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GOVERNMENT IN FRANCE

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## BLUE SKY, BRIGHT SUN, GRAP IV REVOKED

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday relaxed curbs in Delhi-NCR under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) stage III and IV measures imposed in Delhi following the improved Air Quality Index (AQI). The SC advised the CAQM to also consider adding certain measures under GRAP-Stage III. If the AQI crosses 350, GRAP-III should be imposed and if it crosses 400, GRAP-IV must be imposed, the SC said. Following this, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) revoked restrictions under Stage-III and Stage IV of GRAP in the entire NCR, with immediate effect. The restrictions have been reduced to Stage 2 of the GRAP which involves less stringent curbs such as a ban on the use of coal and firewood in industries and commercial establishments, including eateries. This means people using BS-3 petrol and BS-4 diesel vehicles can ply their on the road in the National Capital region. Under GRAP III and IV, diesel-powered medium and heavy goods vehicles (BS-IV or lower) are prohibited, except for essential services while non-essential light commercial vehicles from outside Delhi were also restricted under GRAP stages 3 and 4. All construction and demolition activities, including public infrastructure projects like highways, flyovers, and pipelines, were also banned. "The Sub-Committee, accordingly, has decided to



Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

revoke Stage-IV and Stage-III of GRAP in the entire NCR, with immediate effect. GRAP Stages II and I, to however, remain in-force in the entire NCR," CAQM said in a post on X. The ban of BS-3 and BS-4 vehicles was implemented on November 15 when the CAQM decided to escalate GRAP measures to stage III. According to CAQM, the restrictions under stage II and I of GRAP will continue. "Actions under Stage-I & II of the GRAP shall however remain invoked and be implemented, monitored and reviewed by all the agencies concerned in the entire NCR to ensure that the AQI levels do not slip further. All implementing agencies shall keep strict vigil and especially intensify measures under

Stage-I & II of GRAP. Construction & Demolition project sites and industrial units which have been issued specific closure orders on account of violations/ non-compliances of various statutory directions, rules, guidelines etc. under no circumstances shall resume their operations without any specific order to this effect from the Commission." "The Sub-Committee, shall be keeping a close watch on the air quality scenario and review the situation from time to time for further appropriate decision depending upon the Air Quality in Delhi and forecast made by IIM/IITM," it said. The overall Air Quality Index (AQI) recorded in Delhi was 165, categorised as 'moderate', the cleanest air day of

December so far. The improvement began on Wednesday afternoon, with AQI levels falling from 211 in the morning to 178 by the evening. Of the 38 monitoring stations that recorded air quality data, only six stations reported levels in the poor category. It marks a significant improvement as on Tuesday, the AQI was recorded in the "poor" category with a reading of 268, compared to 280 on Monday and 285 on Sunday. For the month of December, the city has not seen such clean air since December 14, 2022, when the AQI was 163. Under GRAP-II, the restriction will continue which include ban on diesel generators across all sectors, including

commercial, and residential areas, increased mechanical or vacuum sweeping and water sprinkling on identified roads, especially in high-traffic areas and pollution hotspots, use of dust suppressants every alternate day during non-peak hours, along with proper disposal of collected dust, intensified inspections at construction and demolition sites to enforce dust control measures and specific actions to focus on pollution hotspots throughout the city. Earlier, a Bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih allowed the authorities to go down from Stage IV of Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) to Stage II. However, the Court also asked the CAQM to put in place additional measures from Stage III. "We have perused the figures of AQI from Nov 18- Dec 4. Up to Nov 30, it was consistently above 300 and it is only during last four days that the levels came down below 300. It is true that at some stage the court will have to leave to the Commission to decide about GRAP applicability. Considering the data placed before us, we do not think that it will be appropriate at this stage to allow the Commission to go below Stage-II," the SC said. The SC further clarified that when the Air Quality Index (AQI) goes above 350, Stage III will have to be immediately implemented as a precautionary measure. "If AQI crosses 400 on a given day, Stage 4 to be reintroduced," it ordered.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Maharashtra Governor CP Radhakrishnan with the newly-sworn Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy Chief Ministers Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar

## Fadnavis Bhau-kaal returns to Maharashtra

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Twelve days after the MahaYuti returned to power in the state in a spectacular manner, Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Devendra Fadnavis was sworn in as the 31st Chief Minister of Maharashtra at a grand ceremony held in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the historic Azad Maidan in south Mumbai on Thursday evening. Eknath Shinde of the Shiv Sena (ES) and Ajit Pawar of the Nationalist Congress Party (AP) were sworn into office as the Deputy CMs in the BJP-led MahaYuti government in the state, at a ceremony attended by Union Ministers, CMs of several states, corporate bigwigs, film and sports stars, and leading personalities from different walks of life. Maharashtra

Governor CP Radhakrishnan administered the oath of office and secrecy to CM Devendra Fadnavis, Dy. CMs Shinde and Ajit Pawar at the ceremony. A six-time MLA from Nagpur South-West constituency, 54-year-old Fadnavis has taken over as the CM for a third term. Shinde (60), a five-time MLA from Thane's Kopri-Pachpakadi who has assumed charge as the deputy chief minister, was earlier the chief minister in the MahaYuti Government. In a record of sorts, Ajit Pawar (65), an eight-time MLA from Baramati, has become the Dy. CM for the sixth term. Given that the three constituents of the MahaYuti, BJP, Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and Ajit Pawar-led NCP, have not yet formalised the nitty-gritties of the new government, the oath-taking

ceremony was restricted to the swearing-in of Fadnavis, Shinde and Pawar. Talking to media persons after taking over as the CM, Fadnavis said that he would expand the State Cabinet before the Winter Session of the Maharashtra Legislature scheduled to begin towards the end of this month.

### 11 MLAs MINISTERS TAKE OATH IN JHARKHAND

Six new faces and two women are among 11 MLAs who took oath as ministers in the Hemant Soren government in Jharkhand on Thursday. Of the 11 legislators who were sworn in as ministers, six are from the JMM and four from the Congress. Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar administered the oath to the ministers at Ashok Udyan of the Raj Bhavan.

Detailed story on page 5

## 'Avoid the culture of adjournment of cases'

Prez opens new Judicial Court Complex at BBSR  
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

President of India Droupadi Murmu inaugurated a new Judicial Court Complex at Bhubaneswar on Thursday. Addressing the gathering, the President said that if justice is not delivered on time, then it is equivalent to not getting justice. The poor suffer the most due to adjournment of cases. They have neither the money nor the manpower to come to the court frequently. All stakeholders should find a way to avoid the culture of adjournment. Murmu said language is also a barrier for the common people. They do not understand what the lawyer is arguing for or what opinion the judge is giving.



She was happy to note that the court judgments are now being translated into Odia and Santali languages and these translated judgments are available on the websites of the Supreme Court and the Orissa High Court. She said that today, women-led development is being

emphasised. Like in other fields, women's participation should increase in the judiciary also. She noted that currently, the Odisha Judicial Service has 48 per cent female officers. She expressed confidence that the number of female officers would increase in the coming days.

The President said that how ordinary citizens can interact with the judicial system without fear is an important issue. Often, people get nervous before lawyers and judges. It is necessary to have a sensitive environment in courts so that they can express themselves freely.

## People neither have respect nor fear of the law: Gadkari

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said despite the Government's continuous efforts to reduce deaths in road accidents, the casualties have been on the rise as people neither have respect nor fear of the law. Responding during Question Hour in the Lok Sabha, Gadkari said he himself has been a victim of a road accident and is sensitive about the issue. The minister said there are four factors which can help reduce road accidents, road engineering, automobile engineering, enforcement of law and education of people. "Biggest problem of the society is neither they have respect for the law, nor they have fear of law. There are problems like people don't stop on red signal, don't wear helmets... 30,000 people die only because they aren't wearing helmets. I have been a victim myself, my leg has been broken at four places in an accident when I was Leader of Opposition in Maharashtra and I am



Union Minister Nitin Gadkari speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Winter session of Parliament

continuously sensitive about it. "I have no hesitation in accepting this but distressed that despite trying hard there have been 1.68 lakh road accident deaths this year. A large number of these deaths are because there has not been strict implementation of rule of roads... Without cooperation from public representatives, media or society, this is not possible. We have increased fines too but people don't follow rules," he said. Gadkari said a car jumped the traffic signal in front of him on Wednesday.

The Minister urged the Speaker to keep a separate discussion on this issue and asserted that the government is committed to improving the situation. "The problem also is that there are some black spots and the government has already decided to spend 40,000 crores on blackspots. As per mistakes identified in the detailed project report, blackspots are there, and we are very much committed for that," he said. Replying to another question, the minister said four contractors have been held

responsible for deficiencies detected in the construction of the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway and strict action will be taken against them. After taking note of the matter, experts from IIT Kharagpur and Gandhinagar inspected the expressway and found deficiencies in its construction. "We have issued notices to four contractors and will blacklist them. Strict action will be taken. Action will also be taken against concerned officials," the transport minister said during Question Hour in the Lok Sabha. "After noting deficiencies, we had roped in experts from IIT Kharagpur and IIT Gandhinagar. Initial findings of the report show there are deficiencies in the construction," Gadkari said. He said the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway is the country's longest such road and was constructed in the shortest time. "The expressway was constructed at a cost of Rs 1 lakh crore. It has reduced the distance between Delhi and Mumbai by 200 km. The travel time between the two cities has now reduced to 12 hours," he said.

## In Balangir Two men punished in kangaroo court

Police lodge case after video goes viral  
PNS ■ BALANGIR

Two persons were allegedly humiliated and punished in a kangaroo court on November 28 at Badibahal village in Balangir district over the charge of killing a cow. Some villagers of Badibahal took the law into their hands and conducted trial of the two victims from Banipali village in a kangaroo court on behalf of the 'Lakhe Ghar Ganda Samaj'. As per the decision of the court, the two persons were allegedly tied with ropes and forced to move in a circle around the photograph of BR Ambedkar. Some persons also allegedly sprinkled water on the victims to purify them. The victims also bowed down before some persons as an act of penance. They were also ordered to pay some money as a penalty. The video of the incident has gone viral over various social media platforms.



As per sources, the kangaroo court was allegedly held under the leadership of Om Prakash Kumbhar, who was the MLA candidate of Congress for Loisingha Assembly constituency in the last general elections. It was found in the video that Kumbhar himself was sprinkling water on the victims to purify them. The Balangir Town police have lodged a case in connection with the incident and started an investigation into it.

## Gold mines discovered in Deogarh, Keonjhar

Minister shares information  
NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

Steel and Mines Minister Bibhuti Bhushan Jena on Thursday said there are significant gold deposits in Deogarh and Keonjhar districts. The minister, while replying to a query in the State Legislative Assembly, said the gold deposits were discovered because of an extensive geological exploration. Gold reserves have been found in the Adas-Ramapalli region of Deogarh district and the Gopur-Gajipur region of Keonjhar. The Geological Survey of India (GSI) has completed a G2-level exploration in the Adas-Ramapalli area, uncovering promising results. Similarly, a G2 exploration is underway in the Gopur-Gajipur region following encouraging findings from earlier G3-level surveys, the minister said. "Both the GSI and the Odisha

Directorate of Mines and Geology are continuing their investigations to determine the full potentials of these reserves. Once the exploration phase is complete, detailed reports will be submitted to the State Government for further evaluation. An expert committee will then make recommendations on the next steps, including mining and economic utilisation," Jena said. The minister highlighted the economic opportunities the new gold discoveries present for Odisha. "The percentage of gold content will be determined through laboratory tests, and we remain optimistic about its prospects," he said. Odisha is already rich in mineral resources, including iron ore, bauxite, manganese, dolomite and chromite, making these new gold discoveries a valuable addition to the State's mineral wealth. Keonjhar district boasts of having the country's highest reserve of iron ore.

## 'Artificial potato scarcity aimed to blame govt'

Minister Patra flays WB CM's flip-flop  
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In the midst of the unprecedented price rise of potato in Odisha, Food and Civil Supplies Minister Krushna Chandra Patra made an explosive statement on Thursday. He alleged that an artificial scarcity of potato was made in a bid to blamish the BJP government. He said he is clueless about the politics of the West Bengal Chief Minister on why she refused to stop the supply of potato in the first place and later agreed to restore the supply of the essential kitchen item. The minister claimed that the potato price has become normal in the market now and



will be further reduced in the coming days. "We don't have scarcity of potatoes anymore. When the availability reduces, a price rise occurs. Now, we have sufficient availability of potatoes in the market and the price has become almost normal. It will be reduced further in the coming days," he added. In response, opposition BJD said the minister is trying to hide his inefficiency by giving this kind of a statement. "It seems the minister's potato hangover has not gone away yet. No other minister

has given such cheap statements like him on potatoes. His statement that artificial scarcity of potatoes has been created for political gain is condemnable. He is trying to hide his inefficiency by giving this kind of statement," said BJD leader Goutam Buddha Das. Earlier, the minister had said that Odisha would not make any requests to the West Bengal Government to supply potato. The minister's statement came just two days after the West Bengal Government had halted all potato exports.

# Climate change challenges to agriculture need new solutions

Says President at OUAT convocation

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
An overall growth of the country is not possible without the development of agriculture and farmers, said President Droupadi Murmu while addressing the 40th convocation ceremony of the Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) here on Thursday.



as natural disasters, adverse effects of climate change, decreasing per capita farm size and excessive exploitation of natural resources. "To deal with these challenges, our scientists will have to develop and disseminate technologies timely. We have to emphasise on environmental protection, soil health protection, water and soil conser-

vation and better use of natural resources," said Murmu. "Climate change-related issues such as rising temperatures and increases in greenhouse gases are affecting agricultural production. Agricultural scientists have an important responsibility to deal with all such issues. Excessive use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides has also emerged as a

new challenge for our agriculture sector. Their ill effects on soil, water, and the environment are a matter of concern for all. I am confident that young scientists will find solutions to these problems," she said. Murmu said the convocation day opens the path to a promising future of students. The students are now entering

a different ecosystem in which they will face rigorous tests of their knowledge and skills in real-world situations. They are expected to contribute to nation-building through the best application of the knowledge and skills they have acquired. They should contribute to the national goal of making India a developed nation by 2047 through their innovative ideas and dedicated actions. "There was a time when we were dependent on other countries for food grains. Now, we are exporting food grains and other agricultural products. This has been possible due to the guidance of our agricultural scientists and the tireless hard work of our farmers," she noted.

# Action to be taken against occupation of tribal land

Minister Pujari informs Assembly

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari informed the State Assembly on Thursday that the government would not tolerate illegal occupation of tribal land in the State. Responding to a question by BJP legislator Bhaskar Madhei, Pujari emphasised that any influential non-tribal person who illegally occupies land belonging to Scheduled Tribes (STs) or Scheduled Castes (SCs) would face legal action. The minister assured that such land would be returned to its rightful owner after the



illegal occupiers are evicted. He further stated that 654 cases of illegal occupation are currently under review with the government taking appropriate action after conducting inquiries. Pujari clarified that if any land of SC/ST persons is purchased in violation of the Land Reform Act of 1960, the transaction would be declared illegal and the land would be restored to its rightful owners through the eviction process.

At present, 881 such cases are under consideration, he informed. In cases where non-tribals are found encroaching on tribal land in Scheduled Areas, the government would declare the occupation illegal and return the land to the tribal community. A total of 19,690 such cases are currently being reviewed, he said. The minister also mentioned that Deputy Collectors had been empowered to investigate illegal occupation of tribal land by non-tribals from 1956 to 2000. If any violations are found during the land transfer process, the Deputy Collectors have the authority to annul the transactions and return the lands to the original tribal owners.

# Govt car catches fire in Bhubaneswar

Close shave for occupants

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
An Odisha Government car, registered under the Registrar of the State Government's Information Commission, caught fire while moving down the road on Thursday afternoon near Kalpana Square in Bhubaneswar. Fortunately, the registrar and his driver who were inside the vehicle managed to have a narrow escape. The incident took place as sudden flames engulfed the vehicle near Kalpana Panthivas while it was plying down NH-16 along the Bhubaneswar-Cuttack section. Fire department personnel

arrived at the spot and swiftly brought the flames under control, averting any major tragedy. The vehicle was subsequently lifted to one side of the road with extensive burn and charred sections visible around its bonnet and right wheel sections. Till the last reports came in, the fire department was reported to be conducting an inquiry into the exact nature and circumstances that led to the fire outbreak. No official comments were obtained as of yet. Reports indicated that the car was several years old based on the time that particular model was manufactured. The incident raised many questions over the condition of vehicles registered under different departments of the State Government.

# Forum launched in city for elderly people

To meet needs of senior citizens living in isolation

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
The Google Wellness Foundation, a city-based, not-for-profit entity to deliver hope and happiness to the elderly through compassion and care, was launched here on Tuesday. Registered as a trust for rendering social services to varied sections of the society, the Foundation comprehensively aims to cover all aspects of senior citizens' needs who are living in isolation mostly. "It is observed that there are many isolated elderly people living a lonely life because either their children are staying



abroad or are not taking care of them. And there is a growing need to cater to the wide-ranging needs of the elderly, which have evolved dramatically in recent years due to fundamental socio-economic changes in the country," mentioned former Chief Secretary Bijay Patnaik as chief guest. Addressing the gathering, Managing Trustee of the Foundation and former Chief Executive Officer, WATCO Pradipta Kumar Swain said,

"We believe every elderly person deserves love, respect and assurance that someone is there for them. The Foundation is more than a service. We are a family. Our hands-on care, physical support ensures that elderly citizens never have to walk alone - be it need for medical assistance, support to buy daily essentials, transportation to places like hospital or bank, home support and care including home blood sample collection and health check-up etc." Among others, former Special Secretary, Government of Odisha Sanjay Pramanik, water sector leader and former COO, WATCO Sarat Chandra Mishra, eminent social worker Saroj Nalini Parida and members of the Foundation were present. The Foundation has already initiated its services in Bhubaneswar and has planned to expand to other cities of the State in a phased manner. One can avail assistance by visiting the Foundation's website [www.googlewellnessfoundation.com](http://www.googlewellnessfoundation.com), can mail to [googlewellnessfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:googlewellnessfoundation@gmail.com) or can call to 8658155479.

# In city Youth ends life over loss in online games

Youth ends life over loss in online games

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
A 22-year-old youth ended his life at his home in Bhubaneswar on Thursday due to addiction to online games and the pressure to clear off loans taken to play the games. The deceased was identified as Shasanka Sekhar Satpathy of Tinimundia Square under the Lingaraj police station in the city. As per reports, Shasanka was addicted to playing online games. He was playing the games at his home for hours. However, according to his family members, he remained aloof for some days. He com-

mitted suicide by hanging himself. Though his family members rushed him to the Capital Hospital in a critical condition, he was declared brought dead by the doctors. Getting information, the Lingaraj police reached the spot and started an investigation into the incident. Police were looking into various aspects which might have forced Shasanka to commit suicide. Prima facie, it appeared that he died by suicide after losing money in online games, police said, adding that an investigation has been initiated in this connection.

