy a cess on pan masala units, will come into force from February 1

■ Beedis have been moved to the **18%** GST category from the now-defunct **28%** slab

■ All other tobacco products have been moved to the **40%** slab



increases in specific excise duties to ensure that real cigarette prices rise faster than incomes," the note added.

At the same time, the Ministry notified February 1 as the date from which the GST compensation cess would cease to exist.

The cess was originally

introduced for a period of five years to compensate States for any loss arising out of the implementation of GST.

Tax slabs

The Finance Ministry also notified the new GST rates for tobacco products.

Beedis have been

moved to the 18% category from the now-defunct 28% slab. All other tobacco products have been moved to the 40% slab. These new rates will be effective from February 1.

The GST compensation cess was to end in 2022. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the cess collections were not enough to compensate the States and so the Centre borrowed money to compensate them.

Hence, it was extended until 2026, with the proceeds being used to repay the loan.

With the impending end of the loan, the government on September 22, 2025, removed the incidence of the cess on most items except on tobacco

products. From February 1, 2026, the cess will no longer apply on these items either, effectively ending it.

Finally, the Ministry introduced a new valuation mechanism for tobacco products such as chewing tobacco, filter *khaini*, *jar-da*, scented tobacco, and *gutkha*, whereby the GST value would be determined based on the retail sale price declared on the package.

Need for dedicated cess

Regarding the Health Security *se* National Security Act, 2025, the Ministry justified the inclusion of the national security aspect by saying that conventional tax revenues cannot always guarantee funding for

national security functions, and so a dedicated cess is needed for the purpose.

"General tax revenues are subject to competing developmental priorities and cannot always guarantee sustained long-term funding for core national security functions," the FAQ note said.

"A dedicated purpose-specific cess enables the Union to create a non-lapsable, predictable financial stream that supports multi-year security preparedness, technological upgradation, capacity creation, and advanced equipment procurement – without increasing the tax burden on the general population or raising broad-based rates such as GST."

Tax reset

The Central Excise (Amendment) Act, 2025 specifies new rates of excise duty on tobacco products

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- All other tobacco products have been moved to the **40%** slab



● How cigarettes will be taxed

Component	Existing structure	From February 1
Excise duty	₹5-10 per 1,000 sticks	₹2,050-8,500 per 1,000 sticks
NCCD*	₹230-850 per 1,000 sticks	₹230-850 per 1,000 sticks
GST	28%	40%
Compensation cess	5-36% plus ₹2,076-4,170 per 1,000 sticks	Nil

*NATIONAL CALAMITY CONTINGENT DUTY; SOURCE: CBIC

TAKING THE HEAT

Stock performance of cigarette and tobacco companies

Company	Dec 31, 2025	Jan 1, 2026		% change
Godfrey Phillips	2,761.55	2,289.65		-17.09
ITC	403.00	363.95		-9.69
NTC Industries	162.65	158.40		-2.61
VST Industries	256.70	255.15		-0.60
Sinnar Bidi Udyog	700.00	700.00		0.00
Elitecon International	99.80	102.44		2.65
Shanthala FMCG (SME)	31.80	33.35		4.87
Raghunath International	11.58	12.65		9.24

Source: BSE

1. Background of the Decision

- The Union Finance Ministry has notified a new tax regime for tobacco products effective from February 1, 2026.

केंद्रीय वित्त मंत्रालय ने 1 फरवरी 2026 से तंबाकू उत्पादों के लिए नई कर व्यवस्था अधिसूचित की है।

- The changes are enabled through the Central Excise (Amendment) Act, 2025.
यह परिवर्तन केंद्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क (संशोधन) अधिनियम, 2025 के माध्यम से किए गए हैं।
-

2. End of GST Compensation Cess

- The GST compensation cess on tobacco products will cease from February 1.
GST क्षतिपूर्ति उपकर (Compensation Cess) 1 फरवरी से समाप्त हो जाएगा।
- The compensation cess was introduced to offset States' revenue losses due to GST implementation.

यह उपकर GST लागू होने से राज्यों को हुए राजस्व नुकसान की भरपाई हेतु लाया गया था।

- Though meant to end in 2022, it was extended till 2026 due to COVID-19 revenue shortfalls.
हालाँकि इसे 2022 में समाप्त होना था, कोविड-19 के कारण इसे 2026 तक बढ़ाया गया।
-

3. New Cess under Health Security & National Security

- A new cess will be levied under the Health Security and National Security framework.
स्वास्थ्य सुरक्षा और राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा के तहत नया उपकर लगाया जाएगा।
 - This cess will be non-lapsable and earmarked for security preparedness and national needs.
यह उपकर गैर-व्ययशील (non-lapsable) होगा और सुरक्षा तैयारियों हेतु समर्पित रहेगा।
-

4. Revision in GST Slabs on Tobacco Products

- Beedis have been moved to the 18% GST slab from the earlier 28% category.
बीड़ी को 28% से घटाकर 18% GST श्रेणी में लाया गया है।
- All other tobacco products have been shifted to the 40% GST slab.
अन्य सभी तंबाकू उत्पादों को 40% GST स्लैब में स्थानांतरित किया गया है।
- Excise duties will be recalibrated to ensure cigarette prices rise faster than incomes.
सिगरेट की कीमतें आय से तेज़ बढ़ें, इसके लिए उत्पाद शुल्क पुनर्गठित किया गया है।

5. Public Health Rationale

- The government cited global public health guidance on tobacco taxation.
सरकार ने वैश्विक सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य दिशा-निर्देशों का हवाला दिया।
 - India has seen stagnation in tobacco affordability over the past decade.
पिछले दशक में भारत में तंबाकू की वहनीयता लगभग स्थिर रही है।
 - Higher taxation is aimed at reducing consumption.
उच्च कराधान का उद्देश्य उपभोग को कम करना है।
-

6. Valuation Mechanism for Smokeless Tobacco

- A new valuation mechanism will determine GST value based on retail sale price.
नया मूल्यांकन तंत्र खुदरा बिक्री मूल्य के आधार पर GST तय करेगा।
 - It will apply to chewing tobacco, khaini, zarda, scented tobacco, and gutkha.
यह चबाने वाले तंबाकू, खैनी, ज़र्दा, सुगंधित तंबाकू और गुटखा पर लागू होगा।
-

Aspect	Details
Law Involved	Central Excise (Amendment) Act, 2025
Old Cess	GST Compensation Cess
New Cess	Health Security & National Security Cess
Nature of New Cess	Non-lapsable
Objective	Revenue + Public Health
Highest GST Slab	40%
Beedi GST Slab	18%
Tax Philosophy	Sin taxation
WHO Recommendation	Raise real prices faster than income
Exam Relevance	Economy, Health, Polity

Exam	Year	Question Theme	Answer Pointer
UPSC Prelims	2017	GST Compensation Cess	Revenue protection for States
UPSC Mains GS-III	2018	Sin taxes	Discouraging harmful consumption
UPSC Prelims	2020	Non-lapsable funds	Dedicated purpose
UPSC Mains GS-II	2021	Fiscal federalism	Centre–State revenue balance
SSC CGL	2022	GST slabs	Multi-rate GST structure
State PSC	2023	Tobacco control	Taxation + regulation

- **With reference to the new tobacco taxation regime in India, consider the following statements:**
- GST Compensation Cess on tobacco products will end from February 1, 2026.
- Beedis have been shifted to the 18% GST slab.
- The newly introduced cess will not lapse at the end of each financial year.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - A. 1 and 2 only
 - B. 2 and 3 only
 - C. 1 only
 - D. 1, 2 and 3

IN BRIEF



Arunachal welcomes first sunrise with 'Dance of Dawn'

Dong, India's easternmost village in Anjaw district of Arunachal Pradesh, welcomed the first sunrise of 2020 on Thursday with "Alo Pradhat: Dance of the Dawn", a performance drawn from the cultural traits of indigenous Mijie and Mishmi communities. The performance was part of Sunrise Festival organised by the State's Tourism Department at Dong, the first human habitation to receive the first rays of the sun in India. The festival began on December 29 and concludes on Friday. Organisers said "Dance of the Dawn" is an artistic narrative presented through dance, songs, and indigenous rhythms.

236 liquor-related cases on New Year's eve in Ahmedabad

Gujarat Police have registered more than 230 cases related to liquor consumption and possession across Ahmedabad city, where prohibition is in place along with the rest of the state, on New Year's eve and arrested 246 persons, officers said on Wednesday. Police said a total of 236 cases were registered under the Gujarat Prohibition Act and under section 185 of the Motor Vehicles Act, which deals with driving under the influence of alcohol, during a special drive and patrolling carried out on New Year's eve. Also, 107 vehicles were seized across the city after their owners failed to produce proper registration papers or driving license.

In a mix-up, BJP mouthpiece carries IUML organ's edit page on New Year's day in Kerala

Abdul Lateef Nadeem

PALAKKAD

On the morning of New Year's day, Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) state president Syed Kamil Khatib Thangal released an unexpected phone call from a party worker in Kannur. The caller congratulated him on Mr. Thangal's signed article on bidding farewell to 2019 published on the edit page of BJP's mouthpiece *Jammubhumi*.

Although confused at first, Mr. Thangal realised that it was neither a prank nor a misadventure. Instead, it turned out to be a New Year's mix-up by the *Jammubhumi* in its Kannur-Kasaragod edition.

For *Jammubhumi* readers in Kannur and Kasaragod, it was a jarring start to the New Year. For journalists, however, it became a



Sharing technical errors: *Jammubhumi*'s edit and up to the page in Kannur-Kasaragod edition on New Year's day.

fixes like *Jammubhumi* and *Chandrika*'s editorial page patched along with the *Jammubhumi* plates. The blunder went unnoticed at Prathibha Prithvi, where newspapers like *Madhyamam* and *Jammubhumi* are printed. Luckily, there was nothing directly targeting the BJP on the *Chandrika* front editorial page to the day, said a BJP worker in Kasaragod, counselling himself.

Ahead of Assembly polls, Amit Shah to join T.N. BJP chief's yatra on January 4

Home Minister to address valedictory function of Nainar Nagenbhar's Statewide campaign in Pudukkottai party says ally AIADMK unlikely to take part as it is purely a BJP-organised event

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will embark on a two-day visit to Tamil Nadu from January 4 and address the valedictory function of Tamil Nadu Bharatiya Janata Party chief Nainar Nagenbhar's State-wide political campaign in Pudukkottai.

Mr. Nagenbhar has embarked on a "Thamizhagam Thala Nainar Thamizhagam Payanam" ahead of the 2026 Assembly election visiting various districts.

Following this to reporters here on Thursday, BJP State general secretary "Kasappa" Murugesan said the yatra had covered several districts in the state. It will conclude on January 4 at Pudukkottai in which the Home Minister will take part in the evening. A grand arrangement will be made in Pudukkottai in connection with the senior BJP leader's participation in the programme.



T.N. BJP chief Nainar Nagenbhar addressing a public meeting in Tiruchirappalli on Sunday in October. Mr. Nagenbhar launched his Statewide yatra, "Thamizhagam Thala Nainar Thamizhagam Payanam", from Madurai. A visitation

Replying to reporters' questions, Mr. Murugesan said the T.N. BJP leader will meet the members of the party's high-level committee in a hotel at Tiruchirappalli on January 4 night to ascertain the political situation in Tamil Nadu and offer his guidance.

Asked whether BJP al-

lies would take part in the Pudukkottai event, he said AIADMK general secretary and former Chief Minister Edupathi K. Sivasami had a campaign on the same day (January 4) at Salem. The Pudukkottai programme would probably be a BJP-organised event.

Mr. Shah will take part in a Pongal festival to be organised by the party on January 5 morning at the military ground in Tiruchirappalli. About 2,000 Pongal pots are to be placed at the venue with the participation of an equal number of families in the event, Mr. Murugesan said.

'Will form panel to identify kin of victims of Kharsawan firing'

Anil Chelari

PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Hemanth Soren on Thursday said that a special commission would be formed soon to identify the kin of the victims of Kharsawan firing incident and people associated with them to grant them the due honour.

Mr. Soren said this after paying floral tributes at the Kharsawan martyrs' memorial in Bhairabnagar.

"It shall be a tribute to the younger generation about the struggles and sacrifices of their ancestors. The State government has previously implemented several schemes for the welfare of freedom fighters' children," he said.

Turning it a priority for the State government, Mr. Soren said, "It is our moral duty to ensure that the des-

cendants of those who sacrificed and preserved Bhairabnagar's identity and independence have the opportunity to live with pride and dignity."

"Not merely a tribute" He added that "families of the martyrs would be identified and economically honoured by the coming year."

The Chief Minister also stated that this initiative is not merely a tribute, but a history preservation campaign which will educate the younger generation about the struggles and sacrifices of their ancestors.

The State government has previously implemented several schemes for the welfare of freedom fighters' children, he said.

Our struggle will continue until every martyr's family receives its due respect," Mr. Soren said.

Opposition parties demand rehabilitation of violence-hit families in Assam district

The Hindu Bureau

DISPUR

Opposition parties in Assam have urged the State government to rehabilitate the families affected by clashes in West Karbi Anglong district less than a fortnight ago.

In a joint memorandum to Governor Lahman Prasad Acharya on Wednesday, the leaders of these political parties also sought adequate compensation for the relatives of two persons killed in the violence on December 23.

The parties included Congress, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Bodo Dal, and the Assam Jati Parishad.

The parties emphasised livelihood support for the victims of the violence through employment skill development, and access to short-term credit, along

Tezpur University V-C sent on leave amid long protest

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Nearly three months after students and teachers launched a protest demanding the removal of Tezpur University Vice-Chancellor V-C Shambhu Singh, the Ministry of Education asked him to proceed on leave and ordered the setting up of an enquiry panel to probe into the allegations against him, according to officials.

