

MUSTREAD

Over 2,500 nominations filed for 227 BMC seats as filing closes

Mumbai: The race for Mumbai's civic body intensified with 2,516 nominations filed for the 227 seats of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), setting the stage for a highly competitive civic body election scheduled for January 15. The highest number of nominations was received for M East ward (182 nominations), followed by M East M West (164), A B C (150) and G North (137), while the lowest came from R Central (51), C D wards (58) and R North (60). A rush of candidates was witnessed on the final day, with 2,122 nominations submitted on December 30 alone. As per State Election Commission data, 11,392 forms were issued by 23 Returning Officers, but only 22 per cent were eventually filed.

Rs 713 cr released towards pending employee bills in Telangana

Hyderabad: Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu has ordered the release of Rs 713 crore towards pending bills payable to government employees for the month of December. Acting on his directions, officials of the Finance Department released the bills on Wednesday. The release is in line with the assurance given earlier by the Praja Government to employee unions that at least Rs 700 crore would be cleared every month towards pending dues. By the end of June, the government had released Rs 183 crore, and from August onwards, it has consistently ensured the release of a minimum of Rs 700 crore every month.

Court grants anticipatory bail to professor in molestation case

Mumbai: A Session Court granted anticipatory bail to a guest professor accused of molesting nine female students and a retired teacher at a college event in south Mumbai. The professor, who has a 35-year clean career record, claimed the allegations were due to a misunderstanding or personal grudges. In his bail plea he also contended that he is suffering from mental diseases and presently admitted in a hospital. The court considered his severe depression and mental health issues, as well as the delayed filing of the FIR, in granting bail. The police had opposed the bail. The court rejected the prosecution's submission and allowed the anticipatory bail. The detailed order is pending release.

Assam govt closes schools in some dists. till Jan 6 over unprecedented cold spell

Guwahati: Unprecedented cold weather has forced the Assam government to close schools from December 31 to January 6. "In view of the prevailing extreme cold conditions, all district commissioners are instructed to assess the situation in their respective districts and take appropriate decision regarding rescheduling of school hours or closure of schools, as deemed necessary, in line with the instructions issued earlier during the heat wave," said Assam Education Minister Ranaj Pegu on his X handle. The minister said that necessary notification to the district commissioners have already been issued. Guwahati and some other districts in Assam have been witnessing unprecedented cold with prolonged foggy spell for the last two days.

PM Modi likely to visit Bengal's Malda on January 18

Kolkata: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the face of BJP's electoral battle, is expected to make his first move in poll-bound West Bengal in New Year 2026 on January 18 in Malda, which has a significant Muslim population and is a gateway to North Bengal. Local BJP MP Khagen Murmu on Wednesday said the party has informed the PMO to provide a date, specifying January 18 for the Prime Minister's visit. He said party leaders from neighbouring four contiguous districts of north Bengal will be invited once the approval for the PM's visit is finalised. According to BJP sources, the PM will have more than a couple of public meetings in January and February as the state assembly election for 294 seats is expected to be completed by middle of April.

Cabinet approves major highway projects worth over Rs 20,600 crore in Odisha and Maharashtra

New Delhi (UNI)

In a significant push to road infrastructure and regional connectivity, the union Cabinet on Wednesday approved two major highway projects worth over Rs 20,600 crore, one in Odisha and another in Maharashtra, aimed at improving travel efficiency, boosting logistics, and accelerating economic development under the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan.

Briefing the media after the Cabinet meeting, Minister of Information and Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnaw said the decisions reflect the government's commitment to integrated transport planning and inclusive growth.

The Maharashtra project which costs Rs 19,142 crore is being seen as a major greenfield project which will build a six-lane, access-controlled Nashik-Solapur-Akkalkot corridor at a capital cost of Rs 19,142 crore. "This project will provide connectiv-



ity to important regional cities such as Nashik, Ahilyanagar and Solapur, further connecting to Kurnool, as indicated in the map," Vaishnaw said at a press briefing after the Cabinet meeting.

In Odisha, the Cabinet approved the widening and strengthening of National Highway-326 from Km 68.600 to Km 311.700 at a total capital cost of Rs 1,526.21 crore, includ-

ing Rs 966.79 crore for civil construction.

The project will upgrade the existing two-lane highway to a two-lane road with paved shoulders under the Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) mode.

Vaishnaw said the upgradation of NH-326 would make travel "faster, safer and more reliable," leading to the overall development of southern Odisha, particularly the districts of Gajapati, Rayagada and Koraput. Improved connectivity will benefit local communities, industries, educational institutions and tourism centres by enhancing access to markets, healthcare and employment opportunities.

The Mohana-Koraput stretch of NH-326 currently suffers from sub-standard road geometry, including narrow carriageways, sharp curves and steep gradients, which hamper safe and efficient movement, especially for heavy vehicles.