# Research Data Mgmt talk at IIT BBS

Research Data Mgmt talk at IIT BBS

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
The Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) Centre, Gandhinagar, in collaboration with the Central Library, Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar, organised an 'Awareness Programme on Research Data Management' last week. The inaugural address was delivered by Dr Sasidhar Kondaraju, Chairperson, Central Library, IIT Bhubaneswar. Dr Bibhuti Bhusan Sahoo, Deputy Librarian of the institute, welcomed the experts and the participants. Dinesh Ranjan Pradhan, Scientist-D(LS), INFLIBNET Centre, Gandhinagar, spoke about re-



search data management. Dr Sambhunath Sahoo, Assistant Librarian, IIT Bhubaneswar, proposed a vote of thanks. Prof. Rajesh Roshan Dash, Dean (Student Affairs), graced the valedictory session. The programme included sessions on 'Research Data Management: An Overview', taken by Dr Naresh Chandra Sahu, Associate Professor, IIT

# Hope rises for Jujomura open-air jail

After High Court directive

**NIMAI CHARAN SAHU ■ SAMBALPUR**  
The long-delayed proposal to establish Odisha's first open-air jail in Jujomura, Sambalpur district, has regained momentum following a directive from the Orissa High Court. The court recently advised the State Government to explore the concept of open-air jails implemented in other States and determine how they could be adapted for Odisha. The open-air jail concept aims to rehabilitate inmates through community engagement and gradual integration

into the society. Initially proposed at Jujomura, the land for this project was identified along the Sambalpur-Cuttack National Highway near Kansara. Preparatory works, including financial allocations, had commenced, but the project faced delays for reasons unknown. The High Court has urged the government to implement such facilities in every district. It also directed for preparation of an AI-integrated web-based database for all inmates with a detailed status report to be submitted within a week. Social activists like Rajaram Sarangi have highlighted the need to revive this significant project. Local leaders have

raised similar demands in past elections, emphasising the potential socioeconomic benefits of the initiative. Sambalpur MLA Prasanna Acharya has also voiced the importance of prioritising the project. The government has allocated an initial ₹2 crore for the jail department to implement the proposal. Local residents and activists remain optimistic that the proposed Jujomura open-air jail will soon become a reality, promoting rehabilitation and boosting regional development. This High Court's directive has brought renewed hope with citizens anticipating a successful implementation of the State's first open-air jail.

# Cobra in Judicial Complex



Ahead of Prez Murmu's visit

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
Hours before a scheduled visit by President Droupadi Murmu, a two-foot-long cobra was spotted and subsequently rescued from the premises of the new Bhubaneswar Judicial Complex building in the early hours of Thursday. The snake was sighted near

the main gate pathway of the complex by a driver, who promptly alerted others nearby. A team from the Snake Helpline soon arrived at the scene and rescued the cobra. However, the discovery raised concerns about the possibility of more snakes being present in the area leading to a thorough inspection of the entire premises that was currently underway as per the last reports.

# Dec 6 is his death anniversary

# Ambedkar's dream of egalitarian society still unfulfilled

Dr Ambedkar passed away on December 6, 1956. His day of remembrance is observed across the country and outside by his followers. These days, he is being remembered more than before by many across political ideologies, left, right and centrist, and among diverse social groups in India. The Union Government is building a 450-ft statue, the Statue of Equality, as a memorial of Dr Ambedkar at Indu Mills Compound in Mumbai.



MANAS JENA

In 2015, the 125th Birth anniversary year of Dr Ambedkar, 26th November was declared as Constitution Day to celebrate his legacy as Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee and to reaffirm faith in constitutional morality. While remembering him not just on his day of memorial, it is always worthy to revisit his thoughts and ideas for his creative application in the present contest as many of his ideas are guiding the nation in the path of democracy and equality. It is being observed that with his

growing popularity, some section of his followers are trying to make him a demigod status and projecting him as an icon of identity politics in India. But Ambedkar was an iconoclast, a person who challenged the hegemonic hierarchical social order during his time. Blind worship of any historical personality will diminish his historical role and following his writings as unquestionable religious scrip-

tures only can create Bhakts. Rather, his writings must be seen as historical documents to be taken for debate and discussion and further improvement. His real followers must take his mission further to realize all his unfulfilled dreams of an egalitarian society for which he suffered and sacrificed but fought against all odds like many others. During the last 75 years of constitutional governance many things in socio-political and socio-economic life of India have been changed. Ambedkar believed that politics was the master key through which the primary transformation can take place. After independence the value of votes of all citizens is recognized as equal and universal adult suffrage has been practiced in politics. With the 61st amendment of the Constitution, the voting age was reduced from 21 years to 18 in 1989. The Election Commission of India under Article 324 is vested with power to manage free and fair elections. But it is observed from the voting trend that still about 35 per-

cent people do not vote (voter turnout in 2024 was about 65 percent only) and the majority of people do not show interest in politics, public affairs, national issues or activities of political nature which is not desirable for the health of democracy. Politics is slowly getting limited to fighting elections only while not much connected to a nation building exercise for building democracy and equality. Today fanatic ideas in our society discriminate against people along lines of gender, religion, caste and ethnicity which leads to violation of international human rights standards and frameworks of UDHR, a global declaration of civilized nations including India, as a commitment to human dignity and values. Ambedkar's idea of social democracy, supported by many mod-

ern political thinkers of modern India those days, is still relevant to discuss, debate and implement in a country like ours where caste, gender and ethnic based segregation and socio-religious hegemony are acute. The many forms of social inequalities impact our parliamentary democracy leading to political polarization and growing ideas of narrow nationalism. By contrast, Ambedkar's idea of political nationalism was based on constitutional morality, inclusive

of social and religious diversity and economic and social equality. He emphasised on individual liberty with dignity and fraternity of fellow citizens because non-violence and peace are unimaginable in an unequal society. Today in the economic front the idea of economic justice through State socialism as advocated by Ambedkar remains a distant dream. The Constitutional provisions and promises of distribution of national wealth and dismantling of concentration of wealth in the hands of a few are yet to be realized. The growing inequality, substantiated by a number of studies, points to the widening gaps of income and assets and also to the status of different social groups, specially the marginalised sections who still are on the bottom of the pyramid. Present India is one of the most unequal societies in the world not just in economic parameters but also in terms of social inequality. Democracy must embrace both social and economic equality without which political rights have no meaning. Our very election system i.e First

## CONTEMPORARIES

Dr Ambedkar was a politician and his politics was to establish democracy that is inclusive of social equality with respect for diversity and multiculturalism and he was a nationalist like many other makers of modern India those who wanted to build fraternity among diverse social and religious groups based on principles of democracy and equality and most important through fraternity and equal representation in matter of national affairs. Past The Post (FPTP) in practice is not above criticism for its disproportionate character in relation to votes and seats. Political parties with less than 50 percent of vote are ruling the country while the mandate of other segments of voters is ignored. While around 95 countries of the world are in practice of Proportional Representation (PR), India, being the largest democracy, must think about its election methods to make it better by ensuring that all votes are converted into equal numbers of seats. The number of seats in Parliament must be increased to about 1,000 to have more constituencies that make our legislators more accountable to people. The influence of money power mostly dominates our voting behaviour and political parties mostly depend on corporates for election funding which must be replaced with State funding to make our democracy more meaningful. Strengthening democracy and a march towards equality will be the best tribute to Ambedkar. ([manasbbsr15@gmail.com](mailto:manasbbsr15@gmail.com))

## In Bhadrak 4 of family injured during robbery



Armed men flee with valuables worth lakhs

**PNS ■ BHADRAK**  
Four persons of a family, including three women, were injured after armed robbers barged into their house at Napanga village under the Bhandaripokhari police station in Bhadrak district on Wednesday night and attacked them with sharp weapons.

group of masked miscreants broke into the house at midnight, assaulted the residents before fleeing with the valuables.

The robbers used cunning tactics to carry out the attack. After being unable to break open the doors to the house, they set loose hens and roosters kept in a coop outside.

Hearing the commotion, several family members opened the locked doors and stepped outside to check. The robbers then took advantage of the situation, entered the house and looted jewellery worth about Rs 5 to 6 lakh, sources said. The assailants

## In Baleswar Tension after woman's death at CHC

Dowry torture alleged; hubby detained

**PNS ■ BALESWAR**

Tension prevailed at the Jaleswarpur Community Health Centre (CHC) under Bhograi block in Baleswar district on Thursday after a body of a woman was brought there for postmortem following her death allegedly under mysterious circumstances.

The parents of the deceased Sasmitha Mahana (24) alleged that their daughter was killed by her husband and in-laws for the want of more dowries.

Later, police detained the deceased's husband

Ramkrushna Mahana (33) for interrogation. However, the family members and relatives of Sasmitha continued holding a demonstration in the CHC campus.

"Sasmitha had been frequently complaining us about torture; and today morning, Sasmitha and Ramkrushna had quarreled over some issues. Later, we received a call from the in-laws that her condition is serious and they were taking her to hospital. When we arrived at the hospital, we found that she was dead. We suspect she is beaten to death by them for non fulfillment of dowry demands," said Ommprakash Behera, the brother of the deceased.

also brandished weapons and injured four people, including three women when they tried to resist the robbery attempt.

Getting information, a police team reached the spot and began investigations on Thursday.

## In Phulbani Robbery bid at finance firm foiled; 1 held

**PNS ■ PHULBANI**

Timely intervention by police led to overpowering and arrest of three armed assailants, who had barged into a private finance company's office in Phulbani on Wednesday in a bid to commit robbery.

Three masked attackers entered the finance firm office near Phulbani Sahi Chhak under the Town police station, assaulted two employees and fired blank shots while demanding money.

However, the loot bid was foiled after a police patrolling team arrived at the spot. The cops nabbed one of the armed robbers and seized a pistol before taking the accused into custody. Two others accompanying him managed to escape.

The injured employees were rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital.

"Three masked men broke into our office and began hitting my head with a pistol while demanding money. Two blank



shots were fired as police tried to overpower them," said Linkan Mallik, one of the employees who was attacked.

He added that the day's collection of their office ranged close to Rs 2 lakh and he suspected that there was no other motive behind the attack other than to loot the cash.

"We do not have enmity with anyone. The attackers must have followed us while we were returning after field collections," said Srikanth Pradhan, another employee.

The two employees also noted that they were not sure if the attackers took away the looted money or left it behind.

## In Kendrapada Miscreants loot cash, gold from family at gunpoint



**PNS ■ KENDRAPADA**

Armed men looted money and gold ornaments from a family at gunpoint at Angarakh village under the Aul police station in Kendrapada district on Wednesday night.

Victims Prabhakar Pradhan and his daughter-in-law Anusmita Pradhan have suffered severe injuries as the robbers also attacked them with sharp-edged weapons during the robbery bid.

As per reports, as many as six miscreants with guns and sharp-edged weapons entered Prabhakar's house at around 8 pm and attacked him and his daughter-in-law before they

could understand anything.

The burglars also terrorised them by brandishing guns and looted cash and gold ornaments worth over Rs 5 lakh from the house by breaking the lockers of three almirahs. Prabhakar and Anusmita could not identify the burglars as the latter had covered their faces with masks.

Getting information, the Aul police reached the spot and started an investigation into the incident.

"The burglars called us and entered the house immediately when I opened the door. They attacked us with sharp-edged weapons and looted money and gold ornaments by brandishing guns," said Anusmita.

## In Baleswar Docs can't skip hosps during duty hrs anymore

Biometric machines to be installed in all govt hosps soon

**UBACHAK MOHANTY ■ BALESWAR**

In view of allegations that doctors posted in government establishments are busy in attending patients in private nursing homes and clinics during their duty hours, the district has braced up for installation of biometric machines in all healthcare centres, including the District Headquarters Hospital (DHH) here.

The issue of non-availability of duty doctors hitting patients' care and causing severe pain and agony among their attendants was raised by Basta MLA Subasini Jena pointing difficulties at the Basta CHC. A similar allegation was also

levelled by Baleswar MP Pratap Chandra Sarangi.

After getting complaints from various quarters, district Collector Mayur Suryawanshi stressed on the installation of biometric machines for the physicians as well as paramedics.

Although two such machines were operational in the DHH, yet they remained defunct due to want of adequate WiFi strength. As regards the complaints of patients and their attendants that they are not able to know the dates of the surgeries and the doctors who would be performing them, CDMO Gopinath Parida said that soon boards would be installed in the prominent places in the DHH giving information on the issue.

Further, Parida said biometric installation in all healthcare institutions would be completed as soon as possible.

## 7-year-old leopardess dies in S'pur zoo

Of infection in uterus

**NIMAI CHARAN SAHU ■ SAMBALPUR**

A female leopard died while undergoing treatment for a possible infection at Sambalpur Zoo on Wednesday night.

Sources reported that at about 9:13 pm on Wednesday, the 7-year-old leopardess named Rani died due to a possible uterine infection.

Reports also stated that in the evening, Rani started vomiting, prompting immediate medical attention. Subsequently, she was taken to the Sambalpur zoo hospital and administered injections.

However, her health continued to deteriorate, and she began bleeding from the mouth during treatment. Despite the best efforts of zoo officials, the leopardess died.



Confirming the reports, the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Hiraakud Wildlife Division said that the spread

of infection could not be controlled.

"Officials found Rani vomiting at about 6 pm in the

evening and rushed her to the zoo hospital. She was administered anti-inflammatory and antibiotic injections but her life could not be saved. Preliminary reports suggest a uterus infection as the cause of her death," said the DFO.

Incidentally, in the early weeks of November, Rani had her first mating with a leopard named Raja at the zoo. Additionally, the leopard was slated to undergo a medical examination in the third week of this month to check her reproductive health, as per the DFO.

Rani's death comes after a leopard carcass was found near the Budhijhari protected forest area under the Singhapada section of Nayagarh district on Wednesday morning. The animal was suspected to have died after coming in contact with a live wire set up by poachers.

## Old age pension availed by fraud in Kakatpur

Complaints lodged against 63 ineligible beneficiaries

**PNS ■ KAKATPUR**

Old age pension was availed by as many as 63 persons by forging documents and their age in Patpur Sadanga village under Kundhei Panchayat of Kakatpur block in Puri district.

They have done so by inflating their age and giving fake medical certificates, voter ID cards and other related forged documents.

Interestingly, out of the 63 ineligible beneficiaries who have received old age allowance, more than 11 have also



received the Subhadra Yojana benefits.

Meanwhile, after getting a complaint in this regard, district Collector, Puri has directed a probe into the issue.

When asked, BDO Bishnu Gobind said that as per direction of the district Collector, a three-man committee will be formed to investigate the issue and strict action will be taken against the undeserving beneficiaries. Also, the money they have received will be refunded, he added.

## B'pur Mahuri Mahotsav from Dec 7



**PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR**

The Mahuri Mahotsav, 2024 will be celebrated for two days on December 7 and 8 here. The main aim is to popularise folk art, culture, literature and dance of Odisha.

President of Mahuri Mahotsav Dr Sanyasi Moharana and secretary Mihir Kumar Panigrahi informed this to mediapersons on Wednesday.

Focus of the event will be on Danda Nacha, Gahani,

Dasakathia, Bagha Nacha, Pilakhai Dahani Nacha, Ghumara Nacha, Ranapa Singh Badya, etc, besides on Loka Nrutyas, said acting president Kartik Panigrahi.

In order to bring out the hidden talents of children to limelight, an arrangement has been made to conduct competitions on drawing, essay, debate and folk song etc. Advisors of the Mahotsav Abhayendu Patnaik and Anil Patro sought the cooperation of all in making the Mahotsav successful.

## Prafulla Ghadai's 84th birthday celebrated

**PNS ■ JAJPUR**

Senior BJD leader and former Odisha Finance Minister Prafulla Chandra Ghadai's 84th birth anniversary was observed at Dhabalgiri in Jajpur district on Thursday. Besides, the birthday celebrations were also organised at many other places like Danagadi, Kalinganagar and Sukinda.

On the occasion, a book titled 'Jananeta' was released by Ghadai. The book chronicles articles by eminent persons on the contributions of Ghadai to Sukinda, Jajpur and Odisha.

Fruits and medicines were distributed to patients at various hospitals to mark the occasion. Poor people were given away winter clothes like blankets and sweaters.



"Sukinda is very dear to my heart. I love the people of this area very much. I will work for these people all through my life," said Ghadai.

"Prafulla Ghadai has always stood with us," Naresh

Mahant, a local tribal, said.

A blood donation camp was organised on the occasion, which was inaugurated by Ghadai's son and former minister Pritiranjana Ghadai. Among others present on

the occasion were Danagadi Block Chairperson Archana Das, Sukinda Block Chairman Dibyaranjan Baral, youth Leaders Pradip Kumar Mohanty and Debiprasad Mohanty.

## Int'l Disability Day held in JSpur

Different aids given to disabled persons

**PNS ■ JAGATSINGHPUR**

The Jagatsinghpur district administration and the Social Security Disabled Empowerment Department observed the International Day of Disabled Persons (IDDP) at a private disabled school located at Nuapola, six km from her.

Jagatsinghpur district Collector J Sonal chaired the meeting. MLA Amarendra Das, Zilla Parishad president



Manoj Kumar Bhoi, Municipality Chairperson Archana Singh, Culture Officer Dilip Kumar Jena, DIPRO Pratechi Tanaya Mohanty, and the Dis-

trict Social Security Officer spoke on the significance of the IDDP celebration.

The guests discussed this year's IDDP theme 'Amplify-

ing the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future.' The theme recognises the important role that persons with

disabilities play in creating a more inclusive and sustainable world for all.

The Social Security Department distributed Rs 2.50 lakh as assistance for marriage of the disabled to 10 couples, besides giving tricycles to 3 persons. A colorful cultural programme was presented by the inmates of the disabled school.

A similar IDDP fest was held in Dhanuhar Belairi village under Balikuda block. The District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) organised the event in a government school.

## Employ locals in DBRL-HSCL: B'swar activist

Threatens stir if demand not met

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

A youth leader and social activist of the district has demanded employment of local youths in the newly acquired joint venture company the Dalmia Bharat Refractories Limited (DBRL) and Himadri Specialty Chemical Limited (HSCL) at Chhanpur and engagement of former workers of the Birla Tyres as per their eligibility and age factors.

Bikram Panda, besides demanding engagement of at

least 80 percent local unemployed in the plant, threatened to undertake a stir if the demands were not fulfilled.

Notably, Panda in November 2022 had sat in an indefinite hunger strike demanding opening of Birla Tyres which was shut from April 2021 following financial crunch.

"The company would use the natural resources, besides the infrastructure here. Hence, it should give priority to the local unemployed youths and further it should honour the agreement resolution plan following order of the NCLT (National Company Law Tri-

bunal). The elected representatives here are trying to fish in the troubled waters and are not genuinely interested to resolve the issue," alleged Panda stating further he would embark on agitation if the issues were not addressed.

According to the NCLT, Kolkata order, the success resolution plan (SRP) was approved and according to it the joint venture company would engage the previous workers who were with Birla Tyres and they would be extended all service as well as retirement benefits as per labour laws, he said.

# Putin hails PM Modi's revolutionary vision

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Russian President Vladimir Putin has hailed 'Make in India' initiative and the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's stable policies, saying this would encourage Russian companies to set up manufacturing bases here. He praised Prime Minister Modi's "India-First" Policy and "Make in India" Initiative at VTB Russia Calling Investment Forum in Moscow, a ministry of commerce and industry statement said here on Thursday.

