

# Winter woes for cold-blooded species at Van Vihar National Park

**By Ashish Kurl**  
**Bhopal:** Nestled in the heart of the state capital, Van Vihar National Park remains one of Bhopal's most cherished tourist attractions, offering a rare blend of rich biodiversity and urban accessibility. Spread across a vast green expanse, the park allows visitors to observe wildlife in near-natural surroundings, making it a unique conservation and recreation space. Almost all major species of animals found in the region can be seen here, drawing nature lovers, students and tourists throughout the year.



However, during a recent visit by this Correspondent, concerns emerged over the management of enclosures housing cold-blooded animals such as snakes, tortoises and iguanas. With winter setting in, these reptiles and reptiles-like species, which depend heavily on external heat sources to regulate their body temperature, were found to be living in conditions that lacked essential environmental controls.

Experts note that cold-blooded animals eat very little during winter unless provided with appropriate warmth, light and humidity in captivity. Certain tortoise species from temperate regions can hibernate naturally, but tropical species, including the Indian

found to be lacking basic instruments such as thermostatically controlled heating systems, UVB lighting, digital thermometers and humidity monitors. The absence of these facilities can cause stress, weakened immunity and long-term health complications in reptiles, conservationist Dr BP Yadav warn.

When contacted, Field Director Vijay Kumar acknowledged the issue and said corrective measures were already underway. He stated that construction of new enclosures was in progress and assured that once the work was completed, proper thermostat-controlled heating systems and other required facilities would be installed.

Van Vihar authorities maintain that animal welfare remains a priority and that the upgrades will significantly improve living conditions for cold-blooded species during winter, aligning the park with modern zoo management and conservation standards.

# Statewide Atal Smriti Sammelans to Honor Atal Bihari Vajpayee



**Bhopal:** To commemorate Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birth day, Atal Smriti Sammelans (memorial conferences) will be organized in all assembly constituencies of the state. The conferences will begin on December 24 and conclude on December 31. An exhibition based on Atal Ji's life philosophy and contributions will also be held.

Speaking to the media at the state BJP office, BJP National General Secretary Arun Singh said that on the occasion of Atal Ji's birth anniversary, social workers, prominent citizens who worked with him, as well as individuals who have contributed to the fields

of medicine, literature, education, and other areas, will be invited and honored.

## December 24: Cleanliness Drive and Festival of Lights

Arun Singh said that on December 24, a cleanliness drive will be conducted in all assembly constituencies of the state where statues or memorials of Atal Ji are located. A festival of lights (Deepotsav) will also be organized on the same day. Deepotsav programs will also be held at all BJP district offices.

## December 25: Atal Smriti Sammelan

He said that on December 25, Atal Smriti Sammelans will be organized in all assembly constituencies. These conferences will include poetry recitations in memory of Atal Ji, programs related to good governance, and discussion forums.

Singh also said that Jawaharlal Nehru recognized Atal Ji's talent, but Indira Gandhi sent him to jail. Atal Ji was a great leader who held various responsibilities, from the Jan Sangh to becoming the national president of the BJP and then the Prime Minister.

# 7-year-old harassed after being lured with candy

Shocking incident in Bhopal's Ashoka Garden area

**Bhopal:** A harrowing incident has emerged from Bhopal's Ashoka Garden area, where a 7-year-old girl was subjected to "bad touch" and harassment. The suspect, identified as Narendra Rajput, reportedly lured the child with the promise of candies while she was playing in a local park, before taking her to his residence to commit the act. The gravity of the situation came to light when the brave young girl narrated the ordeal to her mother. The news sparked immediate outrage among locals. Members of the Bajrang Dal intervened, tracking down and apprehending the accused before handing him over to the authorities.

## Current status:

- ❖ **Police action:** A formal case has been registered at the Ashoka Garden Police Station.
  - ❖ **Medical investigation:** The victim underwent a medical examination at Hamidia Hospital to determine the full extent of the assault.
  - ❖ **Ongoing inquiry:** While the "bad touch" is confirmed, police are awaiting final medical reports to confirm if further sexual assault occurred.
- This disturbing event has once again raised urgent concerns regarding the safety of minors in public spaces.

# Crime Branch busts illegal liquor warehouse in Ashoka Garden

Raid leads to seizure of liquor worth over Rs 60 lakh, three arrested

**Bhopal:** The Bhopal Crime Branch carried out a major operation against illegal liquor trading by raiding a warehouse in Ektapuri, Ashoka Garden, early Saturday morning. Acting on a tip-off, the police first intercepted a smuggler transporting illegal liquor in an unregistered Mahindra XUV 300 car. During the search of the vehicle, 19 cases of English liquor and beer were recovered. On questioning, the accused admitted to smuggling liquor and revealed the source of supply.