The project will address these deficiencies through geometric improvements, black-spot removal and pavement strengthening, enabling safer and uninterrupted movement of goods and passengers while reducing vehicle operating costs.

The upgraded highway will improve direct connectivity between Mohana and Koraput and link NH-326 with major economic corridors such as NH-26, NH-59, NH-16 and the Raipur-Visakhapatnam corridor.

It will also enhance access to Gopalpur port, Jeypore airport and key railway stations, while connecting major industrial and logistics nodes including JK Paper, Mega Food Park, NALCO, IMFA, Utkal Alumina, Vedanta and HAL. Educational and tourism centres such as the Central University of Odisha, Koraput Medical College and Taptapani will also benefit.

Cabinet clears Rs 19,142-cr Nashik-Solapur-Akkalkot greenfield corridor

New Delhi (UNI)

In a major push to high-speed road infrastructure under the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Wednesday approved the construction of a six-lane, access-controlled greenfield Nashik-Solapur-Akkalkot corridor in Maharashtra at a capital cost of Rs 19,142 crore.

The 374-km project will be developed on a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) toll mode.

Announcing the decision, Minister of Information and Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnaw said the project would significantly enhance regional and national connectivity.

"This project will provide connectivity to important regional



cities such as Nashik, Ahilyanagar and Solapur, further connecting to Kurnool, as indicated in the map," Vaishnaw said at a press briefing after the Cabinet meeting.

He described the corridor as a critical element of integrated transport planning. "This infrastructure is a significant step to facilitate integrated transport infrastructure development under the PM

GatiShakti National Master Plan principle," the minister said.

The proposed greenfield corridor from Nashik to Akkalkot will be linked to multiple major national highways and expressways. It will connect to the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway near the Vadawan Port interchange, the Agra-Mumbai corridor at Nashik through NH-60 (Adegaon), and the Samruddhi Mahamarg at Pangri near Nashik.

The project is also expected to strengthen West Coast-East Coast connectivity. On the eastern side, four-lane corridors are already under development from Chennai port to Hasapur on the Maharashtra border, covering about 700 km via Thiruvallur, Renigunta, Kadappa and Kurnool.

ED raids 13 locations in 'Dunki Route' probe; seizes cash, precious metals

Chandigarh (UNI)

The Enforcement Directorate has carried out a major search operation in connection with the alleged 'Dunki Route' illegal immigration network, seizing large amounts of cash, gold, silver and documents across multiple states, officials said on Wednesday.

The Jalandhar zonal office of the ED conducted searches on December 18 and 19 under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002.

The operation covered 13 locations spread across Punjab, Haryana and New Delhi as part of an ongoing investigation into suspected money laundering linked to unlawful overseas migration.

During the searches, officials recovered cash amounting to Rs 4.68 crore. In addition, gold bars weigh-

ing around 5.9 kilograms, estimated to be worth over ₹8 crore, were seized along with gold coins valued at approximately ₹2.7 lakh.

The agency also confiscated silver bars weighing about 313 kilograms, with an estimated value exceeding ₹6 crore, according to officials familiar with the probe. Investigators believe the seized assets may represent proceeds generated by agents and intermediaries involved in facilitating illegal immigration through the so-called Dunki Route.

Several digital devices, including mobile phones, laptops and storage drives, were also taken into custody. These devices are being sent for forensic analysis to trace financial transactions, suspected hawala links and possible international connections.

NIA court convicts Hizb-ul-Mujahideen conspiracy accused, awards life term

New Delhi: A key accused in the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) terror conspiracy case was convicted and sentenced to simple imprisonment (SI) by the Special Court of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in Guwahati, Assam on December 30, NIA officials said on Wednesday.

The accused, Md. Kamruj Zaman, Dr. Hurairah, and Kamaruddin have been awarded three separate SI punishments, with the maximum of life imprisonment on Tuesday.

The sentences, which will run concurrently, include imprisonment for life under section 18, UA(P) Act, 1967, and five years SI each under section 18B, UA(P) Act, 1967, read with section 120B IPC, and section 38 of UA(P) Act.

78 arrivals, 70 departures cancelled at Delhi's IGI airport; Two flights diverted

New Delhi (UNI)

Flight operations at Indra Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) were significantly disrupted on Tuesday, with 78 arriving flights and 70 departures cancelled over the course of the day. In addition, two flights were diverted to alternate airports, airport officials confirmed.

Visibility plunged to as low as 50 meters in several pockets, severely disrupting road, rail, and air movement, even as city residents geared up to usher in the New Year amid hazardous weather.

According to the officials, at least 150 flights were cancelled and over 200 delayed at Delhi's Indra Gandhi International Airport on Wednesday morning.



Meanwhile, Delhi airport's website showed that at least 75 incoming flights and a similar number of departures had been cancelled till 8.30 a.m. In addition, over 200 flights, including both arrivals and departures, were delayed.