He said India has created stable conditions for small and medium-sized enterprises. Putin has expressed Russia's willingness to establish manufacturing operations in India as investments in India are profitable. "We are also ready to set up our manufacturing operations in India. The Indian government, under the prime minister's leadership, has been creating stable conditions, driven by a policy of putting India first," he said, adding Russian company Rosneft has invested USD 20 billion in the country recently. The president also urged for greater cooperation among BRICS nations to support the growth of SMEs and encouraged member countries to identify key areas for collaboration at the upcoming summit in Brazil next year.



The statement said President Putin acknowledged India's efforts to foster a stable environment for growth, emphasising how these policies have contributed to India's development. President Putin's remarks underscored India's economic progress under Prime Minister Modi's leadership. He lauded the Indian government and its efforts in creating "stable conditions" for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly highlighting the economic initiatives spearheaded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with a special focus on the "Make in India" program. President Putin drew parallels between Russia's import substitution program and India's "Make in India" initiative, expressing Russia's willingness to establish manufactur-

ing operations in India. Investments in India are profitable, he added. He also emphasised that India's leadership has focused on prioritising its national interests. "Prime Minister Modi has a similar program called Make in India. We are also ready to set up our manufacturing operations in India. The Indian government, under the Prime Minister's leadership, has been creating stable conditions, driven by a policy of putting India first. We believe that investing in India is profitable," stated the Russian President. He also said that Russian company Rosneft invested \$20 bn in the country recently. President Putin also highlighted the significance of Russia's import substitution program in the context of BRICS's evolution, focusing

on the growth of SMEs and the necessity for a rapid dispute resolution mechanism to facilitate smooth business transactions for SMEs in BRICS+ countries. He pointed out the rise of new Russian brands that are replacing Western brands that have exited the market, noting the success of local Russian manufacturers in sectors such as consumer goods, IT, high-tech, and agriculture. "For us, this is particularly important as part of our import substitution program. The emergence of new Russian brands is helping replace those of Western companies that have voluntarily left our market. Our local manufacturers have achieved significant success, not only in consumer goods but also in IT and high-tech industries," he said.

## Countries must observe humanitarian laws: Jaishankar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Countries have right to respond to situations but they should be mindful of civilian casualties and must observe humanitarian laws. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday. Responding to supplementaries during the Question Hour regarding India's position on the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine, he said, "We condemn terrorism, we condemn hostage-taking. We do believe countries have the right to respond to the situation but countries should be mindful of civilian casualties. They must observe humanitarian law and we would like a ceasefire and an early end of violence." When asked the reason for India's abstention from a resolution in the UN General Assembly on October 27, 2023, regarding the protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations, Jaishankar said there were many resolutions in the UN General Assembly and in some India abstained and in some, it voted in favour. According to him, there are several reasons to abstain such as a resolution is not balanced, it is more divisive, it can set a precedence which has consequences for India or



it has larger implications. "In this particular case, we felt that the resolution was not well-drafted and not well-considered. We had reservations on the language. Our concern was not accommodated. That is why we abstained," he said. Responding to TMC MP Saket Gokhle, who asked about India's position on a ban imposed by the Israeli government on the UN aid agency UNRWA and how India is sending aid to Palestine, Jaishankar said the government has stood by its decision to send humanitarian aid and it has just released

the latest tranche of support to the UNRWA. He further asked that India always supported a two-state solution and in the UN, India abstained on a resolution against Israeli illegal settlement in the West Bank. What is India's position on the illegal settlement made by Israel in the West Bank in Palestine," Gokhle asked. "Regarding the two-state solution, we supported the two-state solution. We have been public and unambiguous about that. There should be no cause for confusion regarding a two-state solution," Jaishankar answered.

He reiterated that the wording of resolutions is important for deciding to support them. Talking about the October 27, 2023 resolution, he said, "There was no reference to terrorism. There was no reference to hostage-taking. In our mind if a resolution doesn't reflect the entirety of a situation, it is not a balanced resolution. A country like India which is itself a victim of terrorism, if we countenance the fact that terrorism is underplayed and ignored, it is not in our interest that we do so (support)." When asked about India's position on the International

Court of Justice's warrant against Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, former Israel Defence Minister Yoav Gallant and a Hamas leader for war crimes, the minister said, "India is not a member of the International Criminal Court. When the International Criminal Court was constituted, the question of our membership was considered. For very good reason and after a great deal of deliberation, India decided not to become a member. With regard to any decision passed by the ICC, it is not binding on us." Highlighting India's humanitarian assistance to Palestine, he said New Delhi has given assistance to people of Palestine at this particular time by making an annual contribution of USD 5 million to UNRWA the main assistance-providing agency. "This amount traditionally used to be USD 1 Million. This government decided to raise it from USD 1 million to 5 million," he said. Jaishankar added that India has provided 70 metric tonnes of aid of which 16.5 was of medicine in 2023. "We have given 65 metric tons of medicines to the Palestinian Authority and UNRWA in 2024. We have provided 33 metric tons of medicine to Lebanon," he said.

## PM Modi, Bhutan King resolve to further expand 'exemplary' bilateral ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Bhutan vowed on Thursday to further bolster the "exemplary" India-Bhutan partnership across all sectors with Prime Minister Narendra Modi conveying to Bhutanese King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck New Delhi's strong commitment to economic development of the Himalayan nation. Shortly after King Wangchuck arrived here on a two-day trip, he and Prime Minister Modi held talks focusing on bilateral cooperation in diverse areas, including clean energy partnership, trade and investment, space and technology. The two leaders exchanged ideas on the 'Gelephu Mindfulness City' initiative, a visionary project spearheaded by Wangchuck to catalyse Bhutan's development and strengthen linkages with adjoining border areas in India. The Bhutanese King was received at the airport by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, in reflection of the importance India has attached to the Bhutanese leader's visit. The King is accompanied by Queen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck and senior officials of the Bhutanese government. Following the talks, Prime Minister Modi hosted a lunch



in honour of the King and the Queen. "The meeting underscored the tradition of regular high-level exchanges between India and Bhutan, reflecting the spirit of mutual trust, cooperation and profound understanding that underpins the bilateral relations between the two countries," an Indian readout said. The prime minister and the King expressed satisfaction at the excellent state of bilateral relations, encompassing development cooperation, clean energy partnership, trade and investment, space and technology cooperation, and people-to-people ties, it said. "They reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening this exemplary partner-

ship across all sectors," it said. "The prime minister reiterated India's strong commitment to the economic development in Bhutan, highlighting the doubling of India's development support to Bhutan for its 13th five-year plan period," the readout noted. The King expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Modi and the people of India for the steadfast support of Bhutan's aspirations for happiness, progress and prosperity, it added. In the talks, Modi fondly recalled the "exceptionally warm hospitality" accorded by the Bhutanese government and the people of Bhutan during his state visit to the country in March.

## Occurrence, filling up of vacant posts continuous process: Centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Occurrence and filling up of vacant posts is a continuous process and details of vacancies are maintained by the respective ministries or departments, the Centre said on Thursday. Ministries or departments of the central government have been directed, from time to time, to fill up the vacant posts in a time bound manner, Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh told Rajya Sabha in a written reply. He was responding to a question seeking "details of the total number of vacancies in all central government ministries and departments to date, department-wise". "Occurrence and filling up of vacant posts in various ministries/departments is a continuous process. The details of vacancies are maintained by the respective ministry/department," Singh said. In response to another question, he said the contractual appointments in government departments are made by the individual ministries/departments strictly based on their requirements, in accordance with the provisions of General Financial Rules, 2017. "Vacant posts have been filled up in mission mode, in Rozgar Melas launched by Honble Prime Minister on 22nd October, 2022. 13 Rozgar Melas have been held at central level in 40-45 cities across various states/Union Territories," the minister said. In a separate reply to a question seeking details of the number of recruitment letters pertaining to the central gov-



ernment handed over during Rozgar Melas, he said "several lakhs of appointment letters have been issued during the Rozgar Melas". As part of Rozgar Mela, the vacant posts in central government ministries and various organizations of central government are being filled up in a mission mode, he said. Details of various recruitments and vacancies, including category wise breakup are maintained by respective ministries/departments/central public sector undertakings (CPSUs) and the concerned recruitment agencies such as Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), Staff Selection Commission (SSC), Railway Recruitment Board (RRB), Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS) etc., Singh said. Replying to another question, he said as many as 63 specialists have been appointed in different Central government departments through the lateral entry mode from 2019 to 2023. Of these, 35 were appointed on contract basis and the

remaining 28 on deputation, the minister said in a written reply in the Upper House. "Lateral recruitment at the levels of joint secretary, director and deputy secretary has been undertaken since 2018 to appoint persons for specific assignments, keeping in view their specialised knowledge and expertise in the domain area," Singh said. Giving details, Singh said eight joint secretaries were appointed in 2019, including five on contractual basis and three through deputation from other government departments/organisations. Thirty recruitments were made in 2021 at the levels of joint secretary (3), director (18) and deputy secretary (9). Of these, 14 were on contract and 16 were through deputation, the minister said. In 2023, 25 such specialists were appointed, including three joint secretaries, 15 directors and seven deputy secretaries. Of them, 16 were appointed on contract basis and nine through deputation, the minister's reply said.

## Rainfall brought by Western Disturbances mitigates northwest India's air pollution: Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In response to repeated requests from the Delhi government, which had sought the Centre's assistance for artificial rainfall as a potential short-term solution to improve the city's hazardous air quality, the Government informed Parliament on Thursday that rainfall brought by Western Disturbances in northwest India during the winter months already serves to mitigate the region's air pollution, thus eliminating the need for cloud seeding. It also highlighted experts' concern over potential adverse effects of chemicals used in this process. Replying to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Union Minister of State for Environment Kirti Vardhan Singh said his min-



istry received four letters from the Delhi government between August 30 and November 19, asking it to consider cloud seeding as an emergency measure to improve air quality in Delhi during winters. The minister said expert opinions were sought from the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the

Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) regarding the feasibility of cloud seeding for artificial rainfall in the national capital. Citing the experts, Singh said, "Winter clouds in the region are primarily formed due to Western Disturbances (WD),

which are short-lived and travel from west to east. When low clouds form due to WDs, they typically result in natural rainfall over northwest India, eliminating the need for cloud seeding." The experts told the ministry that high-altitude clouds, which are typically at elevations above 5-6 km, cannot be seeded due to aircraft limitations. "Furthermore, effective cloud seeding requires specific cloud conditions which are generally absent during Delhi's cold and dry winter months. Even if suitable clouds were present, the dry atmospheric layer beneath them could cause any developed precipitation to evaporate before reaching the surface. "Additionally, concerns about the uncertainties, efficacy, and potential adverse effects of cloud seeding chemicals

remain," the minister quoted the experts as saying. Last year too, the Delhi government considered using cloud seeding in collaboration with IIT-Kanpur to improve air quality during winter. The goal was to induce rain to wash away pollutants. However, the project got delayed because it required permissions from several Central government agencies, including the aviation and environmental authorities. Cloud seeding involves dispersing substances into the air to encourage condensation, resulting in precipitation. The most common substances used for cloud seeding include silver iodide, potassium iodide and dry ice (solid carbon dioxide). These agents provide the nuclei around which water vapour can condense, ultimately leading to the formation of rain or snow.

## PM Modi put farmers at centre stage: Dhankar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Chairman Rajya Sabha and Vice President, Jagdeep Dhankhar, on Thursday said that the issue of farmers, have been put by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the centre stage. In his remarks in the house, he stressed that in every walk of life—whether affordable housing, whether solar house, whether Jal in Har Nal, and technology to farmers. Therefore, our expectations are bound to be high. It is a time when there is convergence to take the farmer to a greater height. "So I have no doubt that is being done at the moment will get greater momentum and all agencies are converg-

ing. Our expectations are high, but our accomplishments are also historic; our achievements are also splendid, and this will go a long way for the nation", he added. Earlier, taking note of Chairman's recent concerns on farmer issues, Former Prime Minister HD. Deve Gowda, stated in the House, "You speak so much about the farmer; yesterday.....on the issue of the farming communities. You are so much concerned about the farming community. I am a farmer, Sir." Recently, Dhankhar had expressed concerns regarding the challenges faced by farmers. His remarks today reaffirm the government's commitment to the farming community.

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## No proposal to increase retirement age of SC, HC judges: Government

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

There is no proposal to increase the retirement age of Supreme Court and high court judges, the government told the Rajya Sabha on Thursday. It also underlined that there is no mention of any "cooling off" period in the Constitution for post-retirement assignments for judges. Supreme Court judges retire at the age of 65, while High Court judges demit office at 62. District judges retire at the age of 60. "There is no such proposal for increasing the retirement age of judges of the Supreme Court and high courts," Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said. The UPA 2 government had brought a constitutional



amendment bill in the Lok Sabha to bring the retirement age of HC judges on par with that of SC judges. But the bill lapsed as it was not taken up for consideration in the House. Asking a supplementary during Question Hour, AAP's Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chaddha said judges have been given executive and political roles post-retirement. While some come to Rajya Sabha as members, others become governors after retirement. He claimed that this

raises several questions in the minds of people. "It raises the question of conflict of interest. It raises questions about executive interference in the judicial process. Independence of the judiciary is questioned," Chaddha said. The AAP MP said many committees have suggested and he also wants to know the government's view that there should be a cooling-off period. He said no judge should be given any political or executive role for at least two years after retirement. They should also not be given any chairmanship of any committee, he added. Chaddha also suggested that their pension should be enhanced to the extent that they should not be financially dependent on any post-retirement job.

# Farmers' 'jatha' will march to Delhi from Shambhu border on Friday: Pandher

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI

A 'jatha' of 101 farmers will embark on a march to Delhi at one pm Friday from the Shambhu border in Haryana-Punjab protest site, farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher has said. Ahead of the Punjab farmers' proposed march to the national capital on December 6, the Delhi Police on Thursday said they are ready to deal with any situation at the Singhu border in the national capital. Police officials, however, said as of now there is no extra deployment of security personnel at the Singhu border with Haryana. Addressing a press conference at Shambhu border on Thursday, Pandher said, "The jatha will march towards Delhi. What the government will do, it is for them to think. We will begin our march towards Delhi at 1 pm from the Shambhu border." He said that even now if the

government stops them from carrying out their march, it will be a "moral victory" for them. "Because their leaders have been saying if farmers do not bring tractor trolleys then there should be no objection," he said. Ambala Police in Haryana flagged a high alert following farmers plan of a Delhi march and sent senior officers including Ambala district police chief to the border to assess security. Central paramilitary forces have also been deployed on the Haryana side of the border. Ambala had on Wednesday asked farmers to reconsider their march and contemplate any action only after getting permission from the Delhi Police. The administration has already imposed Section 163 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, restricting assembly of five or more persons in the district and issued notices at



the protest site. "It does not look like a Punjab-Haryana border, but an international territory. If they have their way they will not allow even a bird to cross it," Pandher told reporters. He also said there was no plan yet of a march from Khanauri border in Haryana. "We have no announcement to march (to Delhi) from Khanauri border point, despite that there is heavy deployment of police," he

said. Earlier in the day, Deputy Inspector General of Police Mandeep Singh Sidhu (Patiala Range) and Senior Superintendent of Police Patiala Nanak Singh met Pandher and Surjit Singh Phul at Shambhu border. Farmers, gathered under the banner of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, had earlier announced a foot march to the national capital seeking a legal guarantee for minimum support price of crops, and over their several other demands. Sidhu said the farmer assured police that they will be peaceful and will not take tractor-trolleys in the march. "They will go on foot," he said about the marchers. Farmers have been camping at Shambhu and Khanauri border points between Punjab and Haryana since February 13 after their march to Delhi was stopped by security forces.

Police have also erected a steel mesh to shield them from any stone pelting. Ambala administration is yet to lift the barricading. On February 21, Shubhkar Singh, a farmer from Punjab, died during a clash at Khanauri border when protesters tried to march towards Delhi. Teargas shells were also lobbed by the security forces. Besides the MSP, farmers are demanding a farm debt waiver, pension for farmers and farm labourers, no hike in electricity tariff, withdrawal of police cases and "justice" for the victims of the 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri violence. Reinstatement of the Land Acquisition Act, 2013, and compensation to the families of the farmers, who died during a previous agitation in 2020-21, are also two of their demands. Ahead of the Punjab farmers' proposed march to the national capital on December

6, the Delhi Police on Thursday said they are ready to deal with any situation at the Singhu border. Police officials, however, said as of now there is no extra deployment of security personnel at the Singhu border. "We have planned a significant deployment at the Singhu border on Delhi-Chandigarh highway ahead of farmers' march towards the national capital. We are analysing the situation and if we get any intelligence input or information about the movement of farmers, the decision will be taken accordingly," a senior police officer said. "As of now no extra deployment at the Singhu border has been made, but we are ready to tackle any situation," the officer said. Presently, the Singhu border witnesses check posts by the local police to ensure the enforcement of GRAP-4 measures and law and order, another officer said.

## TN remembers Amma, but what about her party leaders?

**KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■**  
CHENNAI

It has been eight years since Jayalalitha Jayaram breathed her last becoming the second chief minister of Tamil Nadu to die in office. The factors that led to the demise of Jayalalitha remain a mystery despite a commission of inquiry probing the same for more than five years. It is not known how many among the AIADMK leadership are aware of the findings of the A Arumugaswamy Commission which submitted its report in August 2022. The Pioneer was the first newspaper in the country to predict that with the death of Jayalalitha, the AIADMK would become a part of history. With dozens of leaders belonging to the Thevar, Vanniyar and Gaundar communities pulling the party in different directions, the AIADMK, Tamil Nadu's largest political party ended up in groups, sub-groups headed by families and local



chieftains. Jayalalitha who led the party to impressive victories in 2011 and 2016 assembly elections and 2014 Lok Sabha polls ensured that the party reached an unassailable position. Though there was deterioration in her health after the 2016 assembly election, neither her aides or party subordinates took any interest in admitting her to a hospital. She was seen shivering and struggling to take even a step

during the Independence Day Flag Hoisting Ceremony at Fort Saint George (Tamil Nadu) seat of power). She was admitted to a corporate hospital in Chennai on 22nd September 2016 where she passed away around 11.30 pm on 5th December 2016. O Panneerselvam succeeded Amma (as Jayalalitha was addressed by party cadres and followers) and he was ousted within two months through a palace coup staged

by her close aide V K Sasikala and her nephews. Stage was set in for the swearing in of Sasikala as chief minister on 14th February 2017. But the Supreme Court order upholding the Parappana Agrahara special court verdict which had sentenced Jayalalitha and Sasikala for four years rigorous imprisonment in a disproportionate asset case. Since Jayalalitha was no more, Sasikala and her two relatives, who were the co-accused had to undergo the imprisonment. On the day she was sworn in as chief minister, Sasikala's cavalcade rushed to the Bangalore jail and surrendered before the IG (prisons). Before leaving for serving her jail term, Sasikala had appointed Edappadi Palaniswamy as chief minister. But within months, TTV Dhinakaran, her nephew who had successfully infiltrated into Veda Nilayam (Jaya's palatial building in Poes Garden) launched his mission to overthrow

## Odisha Minister blames Bengal Govt for potato crisis in the State

**PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR**

Odisha food supplies and consumer welfare minister KC Patra on Thursday blamed the West Bengal government for the ongoing potato crisis in the state, accusing it of creating an artificial scarcity to tarnish the reputation of the state's BJP-led government. "Artificial scarcity was created to bring disrepute to the Odisha government. West Bengal chief minister recently stopped supply of potatoes to Odisha, before agreeing to resume shipments," he told reporters. Amidst mounting criticism for his handling of the crisis, Patra remarked, "I don't understand why they (West Bengal) are doing this. It's obvious that prices will rise when there's less supply in the market." Asked about the duration of the crisis, Patra reassured the public, "As of now, there is sufficient potato stock in



exports on November 28 after prices in local markets surged to Rs 35-40 per kg. As a result, hundreds of trucks carrying potatoes to Odisha were turned back at the border, leading to chaos in markets and prices soaring to Rs 60 per kg. Patra assured that the Odisha government is prepared to source potatoes from Uttar Pradesh and Punjab if West Bengal halts supply again, noting that the state heavily relies on its neighbour for potato imports.