The university has been witnessing sustained protests since mid-September against irregularities allegedly committed by Mr. Singh. The protesters pursued a 24-hour hunger strike on Monday on the completion of 100 days of their agitation without any success.

A three-member enquiry panel has been set up to probe all matters pertaining to the ongoing situation in Tezpur University. The V-C shall resume his post on all duties and proceed on leave immediately and shall remain on leave till the completion of enquiry, a senior Ministry official said. The enquiry panel has been set up within a maximum of



The variety has been witnessing sustained protests demanding the V-C's removal. (File photo)

three months. The committee will be headed by Manipur University Vice-Chancellor N. Lakshmi Singh. The other two members of the panel are Nagaland University Vice-Chancellor Jagdish Kumar Parashar and UGC Secretary Manish K. Joshi.

Meanwhile, the Ministry has appointed Anand Kumar Das from IIT Guwahati as Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Tezpur University.

Earlier this month, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Tharua had spoken to Union Education Minister Chaudhary Prakash Singh to appoint a Pro-Vice-Chancellor immediately to restore academic stability at the campus.

Ancient Marathi literature reveals savannas not as degraded forests

Purnima Shah

MUMBAI

Savannas in western Maharashtra are far older than commonly believed and should not be treated as degraded forests, according to a study that mines medieval Marathi literature and living oral traditions to reconstruct the region's ecological history.

Published in the British Ecological Society journal *People and Nature*, the research shows open-canopy, tree-grass landscapes have persisted for nearly 700 years, long before colonial timber extraction, and calls for conservation strategies that explicitly value local culture alongside biodiversity.

Led by Ashish K. Nerlekar from Michigan State University and Digvijay Patil from Indian Institute of



Sourced from texts: The sacred natural landscape at Shringar, which is described and referred to as Kumbhakar in the *Aditya*, an early 16th-century CE Marathi narrative poem, is now a

leucophylla), khair (Euphorbia), catclaw (tara) (Cassia), dhatura, (Datura), and other plants. The authors also mention dhatura (Datura) and other plants. The authors also mention dhatura (Datura) and other plants. The authors also mention dhatura (Datura) and other plants.

were wild, of which 27 were savanna indicators, 14 generalists and only three forest indicators, an overwhelming signal of open-canopy savanna in the past.

Mr. Nerlekar said, "It's fascinating that some hundreds of years old Marathi texts tell us what is around today and contrast so much with the modern remnant of the past landscape to be." A prominent passage from the *Aditya* (16th century) describes cow herders settling near forest, grass and water from the Nira River, even as the land was "full of thorny trees". Founding myths of Shingara (Satar) and Vihara (Pune) tie the sprouting of banyan or tamar trees to sacred origins, while the nagar-ova performed by Dhanagaya pastoralists

evoked "scrub jungles" and "terrifying forests" beyond settlements, local idioms the authors clearly refer to savanna scrublands, not dense forests.

The study decodes historical terminology to avoid modern misreadings. In Marathi and Sanskrit, vana (forest), jagala (jungle) traditionally denote wild, unsettled tracts and drier landscapes — grasslands, scrublands and savanna — contrasted with arid, the wetter marshes and closed-canopy forests. Ecologists the authors distinguish two savanna types found in Maharashtra: fire-leaf savanna in drier zones up to 1,000 metres (3,280 ft) and broadleaf savanna in wetter zones (>700 mm), with coexistence across the 700-1,000 mm band.

Many species cited in

the texts carry classic savanna adaptations: thick bark, spines, clonal growth and, regrowing, traits shaped by frequent fire, browsing and grazing.

Other evidence Crucially, the literary record is triangulated with 11th-century evidence, strengthening the case for antiquity. These include archaeological paintings and photographs that depict sparsely wooded uplands with continuous grass, colonial revenue records noting open forest, and ecological data. The authors distinguish two savanna types found in Maharashtra: fire-leaf savanna in drier zones up to 1,000 metres (3,280 ft) and broadleaf savanna in wetter zones (>700 mm), with coexistence across the 700-1,000 mm band.

Many species cited in

Haryana govt. to give job to ASI's widow: CM

Press Trust of India

CHANDIGARH

The wife of Haryana Police's Assistant Sub-Inspector Sandeep Singh, a father of two who allegedly committed suicide in October, will get a government job in the Campus School at Bahawalpur, Haryana, Chief Minister Bhupendra Singh said on Thursday. A decision in this regard was taken at a cabinet meeting chaired by Mr. Bahini here.

Lahar, who was posted in the cyber cell in Bahawalpur, allegedly shot himself dead in October 14, leaving behind a "final note" that incriminated corruption allegations against late IPS officer V. Puri Kumar.

The Cabinet also gave its

need to amend the Dera Daulat Lado Lakshmi Yojana, which provides ₹2,000 every month to eligible women. It will now be extended to mothers of children who score more than 80% marks in Class 10 and 12.

Benefit in two parts While the monthly benefit under the scheme will remain ₹2,000 per eligible woman, from the second month onwards, the assistance will be released in two parts — ₹1,000 will be credited directly to the beneficiary's savings bank account, while ₹1,000 will be credited to the government-operated fund deposited against late IPS officer V. Puri Kumar.

The Cabinet also gave its



Arunachal welcomes first sunrise with 'Dance of Dawn'

Dong, India's easternmost village in Anjaw district of Arunachal Pradesh, welcomed the first sunrise of 2026 on Thursday with "Alo Prabhat: Dance of the Dawn", a performance drawn from the cultural traits of indigenous Meyor and Mishmi communities. The performance was part of Sunrise Festival organised by the State's Tourism Department at Dong, the first human habitation to receive the first rays of the sun in India. The festival began on December 29 and concludes on Friday. Organisers said 'Dance of the Dawn' is an artistic narrative presented through chants, songs, and indigenous rhythms.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH
ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS 2011

KILOMETRES
20 0 20 40 60 80









- Dong village in Arunachal Pradesh welcomed India's first sunrise of 2026.
अरुणाचल प्रदेश के डोंग गांव ने भारत का पहला सूर्योदय 2026 में देखा।
 - The sunrise was celebrated through a cultural performance titled "Alo Prabhat: Dance of the Dawn".
इस सूर्योदय का स्वागत "एलो प्रभात: डांस ऑफ द डॉन" नामक सांस्कृतिक प्रस्तुति से किया गया।
-

2. Location Significance

- Dong is India's easternmost village, located in Anjaw district.
डोंग भारत का सबसे पूर्वी गांव है, जो अंजाव जिले में स्थित है।
 - It is considered the first human habitation in India to receive the sun's rays.
इसे भारत की पहली मानव बस्ती माना जाता है जहाँ सूरज की किरणें सबसे पहले पहुँचती हैं।
-

3. Cultural Dimensions

- The performance drew from the cultural traditions of the indigenous Meyor and Mishmi communities.
यह प्रस्तुति स्थानीय मेयोर और मिश्मी जनजातियों की सांस्कृतिक परंपराओं पर आधारित थी।
- 'Dance of the Dawn' narrates stories through chants, songs, and indigenous rhythms.
'डांस ऑफ द डॉन' में मंत्रोच्चार, गीत और पारंपरिक तालों के माध्यम से कथा प्रस्तुत की जाती है।

4. Festival Details

- The event was part of the Sunrise Festival organised by the State Tourism Department.
यह कार्यक्रम राज्य पर्यटन विभाग द्वारा आयोजित सनराइज़ फेस्टिवल का हिस्सा था।
 - The festival began on December 29 and concluded on January 2.
यह महोत्सव 29 दिसंबर से शुरू होकर 2 जनवरी को समाप्त हुआ।
-

5. Tourism & Soft Power Aspect

- The festival aims to promote border tourism and indigenous heritage.
इस महोत्सव का उद्देश्य सीमा पर्यटन और स्वदेशी विरासत को बढ़ावा देना है।
- It strengthens cultural soft power in India's eastern frontier region.
यह भारत के पूर्वी सीमांत क्षेत्र में सांस्कृतिक सॉफ्ट पावर को सशक्त करता है।

Aspect	Details
Easternmost Village	Dong
District	Anjaw
State	Arunachal Pradesh
Cultural Communities	Meyor, Mishmi
Festival Name	Sunrise Festival
Cultural Performance	Alo Prabhat – Dance of the Dawn
Theme	First sunrise, indigenous heritage
Administrative Department	State Tourism Department
Geography Relevance	Longitude, sunrise timing
GS Paper	GS-I (Culture & Geography)

Exam	Year	Question Theme	Answer Pointer
UPSC Prelims	2018	Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh	Mishmi, Meyor
UPSC Mains GS-I	2019	Culture of Northeast India	Indigenous festivals
UPSC Prelims	2020	Easternmost point of India	Arunachal region
State PSC	2022	Border tourism	Cultural festivals
SSC CGL	2021	Sunrise & longitude relation	Earth rotation
UPSC Mains GS-I	2023	Role of culture in regional identity	Soft power



- **With reference to the ‘Dance of the Dawn’ festival, consider the following statements:**

- It is celebrated in Dong village of Arunachal Pradesh.
- Dong is India’s easternmost human habitation to receive the first sunrise.
- The festival is associated with the cultural traditions of the Meyor and Mishmi communities.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - A. 1 and 2 only
 - B. 2 and 3 only
 - C. 1 and 3 only
 - D. 1, 2 and 3

R.K. Shriramkumar receives Sangita Kalanidhi award

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

Hindustani violinist N. Rajam on Thursday advised students of music to pursue their practice without interruption, saying it would keep opening doors they never expected.

Conferring the Sangita Kalanidhi award on violinist R.K. Shriramkumar on the occasion of the Sadas of the Music Academy in Chennai, Ms. Rajam, Emeritus Professor and former Dean of the Faculty of Performing Arts at Banaras Hindu University, said that even after more than 85 years of rigorous practice and *sadhana*, she still felt like a student.

While presenting the

award, she encouraged the audience to give a standing ovation to Mr. Shriramkumar, an authority on the *keertanas* of Muthuswami Dikshitar.

"Music is such an unfathomable ocean – Carnatic or Hindustani, north or south. What we learn in one lifetime is just a speck of that ocean. I strongly feel that all the great musicians we encounter with prodigious proficiency must have been practising the art for multiple births," said Ms. Rajam, recalling the days when she attended concerts at the Academy as a child.

She said she would sit in the last row of the Academy and try to observe and absorb veteran musicians



Violinist N. Rajam presenting the Sangita Kalanidhi award to R.K. Shriramkumar at the Sadas of the Music Academy on Thursday. N. Murali, President of the Academy, is seen. RAGU R.

rendering complex *Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi*.

"I would run home immediately after the concert, where my father would be eagerly waiting. I would render verbatim the *pallavi* line, *anulomam*

and *pratilomam*. I would rest only after my father approved what I had absorbed," she recalled.

She also appreciated the Music Academy's century-long service to the cause of music, as well as the music

school attached to it.

N. Murali, President of the Academy, said it was at Banaras Hindu University that Ms. Rajam decided to pursue Hindustani music, having earlier listened to recordings of Pt. Omkarnath Thakur. Ms. Rajam, sister of violinist T.N. Krishnan, later became a student of Pt. Thakur.

"Before her, the violin was not truly an accompanying instrument in Hindustani music. Moreover, instrumentalists in that system played accompanying instruments in a style distinct from the gayaki style adopted by Rajam. She thus played a pioneering role in introducing the gayaki style to Hindustani violin," Mr. Murali said. He

also appreciated the teamwork of his colleagues, staff, volunteers and scouts who contributed to the music season's success.

Thavil player T.R. Govindarajan and musician Shyamala Venkateswaran received the Sangita Kala Acharya awards.

Kathakali musician Madambi Subramanian Namboodiri and veena-playing couple J.T. Jeyaraaj Krishnan and Jaysri Jeyaraaj Krishnan received the TTK awards.

The Musicologist award went to Professor C.A. Sreedhara.

Prizes were given to winners of various competitions. N. Ramji, secretary of the Academy, proposed a vote of thanks.



1. Award & Occasion

- Carnatic violinist R.K. Shriramkumar was conferred the prestigious *Sangita Kalanidhi* award.
कर्नाटक संगीत के प्रसिद्ध वायलिन वादक आर.के. श्रीरामकुमार को प्रतिष्ठित *संगीत कलानिधि* पुरस्कार प्रदान किया गया।
 - The award was presented at the Sadas of the Music Academy Madras in Chennai.
यह पुरस्कार चेन्नई में म्यूजिक अकादमी मद्रास के सडस (Sadas) में प्रदान किया गया।
-

2. Award Presenter & Remarks

- The award was conferred by legendary violinist N. Rajam.
यह सम्मान महान वायलिन वादिका एन. राजम द्वारा प्रदान किया गया।
 - She highlighted Mr. Shriramkumar's authority over the *kirtanas* of Muthuswami Dikshitar.
उन्होंने मुथुस्वामी दीक्षितर की *कीर्तनाओं* पर श्रीरामकुमार की गहन पकड़ को रेखांकित किया।
-

3. Artistic Philosophy Shared

- N. Rajam described music as an "unfathomable ocean" spanning Carnatic and Hindustani traditions.
एन. राजम ने कर्नाटक और हिंदुस्तानी संगीत को एक "अथाह महासागर" बताया।
 - She emphasised lifelong *sadhana* and uninterrupted practice as key to musical excellence.
उन्होंने आजीवन साधना और निरंतर अभ्यास को संगीत साधना का मूल बताया।
-

4. Insights from Musical Training

- N. Rajam recalled her childhood days of attending concerts and observing senior musicians closely.