According to the Meteorological Department, the visibility at the airport dropped from 600 meters to 50 meters after 2.30 am. However, it is expected to improve after 9.30 am.

In an advisory posted on X, the airport warned passengers of possible delays and cancellations and asked them to check directly with airlines for updates.

The statement added that flight operations under the CAT-III instrument landing system commenced at 3 a.m. and remain in effect. Under these conditions, only CAT-III-equipped aircraft operated by specially trained pilots are permitted to land or take off.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department has warned that the wintry weather will remain strong across large parts of North India, with several states likely to receive rain and snowfall even as cold conditions persist.

India-UAE joint military 'Exercise Desert Cyclone-II' ends in Abu Dhabi

New Delhi (UNI)

"Exercise Desert Cyclone II" concluded with a closing ceremony at Al-Hamra Training City, marking the successful culmination of intensive joint training between the Indian Army and the UAE Land Forces.

Conducted from December 18-30 at Abu Dhabi, UAE, the second edition of the India-UAE Joint Military Exercise reaffirmed the deepening defence partnership between the two nations and underscored their shared commitment to regional peace, security and stability.

In a statement issued here today, the army spokesperson stated that the exercise witnessed a structured mix of classroom and field-based training designed to enhance interoperability, mutual trust and operational synergy in an urban environment, with focus on sub-conventional operations under



a United Nations mandate. Joint activities covered urban combat fundamentals, marking and clearing of buildings, IED awareness, casualty evacuation, first aid and detailed mission planning.

TMC leaders meet ECI as hearing process of unmapped voters continues in West Bengal

New Delhi (UNI)

A 10 member delegation of Trinamool Congress (TMC) headed by General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee, met the Election Commission of India (ECI) on Wednesday as the hearing process of unmapped voters continues in West Bengal.

While speaking to the media outside ECI office, Banerjee stated, "TMC raised 10/15 points, but other than two three points, none were clarified to us." Stressing on the issue of "vote theft", Banerjee said "vote Chori is not happening in EVM. It's happening in the electoral rolls. Parties like Congress, AAP couldn't catch this in states like Maharashtra, Delhi, and Haryana. If they would have caught then BJP would have lost in these states. I appeal to like-minded parties to catch the 'chori' they are doing through software in the voter rolls."

While emphasising the release of the

"logical discrepancy" list, TMC stated that there was no category called logical discrepancy during the preparation of the voters' list in 2002-03, "then how was this category introduced this time? Earlier in SIR there was no such thing as 'suspicious list'."

The letter submitted to the ECI also raised the issue of elderly people being summoned to the hearing.

"If doorstep voting and home-based verification can be operationalised for PwDs and voters aged 85 and above, there is no constitutional, statutory, or logistical rationale for denying the same compassionate dispensation to senior citizens above 60 years who are medically vulnerable. Insisting on mandatory physical hearing in such cases risks the disenfranchisement of precisely those citizens most dependent on constitutional protections," the letter read.

Over 3 crore students, parents and teachers sign up for Pariksha Pe Charcha 2026

New Delhi: Registrations for Pariksha Pe Charcha (PPC), the flagship initiative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have crossed a historic milestone, with over 3 crore registrations from students, parents, and teachers as the year comes to a close.

The ninth edition of PPC will be held in January 2026.

In a statement issued here, the Ministry of Education stated that the response reflects the programme's growing popularity and its success in addressing students' mental well-being, while promoting a positive and confident approach towards examinations.

Cold and dense fog havoc in UP, Orange alert in 37 districts

Lucknow (UNI)

Outbreak of cold and dense fog continues in Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday.

In many districts including the capital Lucknow, due to dense fog in the morning and late night, the visibility has reduced drastically, affecting life and traffic. Vehicles were seen crawling on the roads, while train and bus services have also been affected.

According to the Meteorological Department, there is a possibility of rain in western Uttar Pradesh on January 1. Along with this, there are also signs of sporadic drizzle in the Terai areas.

The department estimates that the day temperature may increase by 4 to 6 degrees Celsius in the next four days, while the night tempera-



ture may increase by 3 to 5 degrees. The Meteorological Department has issued a rain warning in 17 dis-

tricts including Saharanpur, Shamli.

At the same time, in view of the

dense fog, an orange alert has been declared in 37 districts of the state. The administration has appealed to the people to avoid unnecessary travel during fog, use fog lights while driving and take full vigilance.

In view of the possible change in the weather, it is expected to get some relief from the cold in the coming days.

The effect of dense fog is likely to remain in the state till January 1 late at night and early in the morning.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the next Western Disturbance will be activated and will increase the instability in the atmosphere, which is expected to reduce the intensity of fog in large parts of western UP and eastern UP from January 2.