## President calls on scientists to deal with challenges in agriculture sector

**PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR**

President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday called on agriculture scientists to develop and disseminate technologies in a timely manner to deal with natural disasters, adverse effects of climate change and excessive exploitation of resources. The President made the remarks while addressing the gathering at the 40th convocation of Odisha University of Agricultural and Technology (OUAT) here. She also urged the agriculture scientists to come up with ideas to protect soil, water and environment from the adverse impact of climate change. "Agriculture is facing new challenges such as natural disasters, adverse effects of climate change, decreasing per capita farm size, and excessive exploitation of natural resources. To deal with these challenges, our scientists will have to develop and disseminate technologies timely. We have to emphasise on environmental protection, soil health protection, water and soil conservation, and better use of natural resources," Murmu said. She noted that climate change-



related issues such as rising temperatures and increase in greenhouse gases are affecting agricultural production in the country. "Agricultural scientists have an important responsibility to deal with all such issues," she said, adding, excessive use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides has also emerged as new challenges for the sector. "Their (fertiliser and pesticide) effect on soil, water and the environment are a matter of concern for all. Young scientists would find solutions to solve these problems," the President said. She, however, expressed satisfaction that over the past

## 11 MLAs take oath as Jharkhand Ministers

**PTI ■ RANCHI**

Six new faces and two women are among 11 MLAs who took oath as ministers in the Hemant Soren government in Jharkhand on Thursday. Of the 11 legislators who were sworn in as ministers, six are from the JMM and four from the Congress. Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar administered the oath to the ministers at Ashok Udyan of the Raj Bhavan here. The six JMM legislators, who took oath as ministers, are Sudivya Kumar, Deepak Birua, Ramdas Soren, Chandra Linda, Yogendra Prasad and Hafizul Hasan. Congress MLAs Deepika Pandey Singh, Shilpi Neha Tirkey, Irfan Ansari and Radhakrishna Kishore were sworn in as ministers, while RJD's Sanjay Prasad Yadav also found a berth. JMM leader Hemant Soren took oath as the chief minister on November 28. Six new faces have been inducted into the Hemant Soren government, while Deepika Pandey Singh, Irfan Ansari, Deepak Birua and Ramdas Soren have got ministerial positions for the second time and Hafizul Hasan for the third.



The swearing-in ceremony began with Stephen Marandi taking oath as the pro-tem speaker of the assembly. Marandi, a senior JMM MLA, was appointed as pro-tem Speaker of the assembly after Hemant Soren took oath as the chief minister last week. The CM, soon after the swearing-in ceremony told reporters, "Now our work will gain momentum and the government will move ahead with full speed." Congress' Shilpi Neha Tirkey thanked the senior leadership of the party for giving her the responsibility. "It's a big responsibility and I will try to fulfil it. Whatever department is given to me, I will try to do justice with my work," she said.

berths, including CM Soren, in the 12-member cabinet. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) contested 43 seats and won 34, the highest-ever constituencies bagged by the party in the assembly polls. The Congress got four ministerial berths. The party had won 16 seats in the assembly elections, while CPI(M) Liberation, which secured two seats as an ally of the INDIA bloc, earlier announced that it would not be a part of the cabinet. The BJP contested 68 seats, won 21 and emerged as the second-largest party in the assembly. After Soren took oath last Saturday, it was also decided that an assembly session would be held from December 9-12. Congress' Kishore won the Chattarpur assembly seat by defeating BJP's Pashpa Devi by 736 votes while JMM's Birua registered a thumping victory from the Chaibasa constituency over BJP's Geeta Balmuchu with a margin of 64,835 votes. JMM's Linda bagged the Bishunpur seat by a margin of 32,756 votes, defeating BJP candidate and former Rajya Sabha MP Samir Orao, while RJD's Yadav beat BJP's Amit Kumar Mandal by a margin of

21,471 votes to win the Godda assembly seat. Similarly, JMM's Ramdas Soren won the Ghatshila seat by defeating BJP's Babulal Soren, who is also the son of former chief minister Champai Soren, by a margin of 22,446 votes and Congress' Ansari registered a victory from the Jamtara assembly seat by beating BJP candidate Sita Murmu (Soren) by 43,676 votes. JMM's Hasan won the Madhupur assembly seat by defeating BJP's Ganga Narayan Singh by 20,027 votes while Congress' Deepika Pandey Singh secured the Mahagama assembly constituency by beating BJP's Ashok Kumar by a margin of 18,645 votes. While JMM's Yogendra Prasad won the Gomia assembly seat by defeating AJSU Party's Lambodar Mahato by a margin of 36,093 votes and the party's Sudivya Kumar won the Giridih segment, defeating BJP's Nirbhay Kumar Shahabadi by a margin of 3,838 votes. Congress' Shilpi Neha Tirkey, who is the daughter of former minister Bandhu Tirkey, registered a win over BJP's Sunny Toppo in the Mandar assembly constituency with a margin of 22,803 votes.

## What happened in Ayodhya and Sambhal 500 years ago is happening today in Bangladesh: Yogi

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE/KAMLESH SRIVASTAVA ■ AYODHYA**

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, speaking at the inauguration of the 43rd Ramayana Mela at Ram Katha Park, drew parallels between the historical actions of Babur's commanders in Ayodhya and Sambhal 500 years ago and the ongoing events in Bangladesh. He stressed that both share a common intent of division and cautioned against ignoring such threats. "Divisive forces are active within our society, eroding social harmony and unity," the Chief Minister stated. He

added that those promoting discord often have properties abroad and would flee in times of crisis, leaving others to face the consequences. Drawing parallels between the past and present, Adityanath remarked, "What a general of Babur did 500 years ago in Ayodhya and Sambhal is reflected in what is happening in Bangladesh today. The nature and intent of these forces are the same." In his address he emphasized the unifying legacy of Lord Ram and blamed internal divisions for India's historical subjugation by foreign invaders. "Had we valued unity and prevented the strategies of enemies from sowing social

animosity, India would never have become a slave nation. A handful of invaders would have been crushed by our brave soldiers. But internal obstacles allowed these forces to succeed," said Adityanath. He added, "Even today, those who engage in caste-based politics to destroy the social fabric are active. The DNA of such divisive forces remains unchanged." In his address, CM Adityanath urged the audience to draw inspiration from Lord Shri Ram's ideals and work towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat'. He released a booklet during the event and assured full government sup-



port for the Ramayana Mela Committee's initiatives, emphasizing research on the Ramayana and the revival of Ayodhya Dham's ancient heritage. Highlighting Lord Ram's contributions to fostering unity, CM Adityanath lamented that internal divisions and social hatred had historically made India vulnerable to invasions. He expressed concern that caste-based politics and other divisive tactics continue to weaken the nation. "Ayodhya has been a beacon of wisdom and welfare for humanity for thousands of years," he said. "Today, Ayodhya Dham is emerging as a global spiritual and cultural

hub, free from hatred and conflict, offering solutions to global strife." Reflecting on India's enduring devotion to Lord Ram, CM Adityanath mentioned how Ram Leelas, initiated by Tulsidas Ji, are performed across the country. He recalled the 1990s, when families gathered to watch the Ramayana serial on Doodarshan, showcasing the deep cultural connection to Lord Ram. The Chief Minister also criticized those who lack reverence for Lord Ram and Janaki, calling them adversaries. He reiterated the slogan from the 1990s, "Jo Ram ka nahi, vo kisi kaam ka nahi" (Those who do not stand with Ram, stand for

nothing). CM Adityanath emphasized the relevance of Lord Ram's values today, pointing out how disputes over property and caste-based divisions fragment society. He encouraged emulating Lord Ram's relationships, such as his friendship with Nishadraj, which revitalized the social fabric of Chitrakoot. He recalled how Lord Ram, despite winning Kishkindha and Lanka, crowned Sugriv and Vibhishan as rulers, underscoring his selflessness and commitment to unity. As a tribute, the government has erected a 56-foot-high statue in Shringaverpur, symbolizing Lord Ram's enduring teachings.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Korean crisis

President Yoon Suk Yeol briefly declared martial law, a move that ignited domestic outrage and international condemnation

A brief martial law was imposed in South Korea, a country known to have a stable democracy and prosperity to vie for. The South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol took this extreme step to preserve his position amid falling popularity. He faces the toughest challenge of his presidency after a controversial decision to impose martial law backfired spectacularly, plunging the nation into a deep political crisis. The fallout has sparked widespread protests, calls for his resignation, and even moves toward impeachment. Yoon declared martial law, citing national security concerns and the need to eliminate "anti-state elements." However, many viewed the measure as a desperate attempt to consolidate power amid mounting political and personal scandals. The backlash was immediate and severe, with lawmakers rushing to overturn the decree and protesters gathering en masse in the streets of Seoul. Within hours, Yoon revoked the order, but the reversal failed to quell public anger.



The damage was done.

Yoon's presidency, which began with a narrow 2022 election victory, has been riddled with controversy. His platform, focused on gender neutrality and hawkish stances on North Korea, initially appealed to younger male voters. However, a series of missteps and scandals—ranging from allegations of corruption involving First Lady Kim Keon Hee to tensions with the opposition-controlled National Assembly—have steadily eroded his approval ratings. The Democratic Party's landslide win in April's parliamentary elections further isolated Yoon politically.

With an emboldened opposition, efforts to impeach key government officials linked to Yoon's administration gained momentum, leaving the president with limited room to maneuver. The martial law declaration was a last-ditch effort by a president grappling with dwindling support and mounting resistance within his own party. Indeed the move was a miscalculation, a desperate attempt which backfired miserably with significant political fallout. The incident has intensified efforts by the opposition to impeach Yoon, with some members of his party now openly calling for his resignation. Protesters have taken to the streets in unprecedented numbers, with labour unions threatening nationwide strikes unless Yoon steps down. The crisis has raised alarm among South Korea's allies, including the United States and Japan have expressed serious concerns. Their worst fear of course is that North Korea may exploit the internal chaos to escalate tensions with the South, further destabilising the region. For South Korea, this moment represents a critical test of its democratic resilience. The swift revocation of martial law suggests that institutional checks and balances remain robust. However, the path forward will require careful navigation to prevent further polarisation and ensure stability in one of Asia's most vibrant democracies.

### PICTALK



Flamingos at the Pulicat Lake with backwaters brimming to the full, near Sriharikota

## G20 Rio summit: A new voice for the Global South



SUDHIR HINDWAN

The summit addressed pressing global challenges such as economic disparities, environmental degradation, food security and poverty alleviation

The nineteenth Summit of the G 20 held recently in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil holds a lot of significance in raising the voice of the Global South. In addition to the 19 member states, this summit also had two more members which included the African and the European Unions. Amid uncertainty on account of West Asian crises and the ongoing Russian-Ukraine conflict the summit focused on two pertinent issues: the increasing economic disparities and the degradation of the environment besides, the question of food security and poverty alleviation have also become paramount topics of the agenda for a stable and peaceful world order.

In the wake of the economic crisis of 1997, the G-20 Group was formed in 1999 with the basic purpose of uplifting the economies from economic doom and since then economic aggrandizement has been the central point of discussions in all the G-20 summits. The Group of 20 includes an amalgamation of the most powerful as well as the developing countries of the global order like: the United States, France, China, India, Japan, Germany, Russia, the UK, Brazil, Canada, Italy, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, Argentina, Australia. Adding Spain as a permanent guest of the G20 and the recent inclusion of the African Union and the European Union has extended its scope and area of influence.

The latest meeting of G 20 is important from the point of view that now countries of the south started giving a major push to their innate aims and the latest in the series is the idea of green industrial planning and strategies. The increasing demand for bringing about a few reforms in the major international monetary and governing institutions such as the World Bank, IMF the WTO and the Security Council of the UNO indicates the changing dimensions of the Group as now there seems to be a shift towards a more transparent and inclusive world system beside the Cultural Contiguity and exchanges about



energy resources are some new take away of the G 20 meetings. On the other hand, the member countries have increasingly realised the need for sustainable development along with increasing concern for deadly spikes of increasing temperature across the globe. The fullest utilisation of modern technology in the economy such as the digital economy remains another important topic that can play a magnificent role in upgrading the old pattern to save valuable time. The rich experience of India in promoting brotherhood and uplifting standards particularly from developing countries to undoubtedly a developed nation is a lot to learn from. India's remarkable progress in the IT industry has opened new doors for Indian companies, which are now aggressively expanding into overseas markets.

The country's compliance and regulatory authorities have ensured that foreign investments are secure and economic transactions are monitored thoroughly. Despite the challenges posed by a tough global economic climate, India's G20 Presidency during 2023 had already provided it with an opportunity to position itself as a key player in global manufacturing and a reliable partner in various sectors. The cooperation among G20

DESPITE THE CHALLENGES POSED BY A TOUGH GLOBAL ECONOMIC CLIMATE, INDIA'S G20 PRESIDENCY DURING 2023 HAD ALREADY PROVIDED IT WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO POSITION ITSELF AS A KEY PLAYER IN GLOBAL MANUFACTURING AND A RELIABLE PARTNER IN VARIOUS SECTORS

nations has also fostered the development of new strategies to meet the needs of vulnerable countries, fostering a more inclusive global society. This cooperation could promote a positive shift in international relations, promoting greater harmony and collaboration. India's impressive progress is largely attributed to its incredibly foresighted leadership, immense talent and superb foresight. The setting up of the International Solar Alliance, the Green Hydrogen Innovation Centre, One Sun One World One Grid, and the Global Biofuel Alliance along with the waste-to-energy efforts of India speaks volumes of its being the front leader among G 20 Countries. Prime Minister Modi has very well highlighted the remarkable efforts and achievements of India in his speech. He is undoubtedly the most respected and popular leader of World Politics who has made India the leading voice of the Global South. Gradually the scope of G 20 partnership has expanded to include critical areas such as disaster management, digital infrastructure, and climate change, making it a multifaceted initiative with both security and development dimensions as these are also some issues that are raising concerns about the international community.

However, the G-20 countries are also navigating through social and political pressures and their success will depend on how these countries maintain growth momentum amid numerous challenges. By addressing these challenges on account of socio, cultural economic and political pangs, the G 20 can further solidify its position as a global economic powerhouse, capable of driving growth not only among member countries but also able to create an inclusive world order. By fostering diplomatic engagement and conflict resolution mechanisms, the G 20 group members may also promote stability while ensuring economic prosperity for all member nations. The group's shared strategic vision is vital in shaping a multi-layered, multilateral strategy for dealing with not only economic but also security challenges in an increasingly interconnected world. The G 20 can also become a platform for fostering development in fields such as education, science, biotechnology, and strategic planning, further strengthening the bonds between its members and slowing the entire world community and India is playing front runner's role with the ablest leadership at the helm. (The writer is a professor and expert on strategic affairs; views are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### INDIA MUST ACT NOW

Madam — Apropos of the editorial 'No love lost' and the headlines 'Bangladesh challenges India,' the trajectory of diplomatic relations between India and Bangladesh is steeply going down from unfriendliness to the bottom of hostility in the long-term perspective. Bangladesh is moving menacingly fast to Pakistan's fate with a point of no return. Atrocities on Hindu minorities have been echoed across continents and the phenomenon is similar to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Hindus in India are in deep anguish and seek diplomatic and trade and commerce cessation with Bangladesh. The extremist political and religious culture of Bangladesh will not allow cordiality of diplomatic relations with India even at the cost of their own peril as Pakistan did. Afghanistan has already done it. Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Maldives, and now Bangladesh, all neighbours of our country, are in long-lasting turmoil on religious militancy, extremism, and atrocities on minorities, as well as economic bankruptcy.

These countries are killing their own minorities of Hindus and other religions and even their own minorities within the Islamic fold. Bangladesh is now a liability for India, and we can't risk our 4156 km border with Bangladesh with insecurity, violence, and infiltration. We can't afford to allow five states-Assam, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Tripura-to be inflamed in communal violence and anarchy. Bangladesh is devastated by its extremists and their supporters and sponsors in the government. Truly, the mayhem on Hindus can't be perpetrated without government support. It is the most opportune time to stop and cease all civil & food supplies, electricity, tourism, and rail-air-road links with Bangladesh. Even Bangladesh-bound air traffic on our skies should be banned. As Pakistan is fighting for its existential survival, so will Bangladesh, sooner than later. The Modi government must contemplate tough action against Bangladesh, as it will send a strong message to countries like Pakistan

#### Assassination bid on Badal



The attack on SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal at the Golden Temple complex is the surprising incident. Sukhbir Singh, who is fulfilling his religious punishment given by Akal Takt, has been targeted by the lone wolf attacker, Narain Singh Chaura. The open fire

incident within the Harmandir Saheb Golden Temple Complex is a sheer breach of security and raised concerns over the safety of the Gurudwar complex. Although Sukhbir Singh is safe now, thanks to the Z-plus protection, the police in plain clothes rescued him from the intended act of the assassination. Amidst the bullet-firing attack, it is regrettable that security failure happened, although the alertness of the police personnel halted any misdeed, and every worshipper is safe, including Sukhbir Singh. But somewhere the security breach at the golden temple complex yet remains a question. Meanwhile the investigation is initiated, and police are probing for the real guilty for this whole act; the government must step in to enhance the security of the golden temple complex so that future such incidences can be avoided.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

and China. There is no point in soliciting the UN Peacekeeping force in Bangladesh, as the UN failed to stop even the bloodiest wars in West Asia and Ukraine.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

#### WATER AS 'HIGH-RISK FOOD'

Madam — The food regulatory body of India, FSSAI, has categorised packaged drinking water and mineral water as "high-risk food." According to FSSAI, high-risk foods are those that pose a higher risk of food poisoning due to contamination, poor storage, or poor handling. These require closer and regular inspections to safeguard consumers from food poisoning and other health issues. Consumption of drinking water that is not fully purified can lead to cholera, diarrhoea, typhoid, amebiasis, hepatitis, gastroenteritis, and various other health issues.

Also, if the containers used to store water are unsafe, it can lead to chronic health issues. According to the FSSAI, manufacturers of packaged drinking water will have to pass mandatory inspections before getting a license, and packaged drinking water

products will now undergo more stringent safety checks through regular inspections and audits.