एन. राजम ने बाल्यकाल में वरिष्ठ कलाकारों को सुनने और देखने के अनुभव साझा किए।

- She spoke about mastering complex forms like *Ragam–Tanam–Pallavi*.

उन्होंने रागम–तानम–पल्लवी जैसी जटिल शैलियों की साधना का उल्लेख किया।

5. Institutional & Historical Context

- The Music Academy's role in shaping Indian classical music for over a century was acknowledged.

म्यूजिक अकादमी की शताब्दी से अधिक पुरानी भूमिका की सराहना की गई।

- Sangita Kalanidhi is considered the highest honour in Carnatic music.

संगीत कलानिधि को कर्नाटक संगीत का सर्वोच्च सम्मान माना जाता है।

6. Other Awards at the Event

- Several artists received Sangita Kala Acharya and other honours.

अन्य कलाकारों को संगीत कला आचार्य एवं अन्य सम्मान प्रदान किए गए।

- Prizes were also distributed to winners of various music competitions.

विभिन्न संगीत प्रतियोगिताओं के विजेताओं को पुरस्कार दिए गए।

	<h2>Comparison of Carnatic Music and Hindustani Music</h2>	
Basis of Comparison	Carnatic Music	Hindustani Music
Geographical Origin	South India (Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala)	North India (Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Bengal)
Historical Influence	Less influenced by Persian/Islamic traditions	Strong influence of Persian, Arabic & Mughal culture
Period of Codification	Highly codified between 15th–18th centuries	Evolved gradually from medieval period onward
Language of Compositions	Mainly Telugu, Sanskrit, Tamil, Kannada	Mainly Hindi, Braj, Urdu, Persian
Core Focus	Composition-centric (kriti is central)	Improvisation-centric
Raga Development	Ragas strictly structured	Ragas flexible and expanded through improvisation
Tala System	Highly complex and mathematically structured talas	Relatively simpler tala framework
Improvisation Scope	Limited, within predefined structure	Extensive improvisation
Main Forms	Kriti, Varnam, Keerthana, Padam	Dhrupad, Khayal, Thumri, Tappa
Concert Structure	Fixed and predictable sequence	Flexible, varies with artist and mood

Role of Lyrics	Lyrics have high importance (bhakti-oriented)	Lyrics secondary to melodic exploration
Tempo Progression	Starts slow → medium → fast	Gradual elaboration from very slow (vilambit)
Key Instruments (Melody)	Veena, Violin, Flute	Sitar, Sarod, Santoor
Key Instruments (Rhythm)	Mridangam, Ghatam, Kanjira	Tabla, Pakhawaj
Vocal Style	Stable, precise, ornament-rich	Fluid, expansive, emotive
Ornamentation	Gamakas (systematic oscillations)	Meend, Murki, Kan (glides & microtones)
Prominent Trinity / Figures	Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar, Syama Sastri	Tansen, Amir Khusro (early influence)
Spiritual Orientation	Strong Bhakti tradition	Courtly + spiritual blend
Learning Tradition	Guru–Shishya parampara (very strict)	Guru–Shishya parampara (adaptive)
Notation Usage	Widely used and standardised	Limited; oral tradition dominates

Aspect	Details
Award Name	Sangita Kalanidhi
Field	Carnatic Classical Music
Awarding Body	Music Academy, Madras
Established	1927 (Academy), Award from 1942
Award Type	Lifetime Achievement
Recipient	R.K. Shriramkumar
Instrument	Violin
Cultural Domain	Indian Classical Music
Exam Relevance	Awards, Music traditions



- **With reference to the *Sangita Kalanidhi* award, consider the following statements:**

- It is the highest honour conferred by the Music Academy, Madras.
- It is associated exclusively with Hindustani music.
- R.K. Shriramkumar is a noted Carnatic violinist.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - A. 1 and 3 only
 - B. 2 and 3 only
 - C. 1 only
 - D. 1, 2 and 3

A 910

First Vande Bharat sleeper train to ply between Guwahati and Kolkata

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will flag off the first Vande Bharat sleeper train later this month, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Thursday. It will ply between Guwahati and Kolkata.

The 16-coach train, with a capacity of 823 passengers, has a design speed of upto 180 kmph. It has 11 three-tier and four two-tier AC coaches, and a first-class AC coach.

The third-AC fare will be ₹2,300, second AC ₹3,000, and first AC ₹3,600.

The train boasts ergonomically designed berths with improved cushioning, automatic doors, and enhanced ride comfort with superior suspension and noise reduction. Safety measures include Kavach, an indigenously deve-



Ready to roll: The sleeper rake of a Vande Bharat Express at the Integral Coach Factory in Chennai. FILE PHOTO

The 16-coach train, with a capacity of 823 passengers, has a design speed of upto 180 kmph

loped, high-tech automatic train protection system designed to prevent collision, advanced controls, and safety systems inside the driver's cabin. There will be CCTV cameras on

all coaches, and specially designed seats for passengers with disabilities, he said.

The districts that will benefit from this service include Kamrup Metropolitan and Bongaigaon in Assam and Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri, Maldah, Murshidabad, Purba Bardhaman, Hooghly, and Howrah in West Bengal.

Assamese cuisine will be

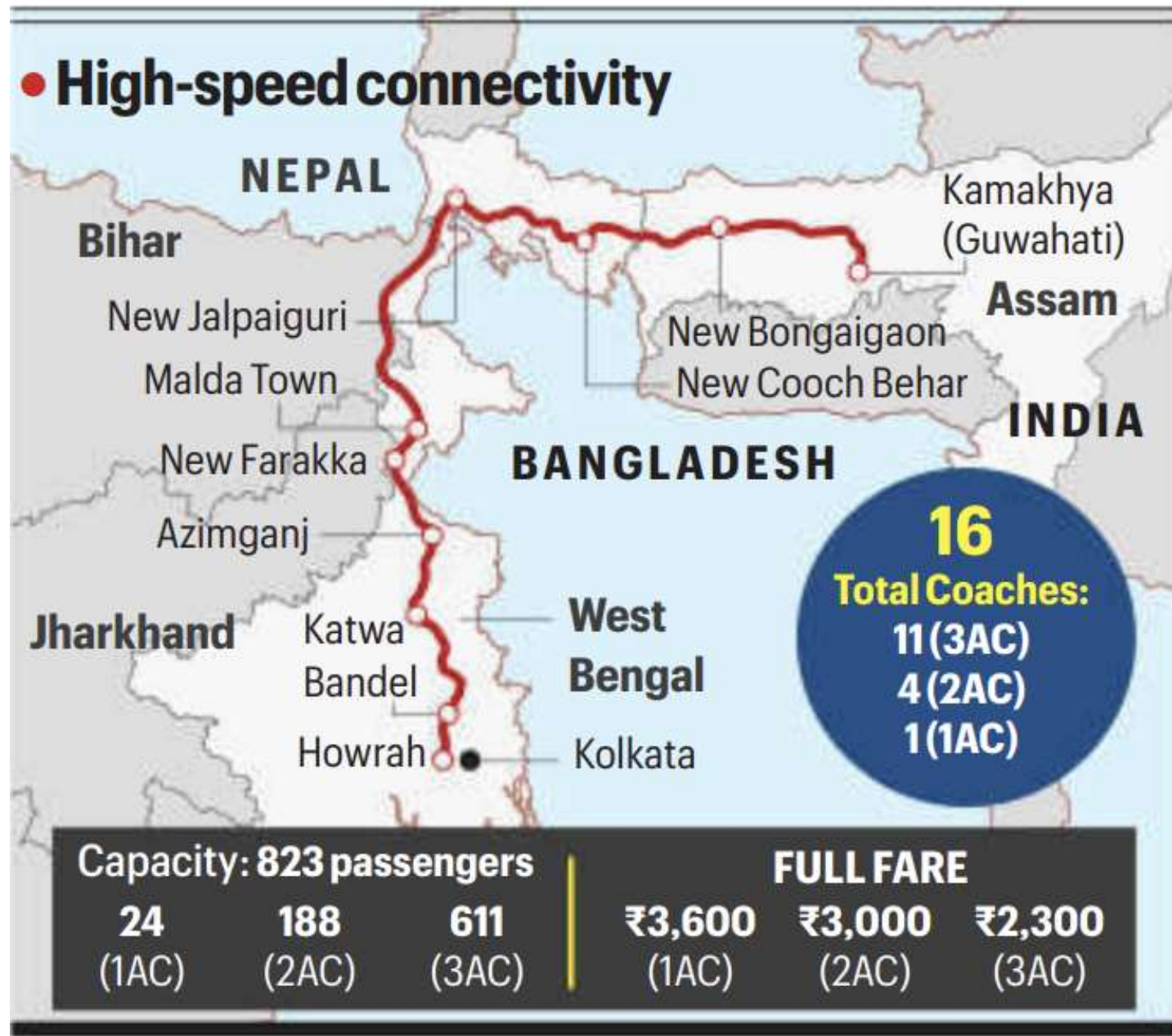
served aboard when the train originates from Guwahati and Bengali cuisine on its return journey.

Bullet train

The Minister also announced that the country's first bullet train would be ready in August 2027, and the route would be opened in a phased manner. The first section to open will be from Surat to Bilimora, followed by Vapi to Surat, Vapi to Ahmedabad, Thane to Ahmedabad, and finally Mumbai to Ahmedabad.

The 508-km Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail corridor has been steadily progressing, with significant work completed on viaducts, bridges, tunnels, and stations. The corridor will see speeds of up to 320 kmph and is set to reduce travel time between Mumbai and Ahmedabad to two hours.

• High-speed connectivity







- It is a 16-coach train with a total passenger capacity of 823.
यह 16-कोच की ट्रेन है, जिसकी कुल क्षमता 823 यात्रियों की है।
 - The train has a design speed of up to 180 kmph.
इस ट्रेन की अधिकतम डिज़ाइन गति 180 किमी प्रति घंटा है।
 - Coach composition includes three-tier AC, two-tier AC, and first-class AC.
कोच संरचना में थ्री-टियर AC, टू-टियर AC और फर्स्ट-क्लास AC शामिल हैं।
-

3. Fare Structure

- Third AC fare will be ₹2,300.
थर्ड AC का किराया ₹2,300 होगा।
- Second AC fare will be ₹3,000.
सेकंड AC का किराया ₹3,000 होगा।
- First AC fare will be ₹3,600.
फर्स्ट AC का किराया ₹3,600 होगा।

4. Passenger Comfort & Design

- The train features ergonomically designed berths with improved cushioning.
ट्रेन में बेहतर कुशनिंग के साथ एर्गोनॉमिक रूप से डिज़ाइन की गई बर्थ हैं।
 - Automatic doors, superior suspension, and noise reduction enhance ride comfort.
ऑटोमैटिक दरवाज़े, उन्नत सस्पेंशन और शोर में कमी से यात्रा आरामदायक होगी।
 - Specially designed seats are provided for passengers with disabilities.
दिव्यांग यात्रियों के लिए विशेष सीटों की व्यवस्था की गई है।
-

5. Safety & Technology

- The train is equipped with *Kavach*, an indigenously developed automatic train protection system.
ट्रेन में स्वदेशी रूप से विकसित *कवच* स्वचालित ट्रेन सुरक्षा प्रणाली लगी है।
 - Advanced controls and safety systems are installed in the driver's cabin.
ड्राइवर के केबिन में उन्नत नियंत्रण और सुरक्षा प्रणालियाँ लगाई गई हैं।
 - CCTV cameras will be installed in all coaches.
सभी कोचों में CCTV कैमरे लगाए जाएंगे।
-

6. Regional & Cultural Integration

- The service will benefit districts in Assam and West Bengal.
इस सेवा से असम और पश्चिम बंगाल के कई जिलों को लाभ मिलेगा।
- Assamese cuisine will be served when the train originates from Guwahati and Bengali cuisine on the return journey.
गुवाहाटी से चलने पर असमिया व्यंजन और वापसी यात्रा में बंगाली व्यंजन परोसे जाएंगे।

Aspect	Details
Train Name	Vande Bharat Sleeper
Route	Guwahati – Kolkata
Coaches	16
Passenger Capacity	823
Design Speed	180 kmph
Safety System	Kavach
Manufacturing Unit	Integral Coach Factory, Chennai
Fare Range	₹2,300 – ₹3,600
Cuisine Onboard	Assamese & Bengali
GS Paper	GS-III (Infrastructure, Transport)

Exam	Year	Question Theme	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	2018	Indian Railways infrastructure	Modernisation
UPSC Mains GS-III	2019	Transport infrastructure	Economic integration
UPSC Prelims	2020	Indigenous technologies	Kavach system
UPSC Mains GS-III	2022	Northeast connectivity	Strategic development
SSC CGL	2021	High-speed rail in India	Bullet train
State PSC	2023	Vande Bharat trains	Semi-high-speed rail



- **With reference to the Vande Bharat Sleeper train, consider the following statements:**

- It is India's first Vande Bharat train designed for overnight travel.
- It has a design speed of up to 180 kmph.
- The Kavach system installed in it is an imported train protection system.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - A. 1 and 2 only
 - B. 2 and 3 only
 - C. 1 only
 - D. 1, 2 and 3

Commercial cylinder price up by ₹111, ATF cut by 7%

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Price of aviation turbine fuel (ATF), or jet fuel, was reduced by 7.3% on Thursday, while commercial LPG rate was raised by ₹111 per cylinder, as state-owned oil marketing companies implemented their monthly price revisions aligned with global fuel benchmarks.