## How the accused were apprehended

Additional DCP Shailendra Singh Chauhan said that late Friday night, the Crime Branch re-



ceived specific information about the transportation of illegal English liquor and beer near Ektapuri ground. A police team was deployed and intercepted the suspi-

cious vehicle. Two occupants were detained and identified as Rajesh Meena (32), a resident of Ratan Colony, Karond, and Rama Ahirwar (25) from Rajiv Nagar, Kota

Sultanabad.

A search of the car led to the recovery of 19 khaki-coloured cases containing 176.28 litres of illegal liquor. The accused failed to produce any licence or valid documents related to the transportation. During further interrogation, they disclosed that the liquor was being supplied from an illegal warehouse in Ektapuri Semra Maidan.

Based on this information, the Crime Branch raided the warehouse and arrested Gajendra Rawat, who confessed to illegally storing and supplying liquor. A total of 888 cases of English liquor and beer, worth over Rs 60 lakh, were seized. Action has been initiated against all accused under the Excise Act, and investigations are ongoing to identify other persons involved through mobile call details.

# Jinagar community conference brochure released

Deputy CM Devda calls introduction meet a catalyst for social harmony



**Bhopal:** The brochure for the Second All India Introduction Conference of the Jinagar community, scheduled to be held on January 18, 2026, was released by Deputy Chief Minister Jagdish Devda. The event will be organised under

the aegis of the Introduction Conference Service Committee of the Jinagar community, Bhopal.

Addressing the gathering, Devda described the introduction conference as a powerful medium for promoting so-

cial harmony, unity, progress and frugality within society. He said such conferences encourage meaningful social connections and help strengthen the tradition of simple and dignified marriages.

Organising committee chairman Bhagwandas Dhalia briefed the Deputy CM about the innovative, service-oriented and value-based initiatives being undertaken by the Jinagar community.

Prominent community leaders and members, including Jinagar community president Ajay Pawar, Hariom Aseri, Ashok Sankle, Devendra Chauhan, Rajesh Aseri, Mukesh Pawar, Sanjay Dabi, Rajkumar Sankhla, Lalit Chauhan, Golu Dabi and others, were present.

# West Central Railway records impressive 8% growth in revenue

**Bhopal:** West Central Railway (WCR) has achieved a significant financial milestone, clocking total originating revenue of Rs 5,675.36 crore between April and November of the current fiscal year. This marks a robust 7.72% growth compared to the Rs 5,268.79 crore earned during the same period last year.

## Financial breakdown

The revenue streams highlight WCR's diversified success:

- ★ **Freight Traffic:** Rs 3,693.94 crore (The largest contributor)
- ★ **Passenger Traffic:** Rs 1,704.13 crore

- ★ **Sundry & Misc Income:** Rs 155.18 crore
  - ★ **Other Coaching:** Rs 122.11 crore
- Among the divisions, Jabalpur led the charts with Rs 3,382.84 crore, followed by Bhopal (Rs 1,237.05 crore) and Kota (Rs 1,055.47 crore).

## Strategic drivers of success

This surge is attributed to coordinated efforts by the Commercial and Operating departments:

- ★ **Passenger Services:** Expansion of special trains, extending

experimental halts, and adding extra coaches to clear waiting lists.

★ **Freight Efficiency:** Implementing 24/7 loading/unloading at warehouses and developing new Gati Shakti Cargo Terminals.

★ **Innovation:** Boosting Non-Fare Revenue (NFR) through the 'NINFRIS' policy and creative advertising schemes.

WCR remains committed to sustaining this momentum through infrastructure upgrades and passenger-centric innovations.

# Admissions open for Arabic, Persian & Urdu Courses

Great news for students

**Bhopal:** The National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL), under the aegis of the Madhya Pradesh Urdu Academy, has announced admissions for its popular one-year certificate and diploma programs. This is a golden opportunity for language enthusiasts to master Arabic, Persian, or Urdu and enhance their career prospects.

## Key highlights

- ★ **Zero Tuition Fees:** Apart from a one-time registration fee of ₹200, the courses are free.
- ★ **Free Study Material:** Textbooks will be provided to all

Course	Prerequisites
Arabic Certificate	Basic knowledge of Urdu/English; ability to read/write Urdu.
Persian Certificate	Ability to read and write Urdu and English.
Urdu Diploma	Proficiency in either Hindi or English.

students at no cost.  
 No Age Bar: These courses are open to learners of all age groups.