M Pradyu | Kannur

#### FRAUDSTERS TARGET SENIOR CITIZENS

Madam — Increasing cybercrime frauds are a nightmare for senior citizens. The senior citizens are not tech-savvy enough to operate a smartphone, which they prefer to use mostly for communicating with their near and dear ones. The fraudsters target the senior citizens who are lonely and carry on their vices, resulting in losing their hard-earned savings. Banks may exercise adequate caution in honouring the transfer requests by delaying a day or two by instituting sufficient checks on the destination account before carrying on the instructions. The telecom authorities also may advise the service providers to institute sufficient firewalls on the spam callers.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

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## Sexual and reproductive health can drive economic growth

By prioritising sexual and reproductive health in workplace policies, the private sector can be a powerful catalyst for change and lead the way

India stands poised on the brink of a transformative era, with unprecedented opportunities for economic and social progress. Yet, one critical area remains starkly underdeveloped: women's participation in the workforce. Despite notable strides in various sectors, women's workforce participation in India stagnates at a concerning 20 per cent.

This is not just a social inequity but a pressing economic challenge. The private sector, which is experiencing rapid growth and evolution, holds immense potential to address this imbalance. By integrating sexual and reproductive health (SRH) into workplace policies, India can pave the way for greater gender parity, enhanced productivity, and accelerated economic growth. **Women and Workforce-Bridging the Gap** Women constitute nearly half the global population, yet workplaces often fail to accommodate their needs adequately. According to the UNFPA report Advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the Private Sector - The Case for



Action and Accountability in the Workplace, businesses must take comprehensive actions to ensure women's well-being in professional environments. **SRH as a Catalyst for Women's Empowerment** Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) plays a vital role in empowering women to reach their full economic potential. In India, limited access to essential services like reproductive healthcare, family planning, and childcare continues to hinder women's workforce participation. These barriers are compounded by societal norms that disproportionately burden women with caregiving responsibilities, making it challenging to balance personal and professional lives. **Elevating the Care Economy**

The care economy, encompassing both paid and unpaid caregiving roles, is a cornerstone of workforce participation, particularly for women. Many women are compelled to leave the workforce or transition to part-time roles due to caregiving responsibilities. Affordable childcare, eldercare, and flexible work arrangements provided by businesses can significantly alleviate these challenges.

Investing in the care economy is more than corporate social responsibility; it is a sound economic strategy. When women are supported in managing their dual roles, they are more likely to remain in the workforce, contributing to economic growth and workplace inclusivity. **Strengthening Social Protections** Robust social protections are fundamental to ensuring women's economic security. Enhancing maternity benefits, broadening health insurance coverage, and providing mental health support can create a workplace culture where women feel valued and supported. Such measures are crucial to fostering gender equality and inclusivity.

**Fostering Inclusivity** An inclusive workplace requires more than offering flexible hours or equal pay-it demands a cultural shift. Companies must actively combat discrimination and harassment, creating environments where women feel safe and supported. Initiatives like vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes can also help close the gender gap.

**Creating a Supportive Ecosystem for SRH** Effective SRH initiatives require a supportive ecosystem that promotes awareness and access to resources. This includes regular training, accessible services, open dialogue, and confidential counseling for employees. **Ensuring Accountability** To maximise the impact of SRH policies, businesses must establish clear metrics for monitoring and evaluation. Regular progress reports promote transparency and accountability, building trust among employees and stakeholders. (The writer is CEO, UpFront, member of UNFPA's Coalition for Reproductive Justice in Business; views are personal)



SHAONLI CHAKRABORTY



## FIRST COLUMN

### US-CHINA TRADE WAR HEATS UP

Trump set to amplify Biden's tough stance with tariffs and export controls



KUMARDEEP BANARJEE

The loaded guns are out for the two largest economies of the world, the US and China, even before the original hard hitter Donald Trump takes charge as the new President in January next year. In one of his last "Containing China" measures outgoing President Joe Biden has imposed additional export controls on high-end chips, chip-making equipment to China, which can be used as components or in the manufacturing of weapons as well. The new restrictions also directly target some of the largest chipmakers in China, thus throwing in as many road blocks as possible in the dragon's aggressive weaponisation programme. Not to be cowered China imposed retaliatory controls on the export of critical minerals such as Gallium, Antimony etc, which are essential components of the chips.

Even as these measures were being announced, President-elect Donald Trump has been threatening the 9 member BRICS nations with severe 100 per cent tariffs, in case, they choose to create an alternate global currency to the dollar. Mr Trump has already threatened Canada, Mexico and the EU with the tariffs scalpel unless they come back to him with offers that are hard to ignore. Trump's third favourite word is tariffs, which he uses as leverage to negotiate trade deals with allies and enemies.

The nations that have faced the latest threat of high tariffs from Donald Trump have already taken a cautionary approach to negotiating with the tough business person. Canada and Mexico have sounded out that would be more interested in sweetening the deal with the US under Trump, than confronting him on the tariff issues. China knows that Trump would be higher on optics, than his predecessor Joe Biden, on issues where the



US considers them as a direct threat. In one of the recently published editorials in the Chinese government mouthpiece Global Times, the Internet Society of China, the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers, the China Semiconductor Industry Association, and the China Association of Communications Enterprises are quoted to have issued statements terming US chips as unsafe and unreliable.

It further states "The US has used this measure to greatly expand its power, affecting many countries and regions, including Japan, the Netherlands, Israel, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, and China's Taiwan region. This will severely disrupt the stability of the global industrial and supply chains and undermine the international economic and trade order." Incoming President Trump is likely to have a harder stance on export controls and, high tariffs for China imports. The incoming administration is likely to focus on high decibels, high optics, and control China measures than what the Joe Biden administration has achieved. It would be worthwhile to note, that some of the restrictive measures against China introduced, during Trump's first presidency, have only been upgraded and made tougher under President Joe Biden.

Therefore at some level, there is bipartisan support for containing China in the US government. India has been watching this space carefully and knows well that it cannot escape the US tariff cannon for too long. It is also well aware that, there is a trade surplus with the US, which means it exports more than imports. Incoming President Trump even though has good relations with Indian PM Modi, is hardly going to miss this infraction. Obviously, the only safe prediction is a degree of unpredictability. Different countries have had their own experiences from the first Administration and would presumably draw from that to approach the second. Naturally, between two major economies, there will always be some give and take. When we look at economic or technology domains, the case for trusted and reliable partnerships have actually increased in recent years. A lot of what lies ahead would be in fashioning terms of engagement that are perceived as mutually beneficial. "A careful recalibration of India's trade relations is on the anvil, not just with the US, but also with its other allies."

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

# Charting Bharat's role in a multipolar world

Renowned Russian philosopher Aleksandr Gelyevich Dugin advocates for civilisational revival and the decolonisation of the mind



BHABANI SONOWAL



Aleksandr Gelyevich Dugin, the Russian philosopher, presents a compelling vision of a multipolar world that seeks to restore balance and harmony to international relations. His recent visit to India, during which he delivered an insightful speech at the Russian Centre in New Delhi on November 19, highlighted his ideas on the importance of civilisational revival. Listening to Dugin was a profound experience, as he articulated the need for great civilisations such as Bharat (India), Russia, and China to assume their rightful roles in shaping a new global order. Dugin's philosophy is deeply intertwined with the concept of State-Civilisation, which transcends the boundaries of the Nation-State model imposed by the Westphalian system. In this framework, civilisations are not merely political entities but repositories of spiritual, cultural, and historical identity.

For Dugin, Bharat exemplifies this notion as it represents a civilisation rooted in ancient wisdom, from the teachings of the Vedas and Upanishads to its rich traditions of Dharmic philosophy. He argues that this heritage uniquely positions Bharat to lead a process of decolonisation—not just politically, but mentally and spiritually. Decolonisation of the mind, Dugin asserts, is essential for nations seeking to reclaim their civilisational sovereignty. Bharat's re-engagement with its Vedic and Upanishadic traditions is not merely an academic exercise but a means of reconnecting with eternal principles that transcend the temporal constructs of modernity. In his view, traditional spiritual processes should be revived as living, evolving frameworks that can guide contemporary governance and social organisation.

He draws a parallel with Russia's return to Orthodox Christianity, which he sees as a similar act of reclaiming spiritual identity in defiance of Western liberalism. The philosopher emphasises that the post-Cold War unipolar world order, dominated by Western hegemony, has exhausted itself. Dugin critiques the universalisation of liberal values, arguing that they are inherently tied to the Atlanticist worldview and therefore unfit to govern the plurality of human cultures. Liberalism, he contends, prioritises individualism and market ideology at the expense of collective, spiritual, and civilisational values.

As he wrote in The Fourth Political Theory,



**BHARAT'S RE-ENGAGEMENT WITH ITS VEDIC AND UPANISHADIC TRADITIONS IS NOT MERELY AN ACADEMIC EXERCISE BUT A MEANS OF RECONNECTING WITH ETERNAL PRINCIPLES THAT TRANSCEND THE TEMPORAL CONSTRUCTS OF MODERNITY**

"Modernity is a project that has exhausted itself. The future lies in the revival of traditional societies, metaphysical truths, and spiritual values." For Dugin, multipolarity represents an alternative to this unipolar dominance, offering a framework for civilisations to engage with one another as equals.

This vision is rooted in dialogue rather than conflict, with each civilisation contributing its unique insights and values. Bharat, China, and Russia, he argues, form a natural triad that can anchor this new world order. He views these three civilisations as distinct yet complementary, with Bharat's Vedic traditions, China's Confucianism and Taoism, and Russia's Orthodoxy providing diverse philosophical and spiritual foundations for a balanced global system. Dugin's ideas resonate with contemporary geopolitical realities, as platforms like BRICS demonstrate the potential for collaboration among major civilisational powers.

He sees BRICS not merely as an economic bloc but as a symbolic embodiment of multipolarity—a round table where civilisations can cooperate without succumbing to Western hegemony. Drawing on the Arthurian legend, Dugin suggests that the multipolar world should function as a round table, where all participants, including the West, have an equal seat, provided they relinquish hegemonic ambitions. Bharat's renaming from India, in Dugin's view, exemplifies the philosophical and cultural depth of this multipolar project.

He perceives this act as a profound rejection of the colonial narrative imposed by Western powers. For Dugin, names carry immense metaphysical significance, and "Bharat" embodies a self-affirmed identity that reclaims the spiritual and cultural essence of the civilisation. This aligns with his broader advocacy for civilisations to transcend the artificial constructs of modernity and rediscover their historical and spiritual cores. The philosopher

also stresses the strategic importance of Eurasia in achieving this vision. He argues that the geographic, cultural, and economic ties between Bharat, China, and Russia make them natural allies in reshaping global power structures. By aligning their civilisational and strategic interests, these three powers can mediate international conflicts and create a more equitable world order. As Dugin writes in Foundations of Geopolitics, "Russia's mission is to unite the peoples and nations of Eurasia into a single geopolitical space that rejects Western domination and promotes a multipolar world." Central to Dugin's vision is the rejection of Western universalism.

He critiques the West's attempt to impose its values globally, arguing that this approach erases the distinctiveness of other cultures and leads to alienation. In contrast, the multipolar world Dugin envisions celebrates diversity, recognising the plurality of human experience and thought. Civilisations, he asserts, should engage in dialogue while preserving their unique identities. As he states in "The Great War of Continents," "The salvation of humanity lies in preserving the plurality of cultures and civilisations."

This rejection of universalism extends to Dugin's critique of modernity, which he sees as a destructive force that undermines traditional values. He identifies a global trend toward the revival of traditionalism, noting that civilisations are increasingly turning to their spiritual roots in response to the moral and cultural relativism of liberalism. From Bharat's Vedic revival to Russia's Orthodox resurgence and China's embrace of Confucianism, Dugin sees a worldwide movement toward reclaiming heritage. "The return to tradition," he writes, "is not an act of nostalgia but a necessity for survival in the face of cultural erosion."

Dugin views Bharat as a cornerstone of this traditionalist resurgence. Its

ability to mediate tensions, whether between China and the Islamic world or within the broader multipolar framework, highlights its potential as a stabilising force. Bharat's emphasis on spiritual heritage and cultural unity, he argues, sets an example for other civilisations seeking to harmonise their internal diversity with their external roles. The path to a multipolar world is not without challenges. Dugin acknowledges that the West's resistance to relinquishing its dominance could lead to conflicts, even escalating to dangerous levels. However, he remains optimistic about the long-term prospects of multipolarity, which he sees as a natural evolution of global history. This optimism is grounded in his belief that civilisational revival offers a more stable and equitable alternative to the power struggles of unipolarity.

In Dugin's analysis, the future lies in the hands of civilisations willing to reclaim their spiritual and cultural identities. Bharat's role is pivotal in this transformation. By embracing its Vedic heritage and fostering partnerships with other great civilisations, Bharat can help shape a world that values harmony over domination. As Dugin wrote in The Fourth Political Theory, "The multipolar world is not a competition of powers but a symphony of civilisations, each contributing its melody to the greater harmony."

Dugin's vision challenges conventional paradigms of International Relations, offering a deeply philosophical and civilisational approach to global politics. By placing spirituality and tradition at the core of his analysis, he provides a framework for a world that celebrates diversity while striving for collective progress. Bharat's role in this vision is both profound and indispensable, symbolising the potential for civilisations to lead humanity toward a more balanced and equitable future.

(The writer is an Assistant Professor at Bennett University; views expressed are personal)

# Financial literacy: The key to unlocking India's economic power

By teaching money management skills early, India can cultivate a generation of financially savvy individuals capable of driving economic growth

As we are about to wrap up 2024, it cannot be underestimated how important financial literacy is with changing trends of the economy, where education is pivotal in determining India's arrival as an economic superpower. Even now, with the growing financial awareness, only 27 per cent of Indian adults are financially literate; that number drops to a mere 16.7 per cent for students. Recognising the urgency for the skills of financial management, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 revolves around putting in place financial literacy from the early days of schooling in the country's educational system. Teaching children money management skills early in life helps develop financially responsible



AJAY LAKHOTIA

adults who can make sound decisions benefiting both themselves and the economy. In earlier times, financial education was largely informal. The previous generation was focused on accumulating tangible assets like gold and property. However, India's banking and financial system has undergone a vast transformation since the 1990s. With SEBI paving the way for new regulated asset classes for the

common public - mutual funds, stocks, bonds, REITs and multiple other financial products are available for the common public to invest and grow their capital. The establishment of the Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI), has instilled confidence in financial markets and led to greater participation in investments. As India progresses towards a digital financial ecosystem, the demand for financial literacy has never been so crucial in navigating opportunities.

**Why Financial Literacy Needs to Start Early:** Financial literacy goes beyond just education; it is a life skill and mindset that needs to be cultivated from an early age. All the education policies stress encourage students to be mindful and well-

read towards financial issues so that they can cope with anything ranging from budgeting to retirement savings. Students with such financial sensibilities provided that they have been exposed practically to these concepts, would be able to cope with investment volatility, financial contingencies and planning for a strong future. Building such a ground is vital for citizens to contribute towards building a balanced economy.

**Taking Inspiration across the globe:** Switzerland, Japan, and South Korea have leveraged their core strengths—banking, technology, and manufacturing, respectively—to drive economic growth and establish distinct global identities. These unique specialisations have not only accelerated their eco-



nomical development but also secured their positions as global leaders in their respective domains.

Following their example, India could prioritise financial literacy as a national initiative to enhance its citizens' saving and investing behaviours while increasing economic participation. This focus could yield significant social benefits: reducing poverty, narrowing income

inequality, and improving the quality of life for millions. India's abundant advantages—from its tech-savvy youth to its robust educational infrastructure—position it favourably for global leadership in financial prosperity. However, these strengths alone are insufficient. Without proper financial knowledge, even the most talented individuals may struggle to maximise their potential, ultimately hindering economic growth. By combining financial education with India's technological expertise and expanding educational framework, the nation can nurture future entrepreneurs, investors, and professionals who will not only excel in their careers but also effectively manage and grow their wealth. A multi-pronged approach can

help to establish a financially literate India. The key steps to follow:

**Integrating Personal Finance into Curricula:** Personal finance should be included as part of the school and college syllabus so that a strong foundation towards money management & finance for a lifetime.

**Nationwide Awareness Programs:** Public campaigns on financial literacy will reach areas lacking financially literate communities, effectively democratizing access to that knowledge as well as encouraging wider economic participation.

**Leveraging Technology and Partnerships:** Public-private partnerships can make financial education accessible and attractive. By using technol-

ogy, it is possible to cast interactive sessions and impart practical, real-life skills to a broader audience, regardless of their location.

**A Call to Action for all of us:** It is now time to recognise financial literacy as an indispensable part of our journey towards education and the economic boom of India. Financial literacy, more than a skill, should be regarded as a strategic enabler to achieve personal growth. Through the infusion of financial education across all levels, which range from classrooms to boardrooms, we can unleash a superpower that will help our population bloom and lead us into the 21st century.

(The writer is founder and CEO of StockGro; views are personal)

# No-confidence vote topples Barnier govt in France

AP ■ PARIS

French President Emmanuel Macron will address the nation Thursday, a day after the National Assembly ousted Prime Minister Michel Barnier in a historic no-confidence vote that has left France without a functioning government. Macron is expected to focus on stabilising the political crisis and possibly naming a new prime minister to navigate the fractured parliament. Barnier formally submitted his resignation Thursday morning at the Elysée Palace, fulfilling a constitutional obligation. The no-confidence motion passed by 331 votes in the National Assembly, forcing Barnier to step down after just three months in office — the shortest tenure of any prime minister in modern French history. **Pressure to act swiftly:** Macron faces the critical task of naming a replacement capable of leading a minority government in a parliament where no party holds a majority. Yael Braun-Pivet, president of the National Assembly and a member of Macron's party, urged the president to move quickly. "I recommend he decide rapidly on a new prime minister," Braun-Pivet said Thursday on France Inter radio. "There must



French Prime Minister Michel Barnier addresses the National Assembly prior to a vote on a no-confidence motion that could bring him down and his cabinet for the first time since 1962 in Paris. AP/PTI

not be any political hesitation. We need a leader who can speak to everyone and work to pass a new budget bill." The process may prove challenging. Macron's administration has yet to confirm any names, though French media have reported a shortlist of centrist candidates who might appeal to both sides of the political spectrum. Macron took more than two months to appoint Barnier after his party's defeat in June's legislative elections, raising concerns about potential delays this time.

**Calls for Macron to step down:** The no-confidence vote has galvanised opposition leaders, with some explicitly calling for Macron's resignation. "I believe that stability requires the departure of the President of the Republic," said Manuel Bompard, leader of the far-left France Unbowed party, on BFM TV Wednesday night. Far-right National Rally leader Marine Le Pen, whose party holds the most seats in the Assembly, did not explicitly call for Macron's resignation but warned that "the pressure on the President of the Republic

will get stronger and stronger." Macron, however, has dismissed such calls and ruled out new legislative elections. The current French constitution does not call for a president to resign after his government was ousted by the National Assembly. "I was elected to serve until 2027, and I will fulfil that mandate," he told reporters earlier this week. The constitution also says that new legislative elections cannot be held until at least July, creating a potential stalemate for policymakers. **Economic uncertainty:** The political instability has heightened concerns about France's economy, particularly its debt, which could rise to 7 per cent of GDP next year without significant reforms. Analysts say that Barnier's government downfall could push up French interest rates, digging the debt even further. Rating agency Moody's warned late Wednesday that the government's fall "reduces the likelihood of consolidating public finances" and worsens the political gridlock. Macron's speech, scheduled for 8 pm local time, is expected to address these economic challenges while setting a course for the future government.