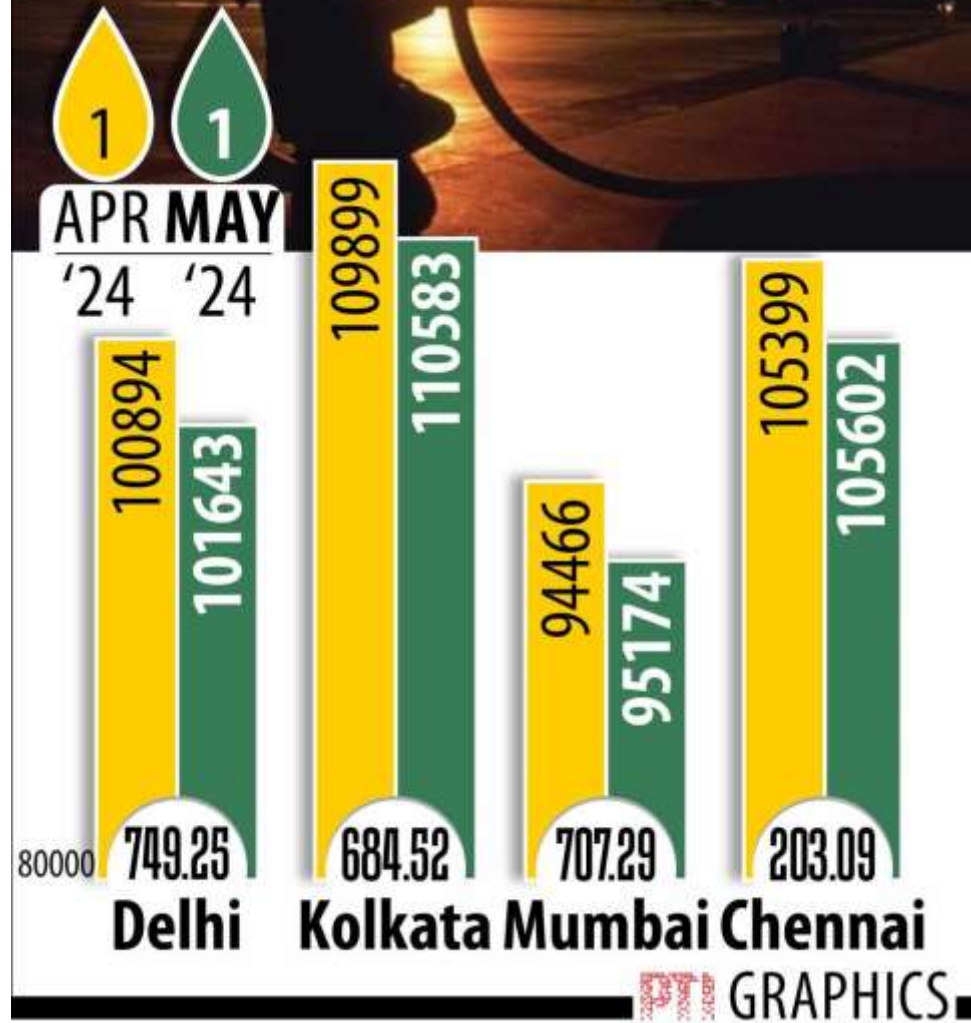
The ATF price in Delhi was cut by ₹7,353.75 a kilolitre, or 7.3%, to ₹92,323.02 per kl, according to fuel retailers. The latest reduction is expected to ease pressure on airlines.

The price of a 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder used by hotels and restaurants was hiked by a steep ₹111 to ₹1,691.50 in Delhi.

Winter heating requirement have pushed up LPG rates in global markets.

ATF PRICES

Aviation Turbine Fuel
(₹ per kilolitre)



- State-owned oil marketing companies revised fuel prices as part of monthly adjustments aligned with global benchmarks.

सरकारी तेल विपणन कंपनियों ने वैश्विक ईंधन मानकों के अनुरूप मासिक संशोधन के तहत कीमतों में बदलाव किया।

- Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) prices were cut, while commercial LPG cylinder prices were increased.

एविएशन टर्बाइन फ्यूल (ATF) की कीमत घटाई गई, जबकि वाणिज्यिक LPG सिलेंडर महंगे किए गए।

2. ATF (Jet Fuel) Price Cut

- ATF prices were reduced by about 7.3%.
ATF की कीमतों में लगभग 7.3% की कटौती की गई।
- In Delhi, ATF price was cut by ₹7,353.75 per kilolitre.
दिल्ली में ATF की कीमत ₹7,353.75 प्रति किलोलीटर घटाई गई।
- The revised ATF price in Delhi stands at ₹92,323.02 per kilolitre.
दिल्ली में नई ATF कीमत ₹92,323.02 प्रति किलोलीटर हो गई है।
- The reduction is expected to ease cost pressure on airlines.
इस कटौती से एयरलाइनों पर लागत दबाव कम होने की उम्मीद है।

3. Commercial LPG Cylinder Price Hike

- The price of a 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder was increased by ₹111 per cylinder.
19 किलोग्राम के वाणिज्यिक LPG सिलेंडर की कीमत ₹111 प्रति सिलेंडर बढ़ाई गई।
 - In Delhi, the revised price is ₹1,691.50 per cylinder.
दिल्ली में नई कीमत ₹1,691.50 प्रति सिलेंडर हो गई है।
 - Commercial LPG is primarily used by hotels, restaurants, and eateries.
वाणिज्यिक LPG का उपयोग मुख्य रूप से होटल, रेस्तरां और ढाबों में होता है।
-

4. Reasons Behind the Price Movement

- Global LPG prices have risen due to higher winter heating demand.
सर्दियों में हीटिंग की अधिक मांग के कारण वैश्विक LPG कीमतें बढ़ी हैं।
 - ATF prices reflect softer international crude and fuel trends.
ATF कीमतें अंतरराष्ट्रीय कच्चे तेल और ईंधन बाज़ार के नरम रुझानों को दर्शाती हैं।
-

5. Inflation & Economic Impact

- ATF price cuts can reduce air ticket prices or curb fare increases.
ATF कटौती से हवाई किराए कम हो सकते हैं या बढ़ोतरी सीमित हो सकती है।
- Commercial LPG hike may increase food service costs, indirectly affecting inflation.
वाणिज्यिक LPG महंगा होने से खाद्य सेवाओं की लागत बढ़ सकती है, जिससे अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से महंगाई प्रभावित होती है।

Aspect	Details
Fuel Affected (Cut)	Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF)
Percentage Change	−7.3%
ATF Price in Delhi	₹92,323.02 per kl
Absolute ATF Cut	₹7,353.75 per kl
Fuel Affected (Hike)	Commercial LPG
Cylinder Type	19-kg
Price Increase	₹111 per cylinder
New LPG Price (Delhi)	₹1,691.50
Pricing Basis	Global fuel benchmarks
GS Paper	GS-III (Economy, Energy, Inflation)

EXAM	YEAR	QUESTION THEME	RELEVANCE
UPSC Prelims	2019	Petroleum product pricing	Global crude linkage
UPSC Mains GS-III	2020	Energy prices & inflation	Cost-push inflation
UPSC Prelims	2022	Aviation fuel	ATF taxation
State PSC	2023	LPG types	Domestic vs Commercial
SSC CGL	2021	Fuel price revision	Monthly pricing
UPSC Mains GS-III	2023	Services inflation	Input cost rise



- **With reference to recent fuel price revisions in India, consider the following statements:**
- Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) prices were reduced by more than 7%.
- Commercial LPG cylinder prices were increased mainly due to global winter demand.
- Domestic LPG cylinders saw a similar price hike.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Mandating student presence, erasing learning

Mob rule The legacy of infiltration is resurfacing in hate crimes across India

In the closing weeks of 2020, a series of violent incidents across India exposed a disturbing pattern of mob violence. In these cases, the three victims were Indian citizens from various parts of the country. Suspicion based on language, region, appearance or presumed nationality is escalating into mob violence in other regions. This is extremely worrying and the police must act decisively. The political leadership in states and the Centre must make it clear that such violence is unacceptable. In Palakkad district, Kerala, Ram Narayan Baghel, a 31-year-old migrant worker from Chhattisgarh was lynched by a mob on December 17. Baghel was accused of theft and repeatedly questioned about his identity, with his attackers allegedly asking him whether he was "Bangladeshi" before beating him to death. Kerala is heavily dependent on migrant labour, and prides itself on its high levels of education and law and order. The lynching is a blot on its reputation. On December 24, in Sandarbati in Odisha, a young migrant worker from West Bengal was beaten to death by a mob that accused him of being a "Bangladeshi". Just eleven days later, in Telangana, a 22-year-old student from Tripura, was stabbed by a group that had alleged racial slurs at him and his brother. He died in hospital later. People from the northeastern states are often treated as potential outsiders in other parts of India. Chakma was called "Chinese" by his attackers. These are not isolated incidents, they occur amid numerous other cases of mob violence, sometimes targeting worshippers of minority communities, other times celebrating a friend's birthday. The police in the States have responded to these heinous crimes by making some arrests, but this is not sufficient. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has turned its incendiary rhetoric of "hate crimes" and "infiltration" from Bangladesh as a central plank in the forthcoming Assembly elections in Assam and West Bengal. It is no coincidence that mobs across the country feel emboldened to take this bogey as a rallying point. The BJP should realise the dangers of its campaign and restrain itself.

The water divide
The quality of piped water supply must be checked at delivery point
An indicator of public health is the well-being of the poorer sections of the people. Health, education, infrastructure, clean air and clean water all fall under basic needs, and various institutions should be working round the clock to improve lives. On most of these counts, however, India appears to be falling short, with the latest being the tragedy unfolding in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. At least four people, including a baby, died in the past two months. They have lost their lives after drinking municipally-supplied water, with more than 2,000 people falling ill. Over 200 people are in hospital and 32 are in the ICU. It is a development staged in irony because Indore has been touted as a clean city for several years in a row for its exemplary waste segregation and management practice among other cleanliness measures it undertook. As has become the unfortunate norm after every midday, the blame game began swiftly with authorities blaming it on tardy progress on installing a fresh supply line. A committee is to investigate the issue, but things would not be allowed to precipitate such a deadly crisis in the first place. This is the second instance of a water issue in the state in the past two months. In November, students at the Yashwantrao Chavan Institute of Technology campus near Bhopal were protesting against contaminated water supply after many of them began contracting hepatitis.

It is a disease that despite progress under the Swachh Bharat Mission and Jal Jeevan Mission, water works continue. The national urban survey data show that despite a rural-urban divide, 96% of households use an improved source of drinking water. A municipal supply is considered to be a safe and "improved source", and if checks and balances are in place, the authorities at Indore would have spotted the contamination and let people know of the dangers. Giving access to water is one thing, ensuring the quality of the supply is assured. There needs to be better enforcement of water guidelines and other environmental laws at all levels. Air pollution is already wreaking havoc on citizens' health; unsafe drinking water should not be added to the list. The incidents in Madhya Pradesh should be taken as a wake-up call for India's water management. With a population that is close to 147 crore, India's water-borne disease burden is also high. All States should immediately check water supply sources for chemical and sewage contaminants. Old infrastructure including pipes must be repaired or replaced. There should be strict enforcement of policy and monitoring of practice along with awareness campaigns. Indore and many more cities in India have to clean up their act, or risk more deaths.

The Delhi High Court's affirmation that students may opt for examinations without satisfying rigid attendance thresholds has provoked predictable anxiety among administrators still tethered to an older, bureaucratic conception of education. But the ruling, far from wedging academia, seriousness, restores a truth that Indian universities have realised for decades, a truth that learning cannot be secured through surveillance. Compulsory attendance belongs to a paternalistic era that believed that students must be prodded into intellectual life rather than invited into it. A university worthy of its name should cultivate curiosity, not compulsion.

The obsession with a student's presence
I say this not only as a critic of the managerial culture that has consumed our campuses, but as someone who has spent more than 45 years in the classroom. In all those years, I rarely took attendance and almost never prevented a student from taking an examination. I believed, and still believe, that coercion produces neither seriousness nor scholarship. If students do not wish to attend a class, the proper response is not punishment but introspection. A teacher should ask the harder question: what did I fail to offer that could have made this hour indispensable to the student? Attendance is not a measure of learning; at best it is a measure of obedience.

The dissonance with physical presence, understandably, flourishes where the classroom has been reduced to the perfunctory transfer of "culture's" notes, the delivery of prefabricated knowledge that students could obtain faster and more efficiently through digital means. The rising divorce of what is taught, the enforcement of law to confront a truth long learned in shadow, that a classroom that enforces attendance is already pedagogically bankrupt. This ruling of the High Court, I hope, will go a long way in changing the attitude that prevails across the country in all universities of higher learning.

Paul Feyerabend saw this with a clarity that remains electrifying. For him, education was never the mechanical delivery of information but a dialogic encounter, an awakening of consciousness through questioning, debate, and the shared labour of inquiry. In his pedagogy of the Oppressed, a seminal classic, students are not information vessels; they are co-creators of knowledge. He urged teachers to "name the world" and interpret through thought, and critical imagination. For instance, my strongest classrooms have always been those born not of obligation but of choice. I remember speaking with Sir Hans Reichenbach, the renowned historian of ideas, over lunch in Oxford many years ago, and he confided, with characteristic generosity, that he would have prepared his notes, outlines, and assignments, a meticulously constructed map of ideas, jokes, narrative turns, and emotional crescendos. His lecture captivated not by accident but because they were acts of



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Indian universities must confront a truth that they evade — a classroom where attendance is enforced is pedagogically bankrupt

craftsmanship. Students came not out of duty but anticipation. I carried that into my own teaching. I never entered a lecture room unprepared, or just working late into the night before class. And like Sir Reichenbach, I believed that the teacher's labour should disappear into the pleasure of learning, an effort made invisible but unmistakable in its effect. I do not think in thinking this way, Terry Eagleton's lectures overflowed not because he demanded attendance but because his ideas were so intense that students felt compelled to listen. Because she brought intellectual rebellion to the podium, The Cambridge Historian, Professor Sir Jonathan Riley-Smith, spoke last year as if it were happening in the present time. Frank Kermode, the influential literary critic, lectured after dinner with a glass of wine in hand, and this atmosphere of informal brilliance made literature feel even more urgent. None of them needed the threat of consequences to fill a classroom. They made education irrefragable. This is what the Indian university has forgotten.