# Campion School celebrates sports day with grandeur

**Bhopal:** The playground of Campion School, Arera Colony, Bhopal, resonated with enthusiasm and excitement as students of the secondary section celebrated the 56th Annual Sports Day 2025. Decorated with colourful flags, bunting and balloons, the venue witnessed the participation of nearly 1,000 students from Classes VI to XII.



The event was formally inaugurated by Principal Fr. Athnas Lakra SJ, with chief guest Lt. Col. Jackson Jose Kottoor, an alumnus of the school, along with Superior and Manager Fr. Kapil Xaxa, Vice-Principal Fr. Manoj Minj and other digni-

taries. Following the oath ceremony and a graceful welcome dance by girl students, the chief guest declared the sports meet open.

Students from Nehru, Ashoka, Tagore and Gandhi Houses competed in various track and field events, including sprints, relays and a vibrant Zumba performance by Class VIII stu-

dents. The cheering crowd added to the festive spirit. Scholarship medals, trophies and shields were also distributed during the annual awards ceremony. Tagore House emerged as the Overall Champion House. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks, the closing declaration by the chief guest and the National Anthem.

# Traced by a login: Missing students found after week-long run

**Bhopal:** Two 9th-grade students from a government residential school in Bhopal, who had been missing for seven days, were safely tracked down in Ujjain on Friday night.

**The great escape:** The 16-year-old boys, originally from Berasia, fled their hostel at 1:00 AM on December 12. Fearing a reprimand after being caught in a school mischief, they decided to run away before their parents could be notified. The duo traveled through Neelbad and Barkheda Nathu before boarding a bus from Sehore to Ujjain.

**Trapped by technology:** While the teenagers managed to evade authorities for a week, their digital footprint eventually gave them away. Upon reaching Ujjain, they purchased a new mobile phone. The moment they attempted to log into their social media accounts, the police cyber cell flagged their location. **Safe return:** Acting on the technical lead, Ratibad police coordinated with Ujjain officials to locate the boys around 9:00 PM. Officer R.B. Sharma confirmed that both students are safe and are being reunited with their families.

# Shortest day and longest night of the year today

Sarika Gharu explains Earth's tilt and Sun's movement

**Bhopal:** December 21st, Sunday, marks the shortest day and the longest night of the year. In astronomy, this celestial event is called the Winter Solstice. According to National Award-winning science communicator Sarika Gharu, at 8:33 PM IST tonight, the Sun's rays will be perpendicular to the Tropic of Capricorn. After this time, the Sun will begin its northward journey, causing the days to gradually become longer in the coming weeks.

Sarika Gharu explained that the Earth revolves around the Sun while tilted on its axis at approximately 23.5 degrees. Due to this tilt, the Northern Hemisphere is at its maximum distance from the Sun on December 21. In this position, the Sun's rays fall obliquely on the Northern Hemisphere, resulting in a shorter day and the



longest night. The duration of daylight on Sunday will vary depending on the location. In cities of Madhya Pradesh, the average day is around 10 hours and 44 minutes. The duration of daylight is even shorter in

North India, while in South India, the day is slightly longer than in Madhya Pradesh. Therefore, people are advised to finish their daytime tasks early today, as tonight will be the longest night of the year.

# Mothers of specially-abled children await implementation of central leave rules

**Bhopal:** Despite the Union Government's 2018 landmark decision to scrap the age limit for Child Care Leave (CCL) for mothers of specially-abled children, Madhya Pradesh is yet to align its service rules with the Centre. This administrative lag has left thousands of female government employees struggling to balance their professional duties with the lifelong care required by their children.

Currently, MP offers 730 days of CCL. However, while the benefit expires when a typical child turns 18, it is capped at 22 years for specially-abled children in the state. Mothers argue that this limit is impractical, as many children with disabilities remain dependent on their parents for medical needs and daily survival

well into adulthood.

"A disability doesn't vanish at 22," say affected employees, who have flooded the CM Helpline with requests for reform. While several other states have already adopted the Central model—recognizing that caregiving for the disabled is a lifelong responsibility—MP's refusal to amend its rules is being viewed as a lack of empathy toward its workforce.

Offering a glimmer of hope, Dr. Ajay Khemaria, Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, stated: "We are discussing these discrepancies with the Finance Department. On Monday, we will officially recommend aligning state provisions with Central rules to favor these parents."