# Yoon replaces defence minister as S Korea's parliament nears vote on their impeachments

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea's president Yoon Suk Yeol replaced his defence minister Thursday as opposition parties moved to impeach both men over the stunning yet short-lived imposition of martial law that brought armed troops into Seoul streets. The main opposition Democratic Party and other small opposition parties submitted a joint motion to impeach President Yoon Suk Yeol on Wednesday over his martial law declaration the previous night. Martial law lasted about six hours, as the National Assembly quickly voted to overrule the president, forcing his Cabinet to lift it before daybreak Wednesday. On Thursday, Yoon's office said he decided to replace Defence Minister Kim Yong Hyun with Choi Byung Hyuk, a retired four-star general who is South Korea's ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Vice Defence Minister Kim Seon Ho will be the acting minister until Choi assumes the job after a parliamentary hearing. The hearing is a formality as the president holds the power to appoint ministers outside of the prime minister without the approval of lawmakers. Yoon's office didn't provide any further comments by him.

He hasn't appeared in public since he announced in a televised address that his government was lifting the martial law declaration. The opposition parties earlier submitted a separate motion to impeach Kim, alleging he recommended that Yoon impose martial law. Kim had offered to resign and apologized for causing disruption and concern to the public. Kim said "all troops who performed duties related to martial law were acting on my instructions, and all responsibility lies with me," according to the Defence Ministry. The impeachment motion against Yoon was introduced in parliament early Thursday, meaning it can be put to a vote between Friday and Sunday. It will be scrapped if it isn't voted within 72 hours of its parliamentary introduction, but a new motion can be submitted if the current one is scrapped or voted down, according to National Assembly officials. Jo Seung-lae, spokesperson of the Democratic Party, said it will push for a National Assembly vote on the impeachment motion on Saturday evening, to provide sufficient time for the conservative lawmakers to contemplate their decisions on what he described as an "unconstitutional, illegal rebellion or coup."

On Friday, the Democrats and other opposition lawmakers voted to impeach Choi Jae-hae, chairman of the country's board of audit and inspection, and three top public prosecutors, including Seoul Central District Prosecutors' Office chief Lee Chang-soo. The four will be suspended from their duties until the Constitutional Court rules whether to remove them from office. Members of the Yoon's ruling conservative People Power Party boycotted the votes, leaving the totals overwhelming over the threshold to impeach them. The Democratic Party's continued impeachment attempts of senior government officials and prosecutors have been a major source of conflict with Yoon, who during his martial law announcement accused the opposition of "anti-state activities" and "paralyzing the government." Prospects for Yoon's impeachment isn't clear as Yoon's People Power Party decided Thursday to oppose the motion's passage. Choo Kyung-ho, the floor leader of the PPP, told reporters that his party would hold another meeting to determine how to oppose the motion's passage. Observers say PPP members could simply boycott a floor vote or cast ballots against the motion.

Impeaching him would require support from two-thirds of the National Assembly, or 200 of its 300 members. The opposition parties together have 192 seats and they need additional votes from the PPP. Some experts earlier said the motion will likely be passed through parliament as 18 PPP lawmakers, who belong to an anti-Yoon faction in the party, already voted down Yoon's martial law decree together with opposition lawmakers. But speaking to reporters Thursday, PPP leader Han Dong-hun, head of the anti-Yoon faction, said he would work to ensure that the impeachment motion doesn't pass though he remains critical of Yoon's action, which he described as "unconstitutional." Han said that there is a need to "prevent damage to citizens and supporters caused by unprepared chaos." Experts say rival factions in PPP could unite not to repeat their traumatic experiences following the 2016 impeachment of scandal-ridden conservative President Park Geun-hye, which happened after some lawmakers at her own party voted to impeach her. Park was eventually removed from office and arrested in 2017, and the liberals easily won the presidency in a by-election as conservatives remained in disarray.

# Syrian army withdraws from Hama after insurgents broke through its defences

AP ■ BEIRUT

The Syrian army says it has withdrawn from the central city of Hama after insurgents broke through its defences, in another setback for President Bashar Assad. The announcement Thursday came hours after opposition fighters said they had entered the city and were marching toward the centre. The Syrian army said it redeployed from Hama and took positions outside the city to protect the lives of civilians. The capture of Hama, Syria's fourth largest city, is another blow for Assad days after insurgents captured much of the northern city of Aleppo, the country's largest city. Syrian state media confirmed violent clashes between government forces and opposition gunmen on the eastern edges of Hama city but denied that the

insurgents had breached it. Hama is one of the few cities that remained under full government control during Syria's conflict, which broke out in March 2011 following a popular uprising. Its capture would be a major setback for President Bashar Assad. The offensive is being led by the jihadi group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham as well as an umbrella group of Turkish-backed Syrian militias called the Syrian National Army. Their sudden capture of the northern city of Aleppo, an ancient business hub, was a stunning prize for Assad's opponents and reignited the conflict which had been largely stalemated for the past few years. Aleppo's takeover marked the first opposition attack on the city since 2016, when a brutal Russian air campaign retook it for Assad after rebel forces had initially seized it. Intervention by Russia, Iran and Iranian-allied Hezbollah

and other militant groups has allowed Assad to remain in power. The latest flare-up in Syria's long civil war comes as Assad's main regional and international backers are preoccupied with their own wars. Tens of thousands of people have been displaced by the renewed fighting, which began with the surprise opposition offensive on November 27. The insurgents claimed on their Military Operations Department channel on the Telegram app Thursday that they have entered Hama and are marching toward its centre. "Our forces are taking positions inside the city of Hama," the channel quoted a local commander identified as Maj. Hassan Abdul-Ghani as saying. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said gunmen have entered parts of the city, mainly the neighbourhoods

of Sawaq and Zahiriyyeh to the northwest. It added that gunmen are also on the edge of the northwestern neighbourhood of Kazo. "If Hama falls, it means that the beginning of the regime's fall has started," the Observatory's chief, Rami Abdulrahman, told The Associated Press. Hama is a major intersection point in Syria that links that country's centre with the north as well as the east and the west. It is about 200 kilometres north of the capital, Damascus, Assad's seat of power. Hama province also borders the coastal province of Latakia, a main base of popular support for Assad. The city's name is synonymous with the 1982 massacre of Hama, one of the most notorious in the modern Middle East, when security forces under Assad's late father, Hafez Assad, killed thousands to crush a Muslim Brotherhood uprising.

# Starmer to outline his 'Plan for Change'

AP ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer is trying to change the narrative on his five-month-old government after plummeting approval ratings, business anxiety over tax hikes and protesting farmers clogging London streets. Conservative opposition leader Kemi Badenoch calls it an "emergency reset" by a floundering administration. But Starmer's office says the "Plan for Change" speech the prime minister will deliver on Thursday is not a relaunch or about-face, but "the next phase" in his government plan, intended to persuade voters that the government is making their lives better. Starmer's centre-left Labour Party was elected in July — ending 14 years of Conservative government — on a promise to get Britain's sluggish economy growing and restore frayed public services such as the state-funded National Health

Service. But it has been criticised, including by Labour supporters, for failing to show people how their lives will improve any time soon. The speech will set out "milestones" for measuring progress on economic growth, clean energy, reforming childcare and education, bolstering the NHS and cutting crime. It includes a pledge of 13,000 more neighbourhood police officers within five years. Starmer's office said he will say that "hard-working Brits ... reasonably want a stable economy, their country to be safe, their borders secure, more cash in their pocket, safer streets in their town, opportunities for their children, secure British energy in their home, and an NHS that is there when they need it." The government hopes to reverse a slew of negative headlines over its economic decisions — taken, it says, because the previous Conservative government left a 22 billion pound

(\$28 billion) "black hole" in the public finances. Spending cuts have included removing from millions of retirees a payment that helps cover winter heating costs — a move that sat awkwardly with revelations that Starmer had accepted clothes and other freebies at a time when millions of people are struggling with the cost of living. The government's first budget in late October included billions in new money for the health system, but also hiked a tax paid by employers, to the alarm of many businesses, and imposed inheritance tax on farmers for the first time in decades. Thousands of farmers thronged the streets around Parliament in November to protest a levy they say will ruin many family farms. The government says three-quarters of farms won't have to pay inheritance tax under the new rules. Starmer also lost a member of his Cabinet last week, when

Transport Secretary Louise Haigh resigned over an old fraud conviction involving a cell phone she'd reportedly stolen. The bad news has sent Starmer's poll ratings plunging deep into negative territory — though the opposition Conservatives are no more popular. Starmer has had more success abroad, where he is trying to reset Britain's relations with its European neighbours following years of acrimony over Brexit. But efforts to move closer to the bloc risk angering incoming President Donald Trump, who is hostile to the EU and has threatened to impose tariffs on European goods. Members of Starmer's government have been strongly critical of Trump in the past, but the Labour government has worked to build ties with the president-elect. Before the US election, Starmer flew to New York for dinner with the then-Republican presidential candidate.

# Taiwan, Guam should work together to defend freedom, says Prez Lai

AP ■ TAIPEI (TAIWAN)

Taiwan and Guam should work together to defend freedom and democracy in the region, Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te said Thursday on a visit to the American territory. Guam was Lai's second US stop during an ongoing tour of the Pacific Islands, following a visit to Hawaii last weekend. China's government claims Taiwan as its territory and says the self-governing island must come under its control at some point in the future. Lai, speaking to Guam's legislature, emphasised the shared values and strategic

importance of Taiwan and Guam in the Indo-Pacific region. "Let us together become the crucial force in defending freedom, democracy in the first island chain," he said, referring to a string of islands off the Asian continent that includes Japan, Taiwan and part of the Philippines. China, which considers Taiwan a renegade province, opposes any official interaction between the island's government and the United States. The US is the main overseas supplier of arms for Taiwan's defence, and has naval and air force bases on Guam. In Beijing, China's Foreign Ministry announced

sanctions on Thursday on 13 American companies and six executives in response to recently announced weapons sales to Taiwan. The executives include the president and vice president of Raytheon's Naval Power strategic business unit. The sanctions include a ban on entering China, including Hong Kong and Macao. Earlier this week, the ministry said it "strongly condemned" US support for Lai's visit to Hawaii and had lodged a complaint with the United States. A resolution from Guam's legislature welcomed Lai and expressed appreciation for Taiwan's "significant contri-

butions to Guam's economy and community," Speaker Therese Terlaje said. Lai called for deeper cooperation with Guam, highlighting aquaculture, hydroponic agriculture, construction projects and alternative energy as potential areas of partnership. Lai arrived in Guam on Wednesday night after visits to the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu. He was scheduled to fly to Palau, the final stop on his trip. The three Pacific Island countries are among 12 governments that recognise Taiwan diplomatically. The rest of the world, including the United States, has official ties with the Chinese government in Beijing.

# Bangladesh's ICT bans Sheikh Hasina's 'hate speeches'

PTI ■ DHAKA

The International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) of Bangladesh on Thursday ordered the authorities to ban the dissemination of all the "hate speeches" of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina in the media and on social networking platforms. The order follows Hasina's recent speech, her first public address after fleeing Bangladesh four months back, in which she mounted a stinging attack on the country's interim leader Muhammad Yunus, accusing him of perpetrating "genocide" and failing to protect minorities including Hindus. Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) reported that a two-member tribunal led by Justice Md

Golam Mortuza Mozumder passed the order and directed the authorities to remove all the "hate speeches" of Hasina from social media and take necessary steps to stop their dissemination in future in all types of mass media. Prosecutor Advocate Abdullah Al Noman told the news agency that the tribunal asked secretaries of the ICT Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to execute the order. The prosecution earlier filed the petition, pleading to remove and restrict all types of hate speech and incitement by the ousted prime minister, which may intimidate the witnesses or vic-

tims or hamper investigation. Earlier, prosecutor Gazi MH Tamim briefed the media in this regard, saying not only in Bangladesh, making hate speech is a criminal offence in every law and every country around the world. "Sheikh Hasina has made speeches, where she was heard saying she got the license to kill 227 people as the same number of cases were filed against her. She was even heard giving threats to the victims and witnesses of the cases against her, through these speeches," Tamim said. In remarks delivered virtually to her supporters at an event in New York, Hasina, presently living in India, also claimed that there were plans to kill her

and her sister Sheikh Rehana just like their father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated in 1975. Describing Yunus as "power-hungry", Hasina alleged that the places of worship in Bangladesh are under attack and the current dispensation has totally failed to deal with the situation. Hasina was speaking to supporters of her Awami League party at the event organised on Sunday to mark "Bijoy Dibos" or Victory Day that falls on December 16. Though Hasina made several statements in the last few months, it was her first public address after taking shelter, said an expert closely tracking developments in Bangladesh.

# Bitcoin tops USD 100,000 as big rally sparked by Trump election win rolls on

AP ■ NEW YORK

Bitcoin has topped the USD 100,000 mark as a massive rally in the world's most popular cryptocurrency sparked by the election of Donald Trump rolls on. The milestone comes just hours after the President-elect signalled a lighter regulatory approach to the crypto industry when he said he intends to nominate cryptocurrency advocate Paul Atkins to be the next chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission. Bitcoin has soared to unprecedented heights since Trump won the election November 5. The cryptocurrency has climbed dramatically from USD 69,374 on Election Day and rose as high as USD 103,713 Wednesday, according to CoinDesk. Just two years

ago, bitcoin dropped below USD 17,000 following the collapse of crypto exchange FTX. How long bitcoin will stay above the USD 100,000 mark is uncertain. It fell back to just under USD 102,000 early Thursday. As with everything in the volatile cryptoverse, the future is impossible to predict. And while some are bullish on future gains, other experts continue to warn of investment risks. **Back up. What is cryptocurrency again?** Cryptocurrency has been around for a while now. But, chances are, you've heard about it more and more over the last few years. In basic terms, cryptocurrency is digital money. This kind of currency is designed to work through an online network without a central authority — meaning it's typically not

backed by any government or banking institution — and transactions get recorded with technology called a blockchain. Bitcoin is the largest and oldest cryptocurrency, although other assets like etherium, tether and dogecoin have also gained popularity over the years. Some investors see cryptocurrency as a "digital alternative" to traditional money, but the large majority of daily financial transactions are still conducted using fiat currencies such as the dollar. Also, bitcoin can be very volatile, with its price reliant on larger market conditions. **Why is bitcoin soaring?** A lot of the recent action has to do with the outcome of the US presidential election. Trump, who was once a crypto-sceptic, has pledged to make the US "the crypto capital of the

planet" and create a "strategic reserve" of bitcoin. His campaign accepted donations in cryptocurrency and he courted fans at a bitcoin conference in July. He also launched World Liberty Financial, a new venture with family members to trade cryptocurrencies. Crypto industry players have welcomed Trump's victory, in hopes that he would be able to push through legislative and regulatory changes that they've long lobbied for — which, generally speaking, aim for an increased sense of legitimacy without too much red tape. Trump made a move in that direction Wednesday when he said he intends to nominate Paul Atkins to chair the Securities and Exchange Commission. Atkins was an SEC commissioner during the presidency of George W. Bush.

In the years since leaving the agency, Atkins has made the case against too much market regulation. He joined the Token Alliance, a cryptocurrency advocacy organization, in 2017. Under current chair Gary Gensler, the SEC has cracked down on the crypto industry, penalizing a number of companies for violating securities laws. But he's also faced criticism from industry players in the process, like the chief legal officer of Robinhood, who described Gensler's approach toward crypto as "rigid" and "hostile." Gensler will step down when Trump takes office. One crypto-friendly move the SEC did make under Gensler was the approval in January of spot bitcoin ETFs, or exchange trade funds, which allow investors to have a stake in bitcoin without directly buying it.

The Spot ETFs were the dominant driver of bitcoin's price before the election — but, like much of the crypto's recent momentum, saw record inflows postelection. **What are the risks?:** History shows you can lose money in crypto as quickly as you've made it. Long-term price behaviour relies on larger market conditions. Trading continues at all hours, every day. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, bitcoin stood at just over USD 5,000. Its price climbed to nearly USD 69,000 by November 2021, during high demand for technology assets, but later crashed during an aggressive series of rate hikes by the Federal Reserve. And the late-2022 collapse of FTX significantly undermined confidence in crypto overall,

with bitcoin falling below USD 17,000. Investors began returning in large numbers as inflation started to cool — and gains skyrocketed on the anticipation and then early success of spot ETFs. But experts still stress caution, especially for small-pocketed investors. And lighter regulation from the coming Trump administration could mean less guardrails. "I would say, keep it simple. And don't take on more risk than you can afford to," said Adam Morgan McCarthy, a research analyst at Kaiko, adding that there isn't a "magic eight ball" to know for certain what comes next. **What about the climate impact?:** Assets like bitcoin are produced through a process called "mining," which consumes a lot of energy.

Operations relying on pollutive sources have drawn particular concern over the years. Recent research published by the United Nations University and Earth's Future journal found that the carbon footprint of 2020-2021 bitcoin mining across 76 nations was equivalent to the emissions from burning 84 billion pounds of coal or running 190 nuclear gas-fired power plants. Coal satisfied the bulk of bitcoin's electricity demands (45 per cent), followed by natural gas (21 per cent) and hydropower (16 per cent). Environmental impacts of bitcoin mining boil largely down to the energy source used. Industry analysts have maintained that clean energy has increased in use in recent years, coinciding with rising calls for climate protections.



US Senate for designating Dec 3 as Chemical Disaster Awareness Day

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Bhopal chemical disaster, three Senators have introduced a resolution to designate December 3 as National Chemical Disaster Awareness Day.

Resolution recognises 40-year efforts of 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy survivors

Applauding the resilience of the Bhopal chemical disaster survivors in battling to overcome ill health, poverty, and marginalization to try to establish a deterrent against future chemical disasters; the resolution calls on the Department of Justice to take timely steps in response to requests by the Indian Government concerning Dow Inc., who purchased the Union Carbide facility where the disaster took place.

Amnesty International says genocide being committed against Palestinians in Gaza, Israel rejects accusation

Amnesty International accused Israel of committing genocide in the Gaza Strip during its war with Hamas, saying it has sought to deliberately destroy Palestinians by mounting deadly attacks, demolishing vital infrastructure and preventing the delivery of food, medicine and other aid.

Amnesty said it analyzed the overall pattern of Israel's conduct in Gaza between Oct. 7, 2023 and early July. It noted that there is no casualty threshold in proving the international crime of genocide, which is defined by the United Nations as acts intended to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.

14 fresh cases against Imran

Fourteen cases were filed against former premier Imran Khan in Islamabad after the violent protest by his supporters last week, taking the total cases against him in the national capital to 76, according to a report submitted to a Pakistani court.

Opp party leader held as Georgia authorities try to curb protests

Georgian police on Wednesday raided the offices of an opposition party and arrested its leader in an apparent attempt to quell a wave of mass protests triggered by the governing party's decision to suspend negotiations on joining the European Union.

CONVERTING LOOP LINE NO. 1 AT KATHIAR

E-Tender Notice No. EL/TRD\_14\_24-25 Dated: 03-12-2024. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Name of work: Surjakamal- Converting loop line no.1 at Surjakamal station as common loop line.