Classroom experiences
My strongest classrooms have always been those born not of obligation but of desire. I recall an afternoon when I took my students to a ridge overlooking the valley to read Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey." I wanted them to encounter the poem not as a museum piece but as a living instance of memory and perception. The students dispersed under the pines and wild grass where, suddenly, Wordsworth's idea of "nature's" notes, the delivery of prefabricated knowledge that students could obtain faster and more efficiently through digital means. The rising divorce of what is taught, the enforcement of law to confront a truth long learned in shadow, that a classroom that enforces attendance is already pedagogically bankrupt. This ruling of the High Court, I hope, will go a long way in changing the attitude that prevails across the country in all universities of higher learning.

A similar transformation occurred when we carried Thoreau's Walden to the edge of a wooded trail. The students sat on stumps and fallen branches, huddling through a frost, interpreting the text not as a moral lesson but as a dialogic encounter, an awakening of consciousness through questioning, debate, and the shared labour of inquiry. In his pedagogy of the Oppressed, a seminal classic, students are not information vessels; they are co-creators of knowledge. He urged teachers to "name the world" and interpret through thought, and critical imagination. For instance, my strongest classrooms have always been those born not of obligation but of choice. I remember speaking with Sir Hans Reichenbach, the renowned historian of ideas, over lunch in Oxford many years ago, and he confided, with characteristic generosity, that he would have prepared his notes, outlines, and assignments, a meticulously constructed map of ideas, jokes, narrative turns, and emotional crescendos. His lecture captivated not by accident but because they were acts of

measure of commitment. They assume maturity, always trusting a student's intellectual autonomy. Their confidence lies in the quality of their teaching, not in the surveillance of their students.

The sorry state of the Indian university
In this context, the Indian university has been reduced to a mere shell of its former self, suffocated by bureaucratic rigidity and administrative overreach. The Centre's increasing control has transformed campuses into intellectual vaults, where curricula are scrutinised, dissent is silenced, and administrative positions are filled by those who trade loyalty over scholarly merit. Within this stifling paradigm, mandatory attendance policies serve as a tool of pedagogical pacification, undermining student autonomy and intellectual curiosity.

A university that prioritises attendance over engagement ultimately betrays its fundamental purpose to nurture critical thinkers who can challenge and transform society. This is why the attendance debate is not administrative but philosophical, asking whether we trust students as thinking beings, or whether we regard them as wards of the institution. Correction, indeed, is always the refuge of a pedagogy that has lost confidence.

The High Court ruling opens up a transformative possibility for rethinking the very fabric of teaching across higher education. By removing the coercive element of compulsory attendance, educators will be compelled to innovate and reimagine their pedagogical approaches. An empty classroom can be a catalyst for introspection, prompting teachers to find learning spaces that are intellectually compelling and interestingly engaging. Free dynamics also undergo a paradigmatic shift, where the shame lies not in absence but in being disconnected from a class that has garnered attention and enthusiasm from other students. This reorients the incentive structure, shifting the focus from external compulsion to intrinsic curiosity.

Learning, in this context, is reconceptualised as a dynamic and evolving process, marked by its restless and vital nature. It thrives on contradiction, dialogue, imagination and risk-taking. The true scholarship is built on this refusal of stasis, its purpose not to disseminate information but to facilitate discovery. The future of education hinges on recognising and embracing this fundamental distinction.

The ruling, therefore, serves as a testament to the inherent tension between freedom and coercion in the pursuit of knowledge. By decoupling attendance from examination eligibility, the Court has highlighted the futility of open source archives placed within the hands of students' fingerprints, the insistence on physical presence feels like a nostalgic appeal to a pedagogically unimaginative. The finest universities, Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, MIT and others, do not treat attendance as the

Paying Musk, irrational exuberance and inequality

Despite the headlines, Elon Musk might never make a trillion dollars. The Tesla CEO would only receive US\$1.5 billion, an amount if he were to meet a set of increasingly ambitious goals, which includes increasing the stock value of the company to \$8.1 trillion, selling 20 million vehicles and one million robots, and the stock of the company to \$1.5 billion. It is the fact that Tesla shareholders see it fit to reward this vision should make us re-assess the value of shareholder capitalism. It is not as if he has shored itself unable to tackle two significant problems: irrational exuberance and inequality.

Speculation and inequality
Many analysts have pointed to Tesla's stock being overvalued, with a high price-to-earnings ratio. But market capitalisation has increased even though sales and profits fell in the wake of its association with the Trump campaign, currently standing at nearly \$4.5 trillion. Why then, is Musk being rewarded when his company's real-world performance has not merited it? The answer is straightforward: the rise of its financial values. The current pay package voted in by Tesla shareholders is a pure bet on the future, that the company would eventually be able to transform itself into an Artificial Intelligence-led tech giant under Musk's leadership. But there is little to support the claim that Musk's extreme pay package is a speculative bet on his ability to deliver record profits in the future. This is irrational exuberance, a gamble made under profound uncertainty regarding the future, the very same irrational exuberance that has seen the economy devastated in 1929 and 2008.

Keynes himself pointed out, only harm can accompany a system which makes economic activity the byproduct of speculation. Let us assume, however, that the gamble does pay off. The exuberance of shareholders' might prove rational, but it would only exacerbate inequality.



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Rising wealth inequality has also led to a weakening of democracy

Under the deal, if Tesla were to achieve a \$8 trillion valuation, Musk would be granted an additional \$1.5 billion. This is a massive sum, given his total holdings to over a trillion dollars — an enormous increase in wealth inequality concentrated under the power of a single individual. An institution designed to mitigate the power of concentrated wealth, the board of directors, is diffusing power among several shareholders has shored itself decisively unable to the task. Either they are guilty of perpetuating the inflated view of the company's prospects, or of legitimising a level of wealth concentration that is unheard of in history, and by extension, weakening the foundations of democracy.

Voting rights and the principles
Voting rights to share capital, in principle, is a useful mechanism. If workers were to own shares in the modern corporation, what they would lose due to close wage compensation could be compensated, in theory, by the rise in equity holdings. Furthermore, the diffusion of voting rights would ensure checks and balances on the exercise of CEO power. The Tesla vote has shown the limitations of this mechanism.

One could argue that the trillion dollar payoff is a reward to Musk increasing shareholder wealth. This fits in with a world-view that sees inequality as being justified if it leads to an increase in living standards. The rampant use of market distortions such as strong arm competitors or cheating consumers. But this is to take too narrow a view of the political impact of inequality.

The process of voting at Tesla may be legitimate, given the narrow bounds of procedure laid down by the company, but is unjustifiable even the fact that Elon Musk has interfered in elections, publicly made a gesture that has been interpreted as a Nazi salute and amplified hateful right-wing content on a social media platform that he owns.

The procedural form of voting is necessary, but

not sufficient, for the preservation of economic democracy. A simple account of democracy, for instance, would hold that organs of free speech should not be monopolised. Yet this is exactly what Xs (Twitter) shareholders voted to do when they agreed to its sale.

Imagine that all workers of Tesla can vote on executive compensation, but not on conditions of work. Further, imagine that Musk provides a veritable plan to increase stock values, and along with it comes a significant increase in his own net worth. Voting for the plan increases workers' net worth, but increases the possibility of further election interference, by the narrow bounds of economic rationality, it would be rational for individuals to vote for the plan, for shareholder capitalism to truly uphold democratic norms, voters would have to be economically irrational in prioritising political objectives over their narrow economic interests.

The effect of wealth rise
One might criticise this argument by claiming that this writer is unfairly conflating political and economic objectives, which shareholders' capitalists will never manage to tackle. But the unchecked wealth accumulation of the last couple of decades has meant a blurring of the boundaries separating the political from the economic. Rising wealth inequality, even if accompanied by rising individual wealth, has brought with it a weakening of political institutions.

Xs and Tesla's pay package have shown that simple access to equity shares and the act of voting cannot meaningfully balance the capitalists' worst excesses. What is required is to embed these processes in broader democratic institutions that explicitly limit the concentration of wealth and its ability to interfere in democratic processes. Keynes realised this contradiction: "The only way to secure the stability of the operation is curtailed. It is beyond time we recognise it as well."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Multination claims
First, U.S. President Donald Trump claimed credit, with his repeated claims, for the realisation of Japan in following a request made by the Pakistan side first. Now, China has jumped into the fray by claiming credit

for "stopping" the conflict. The Government of India has again rejected this claim by stating that there was no third party involvement. Had Operation Sindoor continued for a few more days, there would have been greater destruction in

think that China could have been a realisation of Japan in because it was the biggest arms supplier to Pakistan. General Musharraf, who was the

Since the India Valley Civilisation, there has been a significant increase in the number of people who are drinking water and

event" in medical care. Merely expending efforts in India is not enough. Anybody who is in the line of duty, whether in the military or in the police, must carry the postal address.

Letters emailed to india@thehindu.co.in will be published in the next issue of the magazine.

Mandating student presence, erasing learning

The Delhi High Court's affirmation that law students may sit for examinations without satisfying rigid attendance thresholds has provoked predictable anxiety among administrators still tethered to an older, bureaucratised conception of education. But the ruling, far from eroding academic seriousness, restores a truth that Indian universities have resisted for decades, a truth that learning cannot be secured through surveillance. Compulsory attendance belongs to a paternalistic era that believed that students must be prodded into intellectual life rather than invited into it. A university worthy of its name should cultivate curiosity, not compliance.

The obsession with a student's presence
I say this not only as a critic of the managerial culture that has consumed our campuses, but as someone who has spent more than 40 years in the classroom. In all those years, I rarely took attendance and almost never prevented a student from taking an examination. I believed, and still believe, that coercion produces neither seriousness nor scholarship. If students do not wish to attend a class, the proper response is not punishment but introspection. A teacher must ask the harder question: what did I fail to offer that could have made this hour indispensable to them? Attendance is not a measure of learning; at best it is a measure of obedience.

The obsession with physical presence, understandably, flourishes where the classroom has been reduced to the perfunctory transfer of "yellowing" notes, the rote delivery of prefabricated knowledge that students could obtain faster and more efficiently through digital means. The ruling disrupts this apathy. It forces institutions of law to confront a truth long evaded, that a classroom that enforces attendance is already pedagogically bankrupt. This ruling of the High Court, I hope, will go a long way in changing the attendance norms across the country in all universities of higher learning.

Paulo Freire saw this with a clarity that remains electrifying. For him, education was never the mechanical depositing of information but a dialogic encounter, an awakening of consciousness through questioning, debate, and the shared labour of inquiry. In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a seminal classic, students are not passive vessels receiving knowledge but beings who "name the world" and interpret through thought, and critical imagination.

For instance, my strongest classrooms have always been those born not of obligation but of desire. I remember speaking with Sir Isaiah Berlin, the renowned historian of ideas, over lunch in Oxford many years ago, and he confessed, with characteristic generosity, how rigorously he prepared his notes, outlines, marginalia, a meticulously constructed road map of ideas, jokes, narrative turns, and emotional crescendos. His lectures captivated not by accident but because they were acts of



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craftsmanship. Students came not out of duty but anticipation.

I carried that ethic into my own teaching. I never entered a lecture room unprepared, often working late into the night before class. And like Sir Berlin, I believed that the teacher's labour should disappear into the pleasure of learning, an effort made invisible but unmistakable in its effect. I was not alone in thinking this way. Terry Eagleton's lectures overflowed not because he demanded attendance but because his ideas were intensely incendiary. Germaine Greer filled halls because she brought intellectual rebellion to the podium. The Cambridge historian, Professor Sir Christopher Bayly, spoke history as if it were happening in the present tense. Frank Kermode, the influential literary critic, lectured after dinner with a glass of wine in hand, and this atmosphere of informal brilliance made literature feel even more urgent. None of them needed the threat of consequences to fill a classroom. They made absence unthinkable. This is what the Indian university has forgotten.

Classroom experiences

My strongest classrooms have always been those born not of obligation but of desire. I recall an afternoon when I took my students to a ridge overlooking the valley to read Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey." I wanted them to encounter the poem not as a museum piece but as a living meditation on memory and perception. The students dispersed under the pines and wild grass where, suddenly, Wordsworth's idea of nature as "nurse", "guide" and "guardian of my heart" felt neither archaic nor maudlin but provocatively contemporary. I asked a single question: What does it mean for nature to educate us? What followed was not conventional interpretation but a collective reflection on how landscape shapes consciousness. The poem seemed to open of its own accord, demanding a point of view, rather than receiving it.

A similar transformation occurred when we carried Thoreau's *Walden* to the edge of a wooded trail. The students sat on stones and fallen branches, thumbing through a text, interpreting individually and not merely toeing the line. Thoreau's claim that most lives are lived in "quiet desperation" kindled an unexpected debate about our own system, its addiction to metrics, its reduction of intellectual life to attendance charts, its inability to recognise solitude, reflection, or slowness as virtues. Reading outdoors, my classroom dissolved, and what emerged instead was inquiry in its most rudimentary form.

The ruling, perhaps inadvertently, moves us closer to this ideal. In an era where digital resources, Artificial Intelligence tools, and open-access archives place vast knowledge at students' fingertips, the insistence on physical presence feels not only antiquated but also pedagogically unimaginative. The finest universities, Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, MIT and others, do not treat attendance as the

measure of commitment. They assume maturity, always trusting a student's intellectual autonomy. Their confidence lies in the quality of their teaching, not in the surveillance of their students.

The sorry state of the Indian university

In this context, the Indian university has been reduced to a mere shell of its former self, suffocated by bureaucratic rigidity and administrative overreach. The Centre's increasing control has transformed campuses into intellectual vassals, where curricula are scrutinised, dissent is silenced, and administrative positions are filled by those who prioritise loyalty over scholarly merit. Within this stifling paradigm, mandatory attendance policies serve as a tool of pedagogical pacification, undermining student autonomy and intellectual curiosity.

A university that prioritises attendance over engagement ultimately betrays its fundamental purpose to nurture critical thinkers who can challenge and transform society. This is why the attendance debate is not administrative but philosophical, asking whether we trust students as thinking beings, or whether we regard them as wards of the institution. Coercion, indeed, is always the refuge of a pedagogy that has lost confidence.

The High Court ruling opens up a transformative possibility for rethinking the very fabric of teaching across higher education. By removing the coercive element of compulsory attendance, educators will be compelled to innovate and reimagine their pedagogical approaches. An empty classroom can be a catalyst for introspection, prompting teachers to craft learning spaces that are intellectually compelling and inherently engaging. Peer dynamics also undergo a paradigmatic shift, where the shame lies not in absence but in being disconnected from a class that has garnered admiration and enthusiasm from other students. This reorients the incentive structure, shifting the locus of motivation from external compulsion to intrinsic curiosity.

Learning, in this context, is reconceptualised as a dynamic and evolving process, marked by its restless and vital nature. It thrives on contradiction, dialogue, imagination and risk-taking. The true university is built on this refusal of stasis, its purpose not to disseminate information but to facilitate discovery. The future of education hinges on recognising and embracing this fundamental distinction.

The ruling therefore, serves as a testament to the inherent tension between freedom and coercion in the pursuit of knowledge. By decoupling attendance from examination eligibility, the Court has highlighted the futility of attempting to legislate intellectual engagement. True learning cannot be mandated. It can only be cultivated through the creation of spaces that foster intellectual curiosity and freedom. The university's future depends on its ability to navigate this fundamental distinction.

Indian universities must confront a truth that they evade — a classroom where attendance is enforced is pedagogically bankrupt

- The Delhi High Court affirmed that law students may sit for examinations without meeting rigid attendance thresholds.

दिल्ली उच्च न्यायालय ने माना कि कानून के छात्र बिना कठोर उपस्थिति शर्तों को पूरा किए परीक्षा दे सकते हैं।

- The ruling challenges the long-standing assumption that compulsory attendance ensures learning.

यह निर्णय इस धारणा को चुनौती देता है कि अनिवार्य उपस्थिति से सीखना सुनिश्चित होता है।

2. Core Argument of the Article

- Learning cannot be secured through surveillance and coercion.
सीखने की प्रक्रिया निगरानी और दबाव के माध्यम से सुनिश्चित नहीं की जा सकती।
- Mandatory attendance reflects a paternalistic and bureaucratic conception of education.
अनिवार्य उपस्थिति शिक्षा की पितृसत्तात्मक और नौकरशाही सोच को दर्शाती है।
- True education must cultivate curiosity, not compliance.
वास्तविक शिक्षा का उद्देश्य आज्ञाकारिता नहीं, जिज्ञासा विकसित करना होना चाहिए।

3. Attendance vs Learning

- Attendance is not a measure of learning; at best, it measures obedience.
उपस्थिति सीखने का मापदंड नहीं, बल्कि आज्ञाकारिता का संकेत मात्र है।
 - Forced presence often leads to passive absorption of prefabricated knowledge.
बलपूर्वक उपस्थिति तैयार ज्ञान के निष्क्रिय उपभोग को बढ़ाती है।
 - If students avoid classes, the question should be pedagogical, not punitive.
यदि छात्र कक्षा से दूर रहते हैं, तो समाधान दंड नहीं बल्कि शिक्षण सुधार है।
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4. Critique of Indian University System

- Indian universities are increasingly shaped by bureaucratic rigidity and administrative overreach.
भारतीय विश्वविद्यालय बढ़ती नौकरशाही कठोरता और प्रशासनिक हस्तक्षेप से ग्रस्त हैं।
 - Curriculum scrutiny and attendance policing undermine intellectual autonomy.
पाठ्यक्रम की अत्यधिक निगरानी और उपस्थिति नियंत्रण बौद्धिक स्वायत्तता को कमजोर करते हैं।
 - Universities risk becoming "intellectual vassals" rather than spaces of inquiry.
विश्वविद्यालय जिज्ञासा के केंद्र न रहकर "बौद्धिक अधीनस्थ" बनते जा रहे हैं।
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5. Philosophical & Pedagogical Foundations

- Education, as argued by Paulo Freire, is a dialogic encounter, not mechanical information transfer.

पाउलो फ्रेरे के अनुसार शिक्षा संवादात्मक प्रक्रिया है, न कि सूचना का यांत्रिक स्थानांतरण।

- Students are thinking beings who interpret the world through debate, questioning, and imagination.

छात्र चिंतनशील प्राणी हैं जो बहस, प्रश्न और कल्पना के माध्यम से संसार को समझते हैं।

6. Ideal Classroom Experience

- The most effective classrooms are driven by desire and engagement, not obligation.

सबसे प्रभावी कक्षाएँ दायित्व नहीं, बल्कि रुचि और सहभागिता से संचालित होती हैं।

- Experiential learning outside classrooms can deepen critical reflection.

कक्षा के बाहर अनुभवात्मक सीख आलोचनात्मक चिंतन को और गहरा करती है।

7. Significance of the Court Ruling

- The ruling opens space for pedagogical innovation across higher education.

यह निर्णय उच्च शिक्षा में शिक्षण नवाचार के नए अवसर खोलता है।

- It shifts motivation from external compulsion to intrinsic curiosity.

यह प्रेरणा को बाहरी दबाव से आंतरिक जिज्ञासा की ओर मोड़ता है।

- True learning thrives in freedom, not coercion.

सच्चा ज्ञान स्वतंत्रता में फलता-फूलता है, दबाव में नहीं।

Concept

Mandatory Attendance

Pedagogical Autonomy

Paulo Freire

Surveillance Model

Experiential Learning

Intrinsic Motivation

Bureaucratisation

Explanation

Administrative control mechanism

Freedom in teaching–learning methods

Education as dialogue

Monitoring-based education

Learning through experience

Learning driven by curiosity

Administrative dominance

Thinker	Core Idea	Relevance
Paulo Freire	Dialogic learning	Education ethics
John Dewey	Experiential learning	Classroom reform
Rabindranath Tagore	Freedom in education	Indian philosophy
Ivan Illich	Deschooling society	Critique of institutions

• **With reference to compulsory attendance in higher education, consider the following statements:**

- Mandatory attendance is an effective measure of student learning.
- Excessive surveillance can undermine intellectual autonomy.
- Experiential learning emphasises curiosity over compliance.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- A. 2 and 3 only
- B. 1 and 2 only
- C. 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

BEIJING

China's Xi hails nation's progress, renews pledge to take back Taiwan



Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday hailed his country's technological progress in areas such as artificial intelligence and semiconductors while once again insisting his country would annex self-ruled Taiwan. "The reunification of our motherland, a trend of the times, is unstoppable," he said. **AP**

PARIS

Iran executed at least 1,500 people, a 35-year record, says rights group



Iran executed at least 1,500 people last year, the Norway-based Human Rights group said on Thursday, in what it called an "unprecedented" hike in the use of capital punishment. "It is very alarming and unprecedented in the last 35 years," the group's director, Mahmonad Amry Moghaddam, said of the toll. **AP**

WASHINGTON

U.S. military strikes five more 'drug boats' over two days, killing eight



The U.S. military said on Wednesday it struck five alleged drug-smuggling boats over two days, killing a total of eight people while others jumped overboard and may have survived. U.S. Southern Command said it immediately notified the U.S. Coast Guard to activate search and rescue efforts. **AP**

DHAKA

Hindu businessman attacked, set on fire in Bangladesh, say police



A Hindu businessman, Shukon Chandra Das, 50, was brutally attacked and set on fire by miscreants near Shuhajganj Bazar in Shariatpur, Bangladesh, police said on Thursday. He was assaulted while returning home, sustaining severe burn and lacerating injuries. He was later shifted to Dhaka for advanced treatment. **AP**

Ukraine condemns Russian drone attack on its power infrastructure

Russia launches over 200 attack drones at Ukraine on New Year's night; Zelenskyy says attacks prove that country cannot afford delays in defence supplies; Ukrainian drones hit Russian energy assets, including the fabled oil refinery

REUTERS
KRYVYI RYCHOK

A Russian drone attack damaged power infrastructure in several Ukrainian regions overnight, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Thursday.

"On New Year, Russia deliberately brings war. Over 200 attack drones were launched onto Ukraine in the night," Mr. Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram.

Mr. Zelenskyy said emergency infrastructure in seven regions across Ukraine had been targeted.

He added that Russia's holiday season attacks



Tanks move through the city centre during a blackout after soil infrastructure was hit by Russian attacks in Kyiv, Dec 31/Jan 1.

showed Ukraine could not afford delays in air defence supplies.

"Our allies have the names of equipment which we are lacking. We

expect that everything agreed with the United States at the end of December for our defence will arrive on time," he said, without clarifying further.

Mr. Zelenskyy met with U.S. President Donald Trump in Florida on Sunday to negotiate a peace framework to end the nearly four-year war. Both leaders have said they are close to an agreement, but thorny issues around post-war control of territories remain.

Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Oleksiy Kuleba said rail facilities had been attacked in three regions, including a locomotive depot and a station in the frontline region of Sumy.

The Ukrainian Energy Ministry said a "significant number" of households in the Vynohradiv and Cheliv regions — in northwestern

and southwestern Ukraine, respectively — were disconnected from power supplies by the overnight strikes, as well as some in the Chernihiv region north of the capital Kyiv.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian drones struck an oil refinery in Russia's southern Krasnodar region, as well as an energy storage facility in the oil-rich Volga River region of Tatarstan, Russian authorities and Ukraine's military said on Thursday.

Rebels from the city of Lendegán, in the province of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, and threw in Arna, in neighbouring Lorestan province.

Force reported that the

Agence France-Presse

TEHRAN

Protesters and security forces clashed in three Iranian cities on Thursday, with six people reported killed, the first deaths since the cost-of-living demonstrations broke out.

The protests began on Sunday in Tehran, where shopkeepers went on strike over high prices and economic stagnation, and have since spread to other parts of the country.

On Thursday, Iran's Fars news agency reported two people killed in clashes between security forces and protesters in the city of Lendegán, in the province of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, and threw in Arna, in neighbouring Lorestan province.

Fresh clashes kill six in Iran cost-of-living protests



Shopkeepers and traders protest in the street against the economic conditions in Tehran on December 29. **AP**

buildings were "severely damaged" and that police arrested several people described as "rioters".

Earlier Thursday, state television reported that a member of Iran's security forces was killed overnight during protests in the western city of Kermanshah.

A 21-year-old member of the Basij from the city of Kermanshah was killed last

night by rioters while defending public order," the channel said, citing said Poursari, the deputy governor of Lorestan Province.

The Basij are a volunteer paramilitary force linked to Iran's Revolutionary Guards, the ideological arm of the Islamic republic. The demonstrations are smaller than the last major unrest in 2022.

Israel says one dead as forces open fire on 'stone-throwers'

REUTERS

The Israeli military said its forces killed a Palestinian in the occupied West Bank in the early hours on Thursday as they opened fire on people who were throwing stones at soldiers. Two other people were hit on a main road near the village of Luban al-Sharqiya in Nabulus, the military statement added.

It described the people as militants and said the stone-throwing was part of an ambush.

Palestinian authorities in the West Bank said a 26-year-old man they named as Klutub Al Sarhan was killed and another person wounded.

Israeli forces had closed the main entrance to the village of Luban al-Sharqiya, in Nabulus, and blocked several secondary roads on Wednesday, the Palestinian Authority's official news agency Wafa reported.

More than a thousand Palestinians were killed in the West Bank between October 2023 and October 2024, mostly in operations by security forces and some by settler violence.

Hit squad



Bassanians (brown men) with long-furled jasper brooms, scaly wooden masks and air-filled pig bladders 'bushwhackers' prepare for the 102nd traditional 'Schetinger' procession in Laupen, Switzerland, on Wednesday, held to drive away evil spirits for the New Year. **AP**

Zohran Mamdani, Democrat, sworn in as New York City Mayor

Associated Press

NEW YORK

Zohran Mamdani became mayor of New York City just after midnight Thursday, taking the oath of office at City Hall station — a historic, decommissioned subway station in Manhattan.

Mr. Mamdani, a Democrat, was sworn in as the first Muslim leader of America's biggest city, placing his hand on a Koran as he took his oath.

"This is truly the honour and the privilege of a lifetime," he said.

In Mr. Mamdani's first remarks as Mayor, he said the old subway station was a "testament to the impor-



Zohran Mamdani

ance of public transit to the vitality, the health and the legacy of our city."

In addition to being the city's first Muslim mayor, Mr. Mamdani is also the first of South Asian descent and the first to be born in Africa. At 34, Mr. Mamdani is also the city's youngest Mayor in generations.