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client Uma Charlie R/O C2C, Old slum flat, PaschimPuri, Delhi evicts her son Richard Charlie and daughter-in-law Neelam Richard from her property. My client will not be responsible for any action or transaction of them.

सर्वज्ञानिक सूचना

नगर निगम गुडगाँव के नगर कार्य विभाग में ऑफिस नं. ICGGUH17 बिल्का प्लाट A-197/GFA- 197, Sector 47 Mayfield Garden, Vikas Marg, Vikas Marg, 1220118 की सम्पत्ति का रिकार्ड में बदली हेतु USIA AHLAWADI ने आवेदन किया है...

CLIX HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED

NOTICE UNDER SECTION 13(2) OF THE SECURITIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002. The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of CLIX Housing Finance Limited, a Housing Finance Bank Company under the National Housing Bank Act...

Noreen Niazi, one of Khan's sisters, had filed a petition in the IHC seeking details of cases against him. In response, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) prepared details of the ongoing cases against Khan, which the police shared.

Sealed Bids are invited for Outdoor & Indoor Work including supply of some brought out items associated equipment/accessories, installation and commissioning of Primary drop insert mux, SDH, Battery chargers, Battery sets and other associated equipment in "Proposed Telecommunication arrangement in connection with PROVISION OF 25KV Traction between TVR-TTP-KKDI & TTP-AGX Section in Tiruchirappalli Division".

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Rajan Ghai S/o- Pran Nath Ghai, R/o- 995, Group 3, Pocket - C, Janta Flats Hasthal, Uttam Nagar, West Delhi, Delhi- 110059, declare that in my Union Bank of India SB Account (A/c. No. 517702010014088), my name is written as Rajan whereas my correct name is Rajan Ghai. Both are one & same person i.e. myself

PUBLIC NOTICE

This Notice is hereby given to general public that my client Mr. Javed Qureshi who claimed to be sole and sole owner and in possession of the Residential House bearing No. 138-14/1, area measuring 110 Sq. yards, Ward No. X, Chhatta Lal Man, Darya Gani, Delhi-110002, was the owner by virtue of Relinquishment Deed dated 16.10.2017, having Doc. No. 8331, & through GPA, ATS and Will, now they were approached AU Small Finance Bank Ltd. for a loan...

PUBLIC NOTICE

Reg. Built-up Ground Floor without roof rights "said roof" built on portion of Plot No. 33, Area measuring 50 sq. yds. out of total area 111 sq. yds. "said portion" part of Property bearing No. 33, measuring 111 sq. yds., falling in Kharsa No. 232, Situated in the area of Village Navada, Delhi State, Delhi, Colony known as Vign Garden North Block, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059 (Hereinafter referred to as the "Said Property").

verka

THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD. SCO 153-155, SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022. E-PABX No. 0172-2041812/66. NOTICE Inviting Tender www.verka.coop

Table with 3 columns: Sr. No., Name of Work/Item, Period/Tentative Qty. Includes items like C Boxes for Export Ghee Tins and Defence WMP Tins, and various Verka products.

HARYANA SHEHRI VIKAS PRADHIKARAN PUBLIC NOTICE

Online applications, in prescribed application form, are invited from the land owners whose lands were acquired in the past to develop the Sectors in Estates under Panchkula Zone, i.e., Kaithal Mandi Township, Pundri. The oustees are requested to apply along with application money Rs. 50,000/- for the concerned Sector. The claims of oustees will be decided in terms of policy dated 11.08.2016 and 08.05.2018.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all concerned that the original Possession letter, Allotment cum Demand letter, C&D Form, with correspondence file with DDA regarding property No. B-3/3 Janakpur, New Delhi, has been misplaced/lost and is not traceable and a report in this regard has also been filed online complaint with the Police Station Crime Branch, LR No.2367/75/8/2024 dated 04.12.2024.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The General Public is hereby informed that following locker with Canara Bank Uttam Nagar Branch has been opened by locker holders for the last number of years or are not paying the arrears of locker charges instead of our repeated letters and follow up:-

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, SHEFALI wife of Mr. Manoj Kumar, resident of R-2/170, Near Hint Chowk, Raj Nagar, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201002, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from YUKTA RANI to SHEFALI for all purpose in future and my date of birth is 04.02.1981.

PUBLIC NOTICE

By this notice, it is hereby notified to locker holders or their legal heirs in case of deceased of locker holders that they should approach our Uttam Nagar Branch, within a period of 15th days of this notice with authentic proof of the ownership of the locker and documents such as Passport, Adhaar card, proof of residence etc. to execute fresh locker agreement, and pay the arrears of locker charges. In case no response is received in respect of any of the locker holders of their legal heirs, the bank shall be constrained to break open the Locker on 07-01-2025 in presence of witnesses and keep aside its contents while exercising its lien over the contents of the locker for recovery of arrears of locker charges.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Kiran Bedi wife of Late Amit Bedi R/o D-49/3, Suman Colony Chattarpur Extension Chattarpur New Delhi-110074, hereby declare that my name has been wrongly written in my son's school record and on birth certificate as Khushi Bedi and my actual and correct name is Kiran Bedi that Kiran Bedi and Khushi Bedi are the same and one person.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Can Fin Homes Ltd., under SARFAESI Act and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) read with Rule 3, issued Demand Notice under Section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the Borrowers / guarantors listed hereunder (hereinafter referred to as the "said Borrowers"), to repay the amounts mentioned in the Notice, within 60 days from the date of receipt of Notice, as per details given below.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The said Notices have been returned undelivered by the postal authorities / have not been duly acknowledged by the borrowers. Hence the Company by way of abundant caution is effecting this publication of the demand notice (as per the provisions of Rule 3 (1)). The undersigned has, therefore, caused these Notices to be pasted on the premises of the last known addresses of the said Borrowers, as per the said Act.

CAN FIN HOMES LTD.

Under Section 13(2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 (SARFAESI Act) read with Rule 3(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 (Rules)

Table with 5 columns: Sr. Name of Borrowers/Guarantors with address, Date of Demand Notice, Amount claimed as per Demand Notice, Description of the Secured Asset, Date of NPA. Includes MRS. SAPNA SINGH W/O VINOD KUMAR and MR. ABHISHEK SINGH S/O VINOD KUMAR.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PHYSICAL PLANTS QUAT, BHUBANESWAR, e-Procurement Notice No. 05/2024-25

Table with 2 columns: Name of the work, Construction of Farm Road & Bore Well with Irrigation Pipe, Store-Cum-Nursery Miscellaneous presentation shed, Vermi Compost Unit, Biological waste disposal unit and provision for DG set at College of Forestry, QUAT, Bhubaneswar. (Composite)

# India pushes for fast-tracking special safeguard mechanism at WTO

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

India has pitched for fast-tracking negotiations in the WTO on special safeguard mechanism (SSM), which would allow developing countries to temporarily raise tariffs on agricultural imports in response to import surges or price drops, an official said. The country flagged the issues during a meeting of a committee on agriculture issues in Geneva on December 4. In the meeting, India emphasized on the need to prioritize unresolved mandated issues such as



permanent solution to public stockholding, SSM, and cotton, treating them as standalone issues. "India highlighted the Nairobi Ministerial Decision's

mandate to prioritize and fast-track SSM negotiations, calling for modalities that are simple, operational, and equitable," the Geneva-based official said. Regarding Guyana's proposal, India reiterated that any facilitator-led processes should be consensus-based and respect WTO's (World Trade Organization) multilateral principles, rejecting the non-traditional approach based on convergence. Guyana has presented a new proposal to advance agricultural negotiations ahead of MC14 (ministerial conference). The 14th conference is tentatively scheduled to take place in Cameroon (Africa) in 2026. Further India has urged members to conduct text-based negotiations on finding permanent solution to public food stockholding. Under text-based negotiations in WTO, an agreement is finalised around draft texts floated by the chair of a particular committee dealing with the subject. The draft is based on discussions amongst the member countries and is fine-tuned till all the nations are in agreement with it.

# Government open to explore alternative financing models for MSMEs: Piyush Goyal

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday urged the industry to share specific issues they are facing in accessing bank credit and suggested that the government is open to exploring alternate financing models for MSMEs. He also said the ministry can earmark particular areas in the proposed industrial townships for the MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises). Exporters have raised concerns over declining bank credit, particularly to the MSME segment. While exports grew by 15 per cent in the rupee terms between 2021-22 and 2023-24, the outstanding credit in March 2024 dropped by 5 per cent over the same month in

2022, according to exporters. "Give me specific details (as in) what kinds of problems they (MSMEs) face. Is too much collateral being asked? Suppose an ECGC (Export Credit Guarantee Corporation) cover is available, do they (banks) still ask for collateral, what kind of interest they charge when a 90 per cent guarantee is taken by ECGC in the event of any failure of export credit? "If we get that more specific feedback then we will be able to take it up with the bankers. ECGC is looking at factor services also but my own personal view is that being costlier, people will still prefer to go to the bank and take a loan but we are open to the idea of alternate financing models," he said here at a function. In August, the cabinet approved 12 new project proposals under the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme (NICDP) with an estimated investment of Rs 28,602 crore to set up industrial parks/townships in the country. These industrial areas will be located at Khurpia in Uttarakhand, Rajpura-Patala in Punjab, Dighi in Maharashtra, Palakkad in Kerala, Agra and Prayagraj in UP, Gaya in Bihar, Zaeherabad in Telangana, Orvakal and Koppurthy in AP and Jodhpur-Pali in Rajasthan. "I am happy to commit to a particular area earmarked for MSMEs because without MSMEs no large industries will survive.

# Amazon Web Services commits USD 100 million in cloud credits for underserved students

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Amazon Web Services (AWS) on Thursday said it is committing up to USD 100 million in cloud credits over the next five years to help eligible educational institutions and underserved students worldwide develop and scale digital learning solutions. The programme, a part of AWS Education Equity Initiative, will grant recipients cloud credits, which function similarly to cash, allowing organisations to reduce their expenses when utilising AWS's cloud services. "At AWS, we are committed to levelling the playing field in education, ensuring learners from underrepresented and underserved communities have equal access to transformative learning opportunities. That's why AWS is committing up to USD 100 million in cloud credits over the next five years to help qualifying education organisations around the world build or scale digital learning solutions as part of

the AWS Education Equity Initiative," a company blog said. With these credits, recipients can leverage AWS's comprehensive portfolio of cloud technology and advanced AI services to create innovations such as AI assistants, coding curriculums, connectivity tools, educational platforms, mobile applications, chatbots, and various technology-driven learning experiences, it said. Additionally, they will have access to technical guidance from AWS solution architects, who will offer architectural guidance, best practices for responsible AI implementation, and continuous optimisation support. AWS is already working with more than 50 organisations from across 10 countries, and in the past year, more than 2 million students have received over 17 million hours of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), literacy, and career development courses as part of the AWS Education Equity Initiative, the blog read.

# Sebi mulls revising requirement on settlement of account of clients' funds

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

To facilitate ease of doing business, markets regulator Sebi on Thursday proposed that funds of clients, who have not done any transaction in the last 30 days, will be settled by stock brokers on the upcoming settlement dates of monthly running account settlement cycle. Under the rule, if a client has not done any transaction in the last 30 days and has a credit balance, the stock broker is required to return the fund to the client within three working days. This is known as running account settlement or quarterly settlement. With a view to facilitate ease of doing business as well as to safeguard the investors' interest, Sebi, in its consultation paper, proposed revising the requirement of mandatory settlement of such clients' funds. "It is being proposed that the funds of such clients who have not traded in the last 30 calendar days shall



be settled on the upcoming settlement dates of monthly running account settlement cycle as notified by exchanges in the annual calendar issued by them from time to time," Sebi said. The proposal came after Brokers' Industry Standards Forum (ISF) represented that the current requirement necessitates TM to identify such clients daily, potentially leading to the daily settlement of client funds and resulting in procedural inefficiencies. Also, it has further been represented that since the client funds are anyway upstreamed to the clearing corporation, there is a need to revisit the time for settling such client's funds. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has sought public comments on the proposal till December 26.

# Finance Minister to begin pre-Budget consultation from Friday

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will start pre-Budget consultations with various stakeholders beginning Friday as part of Budget making exercise. The first meeting as part of this series will be held with eminent economists on December 6. Sitharaman, who will chair these meetings, will seek their inputs regarding upcoming Budget amid seven-quarter low GDP print of 5.4 per cent in second quarter of the current financial year. It will be followed by a meeting with farmer associations and agriculture economists and stakeholders in MSME sector on December 7, sources said. Union Budget 2025-26 is likely to be tabled in Parliament on February 1. This would be the eighth straight Budget of Sitharaman and second full budget of the Modi 3.0 government, which will give

policy direction for achieving the goal of Viksit Bharat (developed India) by 2047. The pre-Budget consultations will end on December 30 with consultations with captains of Indian industry and players in the social sector, especially education and health. Besides the finance minister, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary; Finance Secretary and DIPAM Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey; Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth; Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra; and Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju are expected to be present. The Budget for the current fiscal had projected a nominal GDP growth of 10.5 per cent, while fiscal deficit was pegged at 4.9 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government in 2017 scrapped a colonial-era tradition of presenting the Budget at the end of February.

# India awarded for social security good practices

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

India has received awards for adopting good practices in providing social security to its workforce at a regional forum of Asia-Pacific held in Saudi Arabia, an official statement said on Thursday. The 'Good Practice Award for Asia and Pacific 2024' was presented by Mohammed Azman, President of ISSA (International Social Security Association), at Regional Social Security Forum in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the labour ministry said in a statement. The Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) received five certificates of merit for communication channels, E-proceedings: A case on use of information and communication technology in justice delivery, district outreach programme (Nidhi Aapke Nikat), multilingual call centres.

# Gold climbs ₹300 to reclaim ₹79k-mark, silver continues to shine for third day

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Gold price surged to reclaim the Rs 79,000-level in the national capital on Thursday due to fresh buying by jewellers and stockists, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Snapping its three-day losing run, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity rose Rs 300 to Rs 79,150 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 78,850 per 10 grams on Wednesday. Traders said gold climbed due to fresh demand by jewellers and retailers in the local markets. Silver continued to shine for the third straight day by jumping Rs 1,300 to Rs 93,800 per kg on Thursday. It ended at Rs 92,500 per kg on Wednesday. Price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity advanced Rs 300 to Rs



78,750 per 10 grams. It settled at Rs 78,450 per 10 grams in the previous trading session. Meanwhile, in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for February delivery dipped Rs 160 or 0.21 per cent to trade at Rs 76,932 per 10 grams. "Gold traded flat to positive. In MCX, gold is expected to trade within the range of Rs 76,700-77,400," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research

Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said. Silver contracts for March delivery declined Rs 188 or 0.2 per cent to Rs 93,105 per kg on the exchange. Globally, Comex gold futures fell USD 7.20 or 0.27 per cent to USD 2,669 per ounce. "Persistent global risk, as well as political uncertainty in France and South Korea, contribute to driving up the safe-haven precious metal price. "Traders will be awaiting the US macroeconomic data, including new unemployment claims and trade balance to be released later on Thursday," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. According to commodity market experts, the bullion remained slightly

# Rupee rises three paise to close at 84.72 against US dollar

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**

The rupee recovered from its all-time low level and settled for the day with gains of just 3 paise at 84.72 (provisional) against the US dollar in a range-bound trade on Thursday, amid a positive trend in domestic equities. Forex traders said the Indian rupee recovered slightly on strength in the domestic markets and overnight decline in crude oil prices. However, a positive US dollar capped a sharp upside. At the interbank foreign

exchange, the rupee opened at 84.72, moved in a narrow range and touched an intraday high of 84.70 and a low of 84.74 against the greenback. On Wednesday, the rupee slumped by 7 paise to hit its lowest-ever closing level of 84.75 against the US dollar. "We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on the strong dollar and worries over economic slowdown. However, weakness in crude oil prices and fresh FII outflows may support the rupee at lower levels," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan. Choudhary further added that traders may take cues from weekly unemployment claims and trade balance data from the US. "USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 84.50 to Rs 84.95," he said. Moreover, market participants are also awaiting cues from the upcoming Reserve Bank of India (RBI) monetary policy on Friday, which will likely focus on balancing inflation and growth. The Reserve Bank's high-level panel on Wednesday started deliberations on the bi-monthly monetary policy amid expectations of status quo on interest rate as the retail inflation is above the upper tolerance level of the central bank. The decision taken by the RBI Governor Shaktikanata Das headed six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) will be announced on Friday. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading lower by 0.16 per cent at 106.15.

# DRI report reveals rise in commercial fraud, FTA misuse worth ₹1,427 Crore in 2023-24

**RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI**

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)'s report on 'Smuggling in India' 2023-24 highlights a rise in commercial fraud, including misuse of foreign trade agreements (FTA) by individuals/companies. According to the report, the agencies have detected cases of FTA misuse worth Rs 1,427 crore during 2023-24 compared to Rs 481 crore in 2022-2023. Moreover, the DRI booked 109 cases involving 8223.61 kg of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances including 107.31 kg of cocaine, 48.74 kg of heroin, 136 kg of methamphetamine, 236 kg of mephedrone and 7348.68 kg of ganja in 2023-24. The seizures indicate an increasing trend of smuggling of cocaine through air passenger route, from 21 cases in 2022-23 to 47 cases in 2023-24, with majority of seizures effected at airports. According to report, Free



Trade Warehousing Zones in the Middle East are emerging as a major transit point from where cigarette-concealed consignments are shipped to India. "Though illicit cigarettes are reportedly manufactured in certain South East Asian countries, it appears that the consignments are initially shipped to Dubai from southeast Asia and then re-routed to India," it said. According to the report for the fiscal 2023-24, the DRI initiated 485 import cases, involving illegal benefits totaling Rs 5,907.79 crore. The most common offenses included mis-

sticks during the same period in FY24. Illicit foreign currency seizures have also surged. DRI officials seized Rs 13.8 crore in foreign currency during the first half of FY25, surpassing the Rs 12.4 crore confiscated in all of FY24. Additionally, the agency uncovered a Rs 576 crore trade-based money laundering (TBML) racket. The scheme involved importing cheap electrical goods and cosmetics at inflated prices to channel foreign exchange out of the country. According to the report, gold smuggling in India follows a "hub and spoke" model. In this system, contraband is first brought into the country and transported to central hub locations before being distributed to various destinations. During the financial year 2023-24, the DRI seized a total of 1,319 kg of gold, with the land route accounting for 55% of the seizures and the air route

contributing around 36%. The DRI has also shared valuable intelligence with Customs field formations, resulting in significant gold seizures by these units. The report highlights how gold smuggling in India has evolved over time. Smuggling syndicates now employ a wide range of "mules," including foreign nationals, families, and even insiders. These syndicates are increasingly using international departure gates, where airport workers and other staff are involved in smuggling gold from transit passengers. Furthermore, there has been a rise in the number of carriers used by these syndicates to transport smaller amounts of gold, which helps reduce potential losses if the gold is intercepted by law enforcement. There is a sharp rise in seizures of drugs such as cocaine and methamphetamine, contraband cigarettes and illicit foreign currency over the past year. According to report, the agency conducted 47 cocaine seizures worth Rs 975 crore in 2024—more than double the number recorded in the previous financial year. The quantity of cocaine smuggled into India, primarily through airports, increased by 9 per cent to 107 kg during the same period. Methamphetamine smuggling has also spiked, especially in northeastern states like Assam and Mizoram, according to DRI's latest bulletin. While 2024 recorded meth seizures of 136 kg, the first half of 2025 alone saw 123 kg confiscated in 11 cases. In 2024, DRI booked 109 cases involving 8,224 kg of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. This included 107 kg of cocaine (Rs 975 crore), 49 kg of heroin (Rs 365 crore), 236 kg of mephedrone (Rs 357 crore), and 136 kg of methamphetamine (Rs 275 crore).