Kim praises troops in 'alien land' and hails 'invincible alliance' with Russia

Agence France-Presse

SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has praised his troops fighting abroad for forging an "invincible alliance" with Russia in a New Year's message state media said on Thursday.

Pyeonggang has sent thousands of troops to support Russia's nearly four-year invasion of Ukraine, according to South Korean and Western intelligence agencies.

At least 600 have died and thousands of troops sustained injuries, according to South Korean estimates.



Russian President Vladimir Putin with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un during a visit to Pyongyang, North Korea, in 2024. **AP**

News Agency (KCNA) said on Thursday.

"As the whole country is enveloped in a festive atmosphere of greeting the new year, I all the more miss you, who are fighting bravely on the battlefield in the alien land even at

this moment," he said, according to KCNA. "Behind you are Pyongyang and Moscow," Mr. Kim said.

The North Korean leader praised soldiers for strengthening the "invincible alliance" with Russia, calling on them to fight "for the fraternal Russian people".

Analysts say that North Korea's despotic alliance with Russia has offered an economic lifeline to Mr. Kim's regime and allowed him to rebuff U.S. and South Korean overtures for dialogue.

Bulgaria adopts the euro, nearly 20 years after joining European Union

Agence France-Presse

SOFIA

Bulgaria on Thursday became the 21st country to switch to the euro, a milestone met with both cheers and fears, nearly 20 years after the Balkan nation joined the European Union.

At midnight, Bulgaria gave up the lev, in use since the late 19th century, and Bulgarian euro coins were projected onto the central bank's building.

"I warmly welcome Bulgaria to the euro family," said Christine Lagarde, president of the European Central Bank and chief euro "powerful symbol" of "shared values and collective strength".



Final step: A person holds change in euros as customers shop in a fashion store in Sofia, Bulgaria, on Thursday. **REUTERS**

"Great it works!" exclaimed Dimitar, a 43-year-old man after withdrawing 100 euros from an automated teller machine shortly after midnight.

Successive governments in the country of 6.4 million people have advocated

switch, with many worrying the introduction could usher in higher prices and add to the political instability rattling the country.

In a speech broadcast shortly before midnight, President Rumen Radev hailed it as the "final step" in Bulgaria's EU integration, as thousands of people braved sub-zero temperatures in Sofia to celebrate the New Year.

Mr. Radev however voiced regret that Bulgarians had not been consulted by referendum on the adoption.

European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen said that Bulgaria's move into the eurozone marked "an important milestone" for Bulgarians.

Bulgaria adopts the euro, nearly 20 years after joining European Union

Agence France-Presse

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Bulgaria on Thursday became the 21st country to switch to the euro, a milestone met with both cheers and fears, nearly 20 years after the Balkan nation joined the European Union.

At midnight, Bulgaria gave up the lev, in use since the late 19th century, and Bulgarian euro coins were projected onto the central bank's building.

"I warmly welcome Bulgaria to the euro family," said Christine Lagarde, president of the European Central Bank, calling the euro a "powerful symbol" of "shared values and collective strength".



'Final step': A person holds change in euros as customers shop in Fantastico store in Sofia, Bulgaria, on Thursday. REUTERS

"Great! It works!" exclaimed Dimitar, a 43-year-old man after withdrawing 100 euros from an automated teller machine shortly after midnight.

Successive governments in the country of 6.4 million people have advocat-

ed joining the euro, hoping that it will boost the economy of the European Union's poorest member, reinforce ties to the West and protect against Russia's influence.

But Bulgarians have long been divided over the

switch, with many worrying the introduction could usher in higher prices and add to the political instability rattling the country.

In a speech broadcast shortly before midnight, President Rumen Radev hailed it as the "final step" in Bulgaria's EU integration, as thousands of people braved sub-zero temperatures in Sofia to celebrate the New Year.

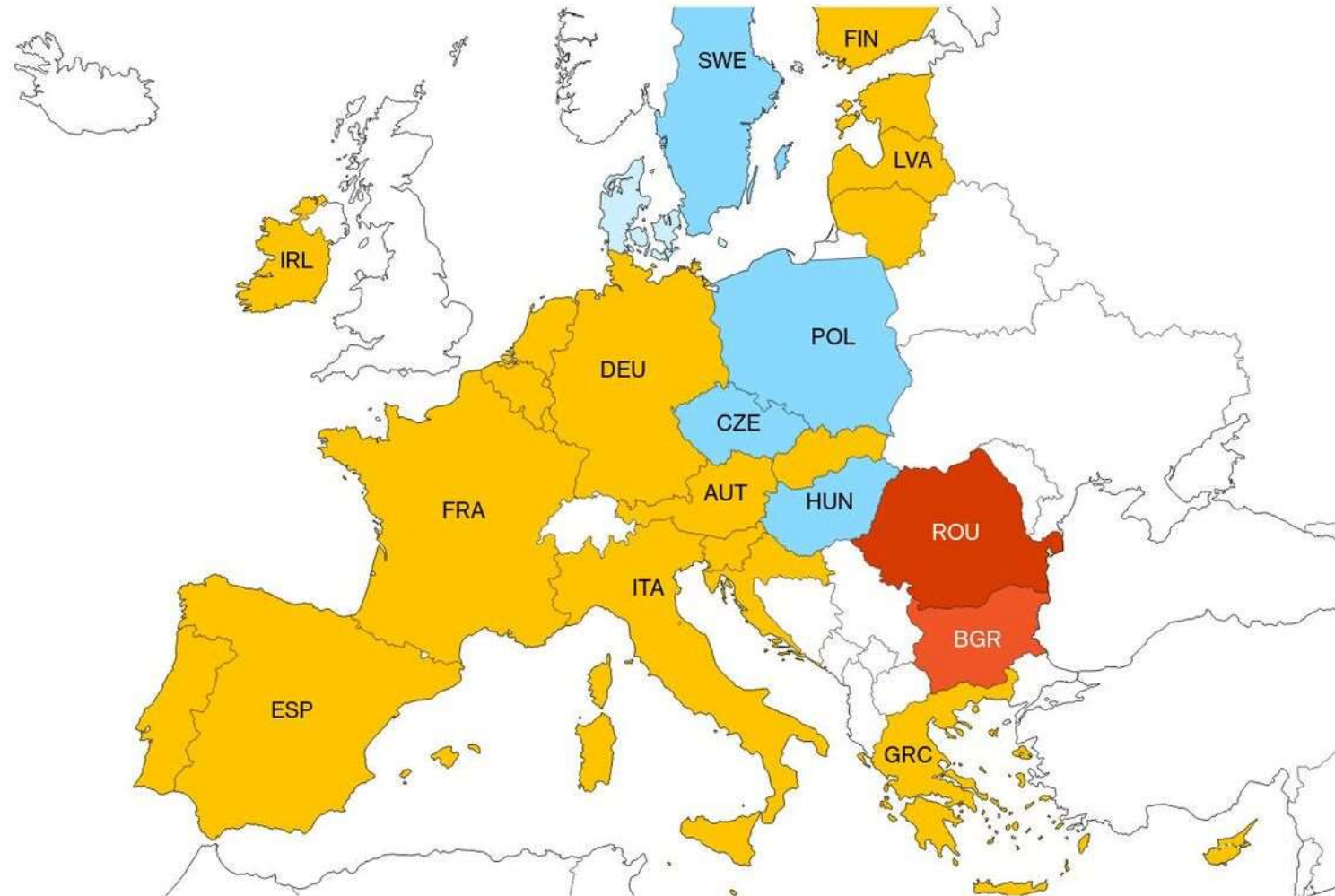
Mr. Radev however voiced regret that Bulgarians had not been consulted by referendum on the adoption.

European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen said that Bulgaria's move into the eurozone marked "an important milestone" for Bulgarians.

Catching the Euro Expansion Wave

Bulgaria seeks to follow Croatia, which adopted the euro this year

■ Euro area ■ Actively pursuing euro membership
■ Seeks to join in 2024 ■ Opt-out from euro ■ Other EU member states



Source: Bloomberg

Note: Sweden is intentionally not meeting euro adoption requirements



- Bulgaria became the 21st country to adopt the euro, nearly 20 years after joining the European Union.
बुल्गारिया यूरो अपनाने वाला 21वां देश बन गया, यूरोपीय संघ में शामिल होने के लगभग 20 साल बाद।
 - At midnight, Bulgaria formally replaced its national currency, the lev, with the euro.
मध्यरात्रि से बुल्गारिया ने अपनी राष्ट्रीय मुद्रा 'लेव' को औपचारिक रूप से यूरो से बदल दिया।
-

2. Symbolism & Celebration

- Bulgarian euro coins were projected onto the central bank building in Sofia.
सोफिया में केंद्रीय बैंक की इमारत पर बुल्गारियाई यूरो सिक्कों की प्रोजेक्शन की गई।
 - Citizens welcomed the move with a mix of enthusiasm and apprehension.
लोगों ने इस कदम का स्वागत उत्साह और आशंका—दोनों भावनाओं के साथ किया।
-

3. European Central Bank's Response

- Christine Lagarde, President of the European Central Bank, welcomed Bulgaria to the "euro family."
क्रिस्टीन लगाई ने बुल्गारिया का "यूरो परिवार" में स्वागत किया।
 - She described the euro as a symbol of shared values and collective strength.
उन्होंने यूरो को साझा मूल्यों और सामूहिक शक्ति का प्रतीक बताया।
-

4. Bulgarian Political Leadership View

- President Rumen Radev called euro adoption the “final step” in Bulgaria’s EU integration.
राष्ट्रपति रुमेन रादेव ने इसे यूरोपीय संघ एकीकरण का “अंतिम चरण” कहा।
 - He, however, regretted that the adoption was not preceded by a national referendum.
हालांकि उन्होंने इस बात पर खेद जताया कि मुद्रा परिवर्तन पर जनमत संग्रह नहीं कराया गया।
-

5. European Commission’s Position

- Ursula von der Leyen said Bulgaria’s euro adoption marked a major milestone.
उर्सुला वॉन डेर लेयेन ने इसे एक महत्वपूर्ण उपलब्धि बताया।
-

6. Economic Expectations & Concerns

- Supporters expect euro adoption to boost Bulgaria’s economy and strengthen Western integration.
समर्थकों को उम्मीद है कि इससे अर्थव्यवस्था को बढ़ावा मिलेगा और पश्चिमी देशों से एकीकरण मज़बूत होगा।
- Critics fear price rises and deeper political instability.
आलोचकों को कीमतों में वृद्धि और राजनीतिक अस्थिरता की आशंका है।
- Bulgaria remains one of the poorest members of the European Union.
बुल्गारिया अभी भी यूरोपीय संघ के सबसे गरीब सदस्य देशों में शामिल है।

Aspect	Details
Country	Bulgaria
Capital	Sofia
Old Currency	Lev
New Currency	Euro
Eurozone Entry Order	21st
EU Membership	2007
Central Bank	European Central Bank
Currency Bloc	Eurozone
Population	~6.4 million

Eurozone ≠ European Union

यूरोज़ोन ≠ यूरोपीय संघ

All Eurozone members are EU members, but not all EU members use the euro.

हम कह सकते हैं कि यूरोज़ोन के सभी सदस्य EU के सदस्य हैं, लेकिन

सभी EU के सदस्य यूरो नहीं इस्तेमाल करते हैं।

यूरोपियन संघ के सभी सदस्य



• **With reference to Bulgaria's adoption of the euro, consider the following statements:**

- Bulgaria has become the 21st member of the Eurozone.
 - Adoption of the euro automatically grants EU membership.
 - The European Central Bank manages the monetary policy of euro-using countries.
 - Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- A. 1 and 3 only
 - B. 1 only
 - C. 2 and 3 only
 - D. 1, 2 and 3

IMD: India saw fifth driest December in 124 years

Express News Service
Bengaluru, January 1

DECEMBER 2025 was the fifth driest December in India since 1901, and the driest since 2001. The all-India rainfall last month stood at 4.9mm, which was 69 per cent below normal. Northwest and north India usually experience rainfall and snowfall in December, but it was an exceptionally dry December this time.

Delhi did not receive any rainfall last month, the IMD rainfall data stated. Between 2016 and 2025, Delhi experienced dry December only in 2023.

IMD Director General Mru-tyunjay Mohapatra said there were multiple factors that resulted in a no-rain December, such as feeble western disturbances, no strong easterly winds, no wind interactions over central India region and the Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO), a global weather phenomenon, was unfavourable.

Central India, too, experienced its lowest rainfall in December in over 124 years whereas east and northeast India experienced their sixth lowest rainfall last month.

Overall, there were only 14 very heavy rainfall events (115-204mm in 24 hours) last month in comparison to 146 events in 2024 and 144 in 2023. Due to below-normal rainfall activity, there were above-average fog conditions prevailing for 15 to 26 days of December, IMD officials said. Vast areas were affected by dense fog lasting 15 days last month. Drop in visibility due to fog affected regions as far as Odisha and Tripura last month, IMD said.

Dry conditions will continue to prevail over north and northwest India regions during January-March, IMD said.

Winter rainfall and snowfall are particularly key for water recharge in places located along the higher altitudes.

In its monthly forecast released on Thursday, the IMD

said that below-normal rainfall will particularly affect Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Ladakh, Punjab and Haryana spanning north and northwest India regions. However, above-normal rainfall is predicted over central India region and Uttar Pradesh during the next three months. During January, the Met department has predicted normal rainfall activity over the country and also over the northwest India region. With good rainfall last year and support of irrigation, the rabi crop would not be majorly impacted, the IMD chief said.

El Nino, the warmer than usual temperatures prevailing over the equatorial Pacific Ocean, is likely to emerge during the later half of 2026. Multiple global models have indicated that the existing La Nina conditions are expected to last till March this year and will be followed by El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) neutral conditions likely to prevail till July.



- According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), December 2025 was the fifth driest December in India since 1901.
भारत मौसम विज्ञान विभाग (IMD) के अनुसार, दिसंबर 2025 वर्ष 1901 के बाद भारत में पाँचवां सबसे शुष्क दिसंबर रहा।
 - It was also the driest December since 2001.
यह 2001 के बाद का सबसे सूखा दिसंबर भी रहा।
-

2. Rainfall Statistics

- All-India rainfall in December stood at just 4.9 mm.
दिसंबर में अखिल-भारतीय वर्षा केवल 4.9 मिमी रही।
 - This was 69% below the long-period average (LPA).
यह दीर्घकालिक औसत (LPA) से 69% कम थी।
-

3. Regional Distribution

- Northwest and north India, which usually receive winter rain and snowfall, experienced exceptionally dry conditions.
उत्तर-पश्चिम और उत्तर भारत, जहाँ सामान्यतः शीतकालीन वर्षा और हिमपात होता है, इस बार असामान्य रूप से शुष्क रहे।
- Central India recorded its lowest December rainfall in over 124 years.
मध्य भारत में 124 वर्षों में सबसे कम दिसंबर वर्षा दर्ज की गई।
- East and Northeast India saw their sixth lowest December rainfall.
पूर्व और पूर्वोत्तर भारत में छठी सबसे कम दिसंबर वर्षा दर्ज हुई।

4. Delhi & Fog Conditions

- Delhi received no rainfall during December 2025.
दिसंबर 2025 में दिल्ली में बिल्कुल वर्षा नहीं हुई।
 - Between 2016 and 2025, Delhi saw a dry December only once earlier, in 2023.
2016 से 2025 के बीच दिल्ली में केवल 2023 में ही सूखा दिसंबर दर्ज हुआ था।
 - Below-normal rainfall led to dense fog for 15–26 days across vast areas.
कम वर्षा के कारण 15–26 दिनों तक घना कोहरा छाया रहा।
-

5. Extreme Rainfall Events

- Only 14 very heavy rainfall events (115–204 mm in 24 hours) occurred in December.
दिसंबर में केवल 14 अत्यंत भारी वर्षा घटनाएँ (24 घंटे में 115–204 मिमी) हुईं।
- This is sharply lower compared to 146 events in 2024 and 144 in 2023.
यह 2024 की 146 और 2023 की 144 घटनाओं की तुलना में बहुत कम है।

6. Reasons Behind the Dry December

- IMD cited feeble western disturbances as a key reason.
IMD ने कमजोर पश्चिमी विक्षोभों को प्रमुख कारण बताया।
 - Lack of strong easterly winds and weak wind interactions over central India contributed to dryness.
मजबूत पूर्वी हवाओं की अनुपस्थिति और मध्य भारत में कमजोर पवन अंतःक्रिया भी कारण रही।
 - The Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) remained unfavourable.
मैडेन-जूलियन ऑस्सीलेशन (MJO) की स्थिति प्रतिकूल रही।
 - These factors were explained by IMD Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra.
इन कारणों की व्याख्या IMD महानिदेशक मृत्युंजय महापात्र ने की।
-

7. Forecast & Climate Signals

- Dry conditions are expected to persist over north and northwest India during January–March.
जनवरी–मार्च के दौरान उत्तर और उत्तर-पश्चिम भारत में शुष्क स्थिति बनी रहने की संभावना है।
- Normal rainfall is predicted for January across the country, including northwest India.
जनवरी में देशभर में, विशेषकर उत्तर-पश्चिम भारत में सामान्य वर्षा की संभावना है।
- IMD indicated that La Niña conditions may last till March, followed by El Niño later in 2026.
IMD के अनुसार ला नीना की स्थिति मार्च तक बनी रह सकती है, जिसके बाद 2026 के उत्तरार्ध में एल नीनो उभर सकता है।
- ENSO-neutral conditions are likely to prevail till July.
जुलाई तक ENSO-न्यूट्रल स्थिति बने रहने की संभावना है।

Aspect

Month & Year

Rank

All-India Rainfall

Deviation from LPA

Worst Affected Regions

Fog Days

Key Causes

Climate Drivers

Authority

GS Paper

Details

December 2025

5th driest since 1901

4.9 mm

−69%

North, Northwest, Central India

15–26 days

Weak western disturbances, unfavourable MJO

La Niña, ENSO

IMD

GS-I (Geography), GS-III (Climate)

Ikkis: The story of 2nd Lt Arun Khetarpal & the Battle of Basantar

Arjun Sengupta

New Delhi, January 1

"No, sir, I will not abandon my tank. My main gun is still working and I will get these bastards." These were 2nd Lt Arun Khetarpal's final words.

At the height of the Battle of Basantar in 1971, the young officer, six months into service, refused to abandon his burning tank, taking down one more Pakistani Patton before being hit again. He died on the battlefield. The bravery of 2nd Lt Khetarpal, one of the heroes of the 1971 India-Pakistan War, has been picturised in *Ikkis* (21, a reference to the age at which he died), starring Agastya Nanda. With the film's release on Thursday, here is the story of the Battle of Basantar.

The Western Front

The war of 1971 is mostly remembered for India's triumphant campaign in the East, liberating Bangladesh. What happened on the Western Front was as important. The Pakistani military believed that even if Dhaka fell, New Delhi could be leveraged into a favourable settlement if it made gains in northern and western India.

Due to the Indian Army's commitments in the East, India and Pakistan were in near-parity in the West. Unlike in the East, where the objective was capturing Dhaka, fighting in the West comprised a series of defensive (and a few offensive) operations, with no objective beyond keeping Pakistani forces at bay. The Battle of Basantar was among the most important defensive-offensive operations in the 1971 war.

Shakargarh Bulge

The Radcliffe Line left a few major points of vulnerability on the western border. The most notable was the Shakargarh Bulge, a narrow piece of Pakistani territory between the Ravi and the Chenab that sticks into India, to the north of Gurdaspur and the south of Jammu. To the bulge's east lies Pathankot, through which the road from Punjab to Jammu passes.

Pakistani military planners have long viewed the Bulge as a key to Kashmir: if Pakistan were to capture Pathankot, it could choke Jammu and Kashmir.

The war began on December 3 as Pakistan mounted a massive offensive through the Bulge. Catching the Pakistanis by sur-

Decorated soldier

2nd Lt Khetarpal became the youngest recipient of the Param Vir Chakra, India's highest military honour, for his actions at the Battle of Basantar.

The parade ground at the National Defence Academy, Dehradun, is named after him. The auditorium and one of the main gates at the Indian Military Academy, Khadakwasla, too, bear his name.



prise, Indian forces, too, mounted an offensive through the Bulge on December 6. Thus began the Battle of Basantar (known in Pakistan as the Battle of Bara Pind). Over twelve days, Indian forces crossed the heavily mined Basantar river under fire, absorbed armoured counter-attacks, and took control of 500 sq km of Pakistani territory. Pakistan lost around 50 Patton tanks. It called for a ceasefire on December 16.

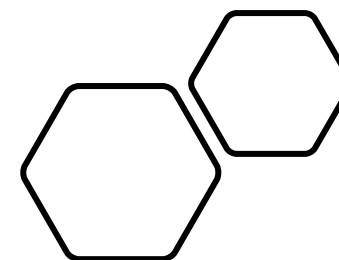
The role of Poona Horse

On December 15, 1971, the Poona Horse regiment was ordered to establish a bridgehead across the Basantar river. Its Cenurion

tanks came under heavy fire from Pakistani Pattons as well as gun nests, but carried on through the partially-mined battlefield. The regiment established a bridgehead across the Basantar by the following morning.

On the morning of December 16, the regiment faced the first of three Pakistani counterattacks. 2nd Lt Khetarpal responded with ferocity. An Army account states: "... Khetarpal continued to attack fiercely until all resistance was vanquished and he broke through in the direction of our squadron... he chased the enemy tanks and destroyed one of them." Then a Pakistani armoured squadron of a dozen tanks attacked an area held by three Indian Centurions, one of which was manned by 2nd Lt Khetarpal. The officer destroyed four tanks. But his tank, christened *Famagusta*, took a direct hit and caught fire, leaving him seriously injured.

2nd Lt Khetarpal's superior ordered him to abandon his tank. But seeing the enemy offensive was on, he refused. He would take down one more Patton before his tank was hit again, fatally wounding him. Due to 2nd Lt Khetarpal's bravery, the Poona Horse held on to the bridgehead, helping Indian forces continue their thrust into Pakistan.





- **2nd Lt Arun Khetrapal** was a young Indian Army officer of the Poona Horse regiment.
सेकंड लेफ्टिनेंट अरुण खेतरपाल पूना हॉर्स रेजिमेंट के युवा भारतीय सेना अधिकारी थे।
 - He was only 21 years old when he laid down his life in the 1971 Indo-Pak war.
1971 के भारत-पाक युद्ध में उन्होंने मात्र 21 वर्ष की आयु में बलिदान दिया।
-

2. Battle of Basantar – Background

- The Battle of Basantar was fought during the 1971 India–Pakistan War on the western front.
बसंतर का युद्ध 1971 भारत-पाक युद्ध के दौरान पश्चिमी मोर्चे पर लड़ा गया था।
 - It was part of India's defensive-offensive operations in the Shakargarh Bulge area.
यह शकargarh बुल्ज क्षेत्र में भारत के रक्षात्मक-आक्रामक अभियानों का हिस्सा था।
-

3. Strategic Importance of Shakargarh Bulge

- Shakargarh Bulge is a narrow Pakistani protrusion between the Ravi and Chenab rivers.
शकargarh बुल्ज रावी और चिनाब नदियों के बीच पाकिस्तान का एक संकरा उभार है।
- Control of this region was crucial to protect Pathankot and Jammu.
इस क्षेत्र का नियंत्रण पठानकोट और जम्मू की सुरक्षा के लिए अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण था।
- Pakistani forces aimed to cut India's access to Jammu & Kashmir.
पाकिस्तानी सेना का उद्देश्य भारत के जम्मू-कश्मीर संपर्क को बाधित करना था।

4. Course of the Battle

- The battle began on 3 December 1971 and intensified around the Basantar River.
युद्ध 3 दिसंबर 1971 को शुरू हुआ और बसंतर नदी क्षेत्र में तीव्र हुआ।
 - Indian forces had to cross heavily mined fields under enemy fire.
भारतीय सेनाओं को दुश्मन की गोलीबारी के बीच बारूदी सुरंगों से भरे क्षेत्र पार करने पड़े।
 - The Poona Horse regiment played a decisive role in establishing a bridgehead.
पूना हॉर्स रेजिमेंट ने पुल-क्षेत्र (ब्रिजहेड) स्थापित करने में निर्णायक भूमिका निभाई।
-

5. Role of 2nd Lt Arun Khetrapal

- 2nd Lt Khetrapal commanded a Centurion tank named "Famagusta".
सेकंड लेफ्टिनेंट खेतरपाल "फेमागुस्ता" नामक सेंट्यूरियन टैंक का संचालन कर रहे थे।
- His tank was hit, yet he refused to abandon it.
उनका टैंक क्षतिग्रस्त हो गया, फिर भी उन्होंने उसे छोड़ने से इनकार किया।
- He destroyed four Pakistani Patton tanks in close combat.
उन्होंने आमने-सामने की लड़ाई में चार पाकिस्तानी पैटन टैंकों को नष्ट किया।
- His famous words: "No, sir, I will not abandon my tank."
उनके प्रसिद्ध शब्द: "नहीं सर, मैं अपना टैंक नहीं छोड़ूँगा।"

6. Outcome of the Battle

- Indian forces repelled multiple Pakistani counter-attacks.
भारतीय सेनाओं ने पाकिस्तान के कई प्रतिआक्रमणों को विफल किया।
 - India captured around 500 sq km of Pakistani territory.
भारत ने लगभग 500 वर्ग किमी पाकिस्तानी क्षेत्र पर नियंत्रण स्थापित किया।
 - Pakistan lost around 50 Patton tanks in this sector.
इस क्षेत्र में पाकिस्तान ने लगभग 50 पैटन टैंक खोए।
 - Ceasefire came into effect on 16 December 1971.
16 दिसंबर 1971 को युद्धविराम लागू हुआ।
-

7. Param Vir Chakra & Legacy

- 2nd Lt Arun Khetrpal was awarded the Param Vir Chakra posthumously.
सेकंड लेफ्टिनेंट अरुण खेतरपाल को मरणोपरांत परम वीर चक्र प्रदान किया गया।
- He remains the youngest recipient of India's highest military honour.
वे भारत के सर्वोच्च सैन्य सम्मान के सबसे युवा प्राप्तकर्ता हैं।
- Several military institutions and landmarks are named in his honour.
उनके सम्मान में अनेक सैन्य संस्थानों और स्थलों के नाम रखे गए हैं।



- **With reference to the Battle of Basantar, consider the following statements:**

- It was fought during the 1971 Indo-Pak war on the western front.
- The battle was strategically linked to the Shakargarh Bulge region.
- 2nd Lt Arun Khetrapal destroyed Pakistani Sherman tanks during this battle.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

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Word of the day

Convoluted:

extremely complicated and difficult to follow

Synonyms: tough, intricate, confusing

Usage: *His explanation sounded convoluted to everyone.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/
convolutedpro

**International Phonetic
Alphabet:** /kɒnvəluːtɪd/



Thank you 😊