# INBRIEF

**GNU SECURES SECOND RUNNERS-UP TROPHY IN INTER-UNIVERSITY YOUTH FESTIVAL 2024**

**AMRITSAR:** Guru Nanak Dev University has brought laurels to the state by securing the Second Runners-Up Trophy in the Punjab State Inter-University Youth Festival 2024.

**GNU RESEARCH STUDENT BAGS PRESTIGIOUS PRIME MINISTER FELLOWSHIP**

**AMRITSAR:** Ms. Aanchal Khanna from Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences of Guru Nanak Dev University bagged the prestigious Prime Minister Fellowship for doctoral research for the 2024 session.

**PSPCL DIRECTOR ADMIN WELCOMES NOTIFICATION ON ELECTRICITY CONNECTIONS**

**PATIALA:** Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL) Director Administration Jasbir Singh Sur Singh has welcomed a notification issued regarding release of electricity connections to the applicants of unauthorised regularised colonies.



## A Celebration of culture, humanity, and timeless narratives

Shakila and Other Stories stands as a remarkable anthology that transcends its regional origins to deliver universally resonant narratives, writes **SHALEEN KUMAR SINGH**

*Shakila and Other Stories* is a compelling anthology that showcases Dr. Lakshmana Iyer Rama Swamy's nuanced cultural insights and humanistic vision. Renowned for his contributions to Telugu short fiction, Dr. Swamy adeptly captures the essence of middle-class Telugu life alongside the complexities of industrial labor. The collection, translated into English by T.S. Chandra Mouli, a distinguished scholar in translation studies, brings Swamy's narratives to a global audience while retaining their cultural authenticity.

Swamy's stories are a masterful blend of tradition and modernity, juxtaposing rural values against urban dilemmas to illuminate the evolving Telugu society. As a Tamil Brahmin from Kerala, his life is as fascinating as his storytelling. Multilingual and multicultural, Swamy embodies the intersection of diverse identities, an influence evident in his writing. Fluent in Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, and English, he brings a rich linguistic texture to his work, infusing his characters with authenticity and vitality.

In the foreword, Prof. Sushil Kumar Sharma praises Swamy's narrative finesse, which melds traditional storytelling zeal with modern sensibilities. Sharma highlights storytelling as an ancient art form that Swamy rejuvenates by weaving timeless themes with contemporary relevance. Swamy's identity as a polyglot and chemical engineer further enriches his writing. His exposure to varied cultural contexts—Malayali traditions in Assam, Telugu life in Mumbai, and Tamil values in Dubai—adds a unique depth to his narratives. With over 40 short stories, numerous translations, and insightful journalistic work, Swamy has cemented his place in Indian literature. His acclaimed short story *Shakila*, part of the anthology *Hundred Stories* by Hundred Writers, exemplifies his storytelling prowess.

**A TALE OF LOVE, CLASS AND CULTURAL IDENTITY:** The titular story *Shakila* delves into complex themes of love, class and cultural identity through the evolving relationship between a childless mistress and her maid, *Shakila*. Adopted and raised abroad, *Shakila* becomes a bridge between her employer's values and her estranged birth family. Her marriage to *Kabir*, a man from her

own faith, challenges societal norms but also underscores interfaith cohesion. Swamy's narratives, such as *Shakila*, *The Sun and the Moon*, and *A Cry in the Wilderness*, often examine the intersection of industrialisation and globalisation with everyday lives. His characters grapple with conflicts between tradition and modernity, presenting a poignant critique of urbanisation's impact on relationships and the natural world. The juxtaposition of organic life against mechanised industrial settings underscores a recurring theme: "one who works among machines becomes a machine."

**A VOICE FOR CHANGE:** Swamy's writing is marked by realism, emotional depth, and a secular outlook. His stories tackle superstition, advocate reform, and celebrate resilience. His portrayal of women is particularly notable, as they emerge as agents of change, challenging traditional norms and embodying strength. His use of Telugu expressions, preserved in translation by Chandra Mouli, adds authenticity while inviting global readers to engage with the richness of Telugu culture.

**THE TRANSLATOR'S CRAFT:** T.S. Chandra Mouli's translation preserves the essence of Swamy's stories, balancing fidelity to the original text with accessibility for a global audience. By retaining Telugu phrases and providing contextual explanations, Mouli captures the cultural subtleties that make Swamy's work unique.

**A UNIVERSAL APPEAL:** *Shakila and Other Stories* transcends regional boundaries, offering readers a vivid portrayal of the human experience through the lens of Telugu culture. Swamy's characters, caught between tradition and modernity, resonate universally, reflecting the complexities of contemporary society. Chandra Mouli's meticulous translation amplifies this resonance, ensuring that the anthology's themes remain both timeless and relevant.

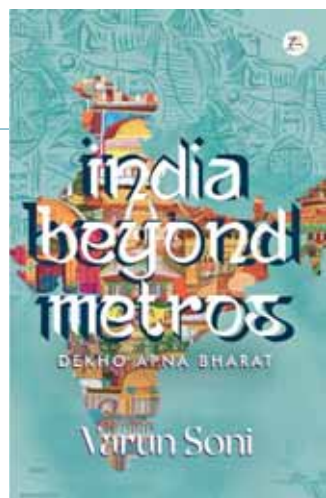
The collection reaffirms the significance of regional Indian literature in representing the country's socio-cultural landscape. It invites readers into a world deeply rooted in Indian ethos while exploring universal questions of resilience, ethics, and the search for meaning.



**ABOUT THE BOOK**  
Book: *Shakila and Other Stories*  
by L.R. Swamy  
Publisher: Aadi Publications  
Price: ₹375



**"India Beyond the Metros: Dekho Apna Bharat"** by Varun Soni explores 50 lesser-known cities, highlighting their cultural, historical and natural attractions, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**



**ABOUT THE BOOK**  
Book: *India beyond metro*  
by Varun Soni  
Publisher: Zorba Books Pvt Ltd  
Price: ₹299 Pages: 172

travellers. The book serves as a timely reminder for urban dwellers, often caught up in international travel plans, to turn their gaze inward and rediscover the treasures within their own country. By exploring these smaller cities and towns, Soni argues, one can truly experience the pulse of India's vibrant traditions, natural beauty, and historical depth. However, *India Beyond the Metros* is not just about sightseeing. It subtly urges readers to appreciate the cultural and historical wealth that lies beyond the metropolitan gloss. It also recognises the role of local tourism, noting that nearby residents often form the backbone of these cities' visitor economies.

*India Beyond the Metros* is an inspiring and informative read that fills a much-needed gap in Indian travel literature. It is not only an invitation to explore but also a celebration of the untapped potential of India's smaller cities. Ideal for corporate travellers, families or anyone looking to delve deeper into the country's heartland, this book is both a guide and a companion for those ready to embrace the unexplored.



## A JOURNEY BEYOND THE METROS

Varun Soni's *India Beyond the Metros: Dekho Apna Bharat* serves as an insightful travelogue that ventures into the heart of India's lesser-explored Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. Unlike conventional guides focusing on metropolitan hubs or popular tourist destinations, this book offers a window into the charm and cultural richness of small-town India. Covering approximately 50 cities, each chapter provides a comprehensive travel guide detailing places to visit, accommodation options, transportation and unique shopping experiences.

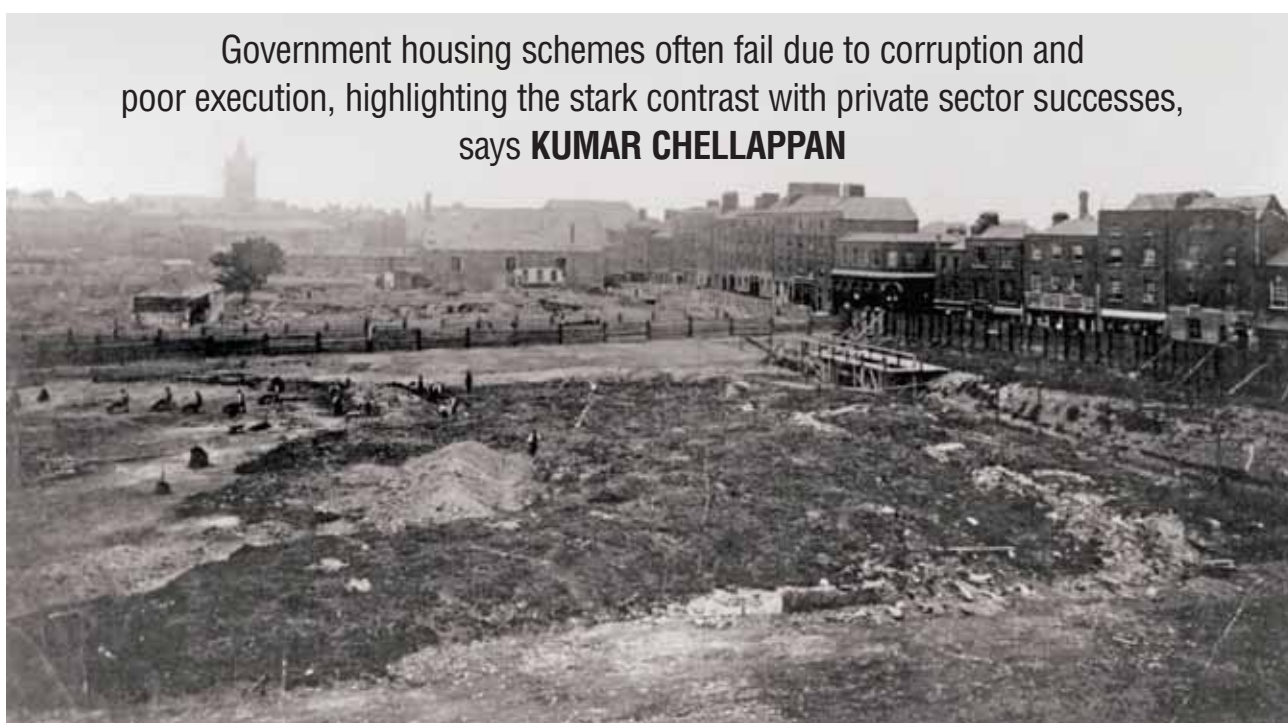
The book's unique appeal lies in its focus on destinations that often remain overlooked, such as Jabalpur, Gorakhpur, Kollam and Hubballi. Soni's narrative highlights the beauty and significance of these locations, offering readers a chance to explore India's hinterlands. His accounts are not just factual but are peppered with personal anecdotes and observations gathered during his extensive travels since 2010. For instance, Soni sheds

light on the breathtaking North Kerala, the architectural marvel of the Brihadeeswara Temple in Thanjavur and the serenity of the Krishna-Godavari Sangam. Each chapter is thoughtfully crafted to guide readers through the essence of the city, from its historical significance to its natural beauty and cultural heritage. The depiction of Jabalpur, for example, showcases its strategic location on the Narmada River and its rich history as a hub of the Kalachuri and Gond dynasties. Similarly, the chapter on Kollam highlights its enchanting Ashtamudi backwaters and the iconic Jatayu Earth Centre, a masterpiece of art and mythology.

Soni's ability to bring these cities to life is commendable. His description of local attractions, such as Hubballi's Chandramouleshwara Temple and Rammal Lake or Jamnagar's Lakhota Palace and Darbargadh Palace, reflects his keen observation and deep appreciation for India's diverse culture. Furthermore, the book also includes practical travel tips, like transportation options and shopping suggestions, making it a useful resource for

## Revamping India's Housing

Government housing schemes often fail due to corruption and poor execution, highlighting the stark contrast with private sector successes, says **KUMAR CHELLAPPAN**



The governments at the Centre and the States are sincere in their efforts to provide shelter to those without roofs over their heads. It must be said that food, clothing, and shelter remain the essential elements that constitute the life of any ordinary person. The administrations have conceived and executed many housing projects such as the Prime Minister's Awaas Yojana and the Indira Gandhi Housing Scheme. In Tamil Nadu, former Chief Minister J Jayalitha launched a mission to construct houses for the poorest of the poor at heavily subsidised rates.

During the tenure of C Achutha Menon as Chief Minister (1969 to 1977), the Kerala Government launched Laksham Veedu (1,00,000 Houses), a housing scheme for the poorer sections of society. Small houses were built under this scheme across the State for the benefit of people below the poverty line. Although the intention was noble, these houses ended up as dens of all vices. Residents of Laksham Veedu colonies were treated as anti-social elements, as many excelled in dubious professions such as theft, dacoity, bootlegging, pimping, and prostitution. The scheme died a natural death, like many other government-sponsored initiatives. Later, the LDF Government led by Pinarayi Vijayan launched Life Mission in 2016 with the aim of providing residential accommodation to those without homes. However, this multi-crore project is reportedly embroiled in corruption, with central agencies investigating the issue.

In Tamil Nadu, the Slum Clearance Board has constructed four-storey apartments for the poor along the scenic Marina Beach. However, the quality of construction and the ambience are worse than the slums themselves. Why do government schemes fail so frequently? The answer is not difficult to ascertain. Massive corruption involving public works departments, bureaucrats, contractors, and politicians turns these schemes into milch cows. "To hell with the beneficiaries... we can make as much money as possible from these schemes," seems to be the driving mantra of these anti-nationals.

The Central Public Works Department, responsible for constructing central government buildings, and the State PWDs, entrusted with building roads, offices, and residential accommodations, are classic examples of corruption in high places. One need only look at the buildings, be they office complexes, hospitals or housing projects for the poor. What stands out is the careless manner in which they have been designed and built. Hygiene and sanitation in these buildings are often appalling. Walls double as spittoons, toilets are worse than hell, and cleanliness seems alien to such structures.

Contrast this with the apartments and villas built by private developers, and the difference is stark. Major players such as Tata Housing, L&T, DLF, Ashok Leyland, the Godrej Group, Hiranandani, Chettinad Group, Ceebros, Puravankara, and Sobha City (to name a few) create visual treats. Their projects cost a fortune and cater to the affluent, but they stand as a testament to

quality construction and planning. The townships they build, with their panoramic views, starkly contrast the stinking low-income group apartment complexes constructed by CPWD and PWDs. These public works departments have effectively become Public Waste Departments, proving themselves incapable of fulfilling their intended purpose.

It is indeed possible to build beautiful and safe houses for the poor. What is needed is a change in the attitude and approach of bureaucrats. The success of private developers in building well-planned townships and apartments stems from thoughtful planning and treating construction as an art. The life and achievements of Kushal Pal Singh (KP Singh), who single-handedly built the DLF empire, illustrate this point. The township at Gurugram (which I have read about and seen on television) is a breathtaking achievement. Thanks to companies like DLF, India has become a global player in

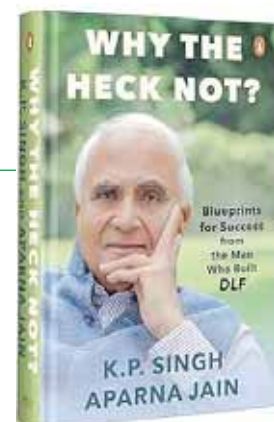
constructing townships, major software parks, and apartment complexes. Is it not possible for doyens like K P Singh to build affordable housing for the poor?

Such a vision could materialise by loosening the stranglehold of the government (both Centre and State) on these sectors. For every high-end township that private developers construct, they could be tasked with building housing complexes for low-income groups, complete with well-laid-out landscapes. Given proper incentives and recognition, these companies would likely embrace such missions. It would also be crucial to foster respect for business leaders like Singh, the Godrejs, the Tatas, and others. India cannot afford to view its entrepreneurs, who employ millions, with suspicion. Business and entrepreneurship are forms of art that can drive progress where the government cannot.

The memoir *Why The Heck Not*, by K P Singh with Aparna Jain, is an eye-opener. It highlights the often-overlooked role of Indian entrepreneurs in nation-building. Figures like JRD Tata and Dhirubhai Ambani were visionaries who lacked the recognition they deserved within India, even as foreign media sought their insights. Singh's story, from studying aircraft maintenance engineering in Coventry to heading the DLF Group, is nothing short of inspiring. His advice, peppered throughout the book, offers valuable lessons for parents, youth, and policymakers alike.

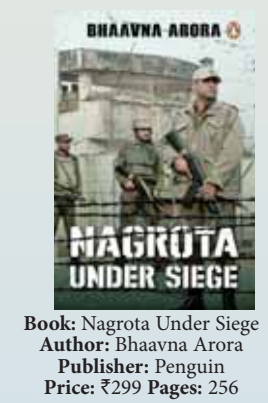
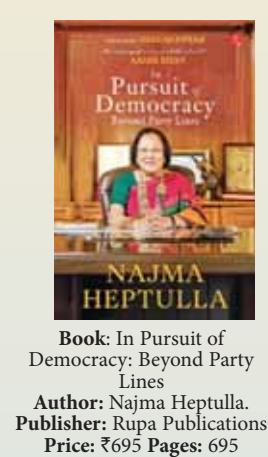
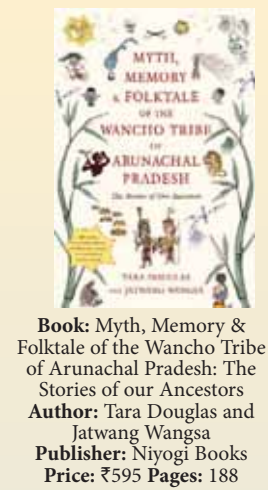
After reading the memoir, one cannot help but wish Singh another 95 years of health, strength, and happiness. His contributions to India's infrastructure and business landscape make him a national treasure. The insights he shares about India's fragile infrastructure and the steps needed to achieve the five trillion-dollar economy are profound. His vision of a better, more inclusive India should inspire policymakers to let a thousand flowers bloom.

One blemish on Singh's otherwise remarkable career is his association with a less-than-reputable individual, often referred to as Damaad Shree. With his wisdom and experience, Singh could have avoided such associations and still achieved success.



**ABOUT THE BOOK**  
Book: *Why The Heck Not?*  
by K.P. Singh and Aparna Jain  
Publisher: Penguin Viking  
Price: ₹799

### New Releases



# KL Rahul will open innings, I will bat in middle: Rohit

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

KL Rahul's composure and brilliant technique while opening the innings in Perth convinced skipper Rohit Sharma to move himself down the order and "bat somewhere in the middle" in the day/night Test against Australia starting here on Friday.

The Indian captain said on Thursday he didn't wish to tinker with a combination that brought the team success in the series opener of the five-match rubber which the visitors lead 1-0 following their 295-run win at Optus Oval.

Rahul looked solid with scores of 26 and 77 and added 201 runs with fellow opener and centurion Yashasvi Jaiswal in the second innings of the first Test.

"He (Rahul) will open the innings. I will play

somewhere in the middle," Rohit told reporters on the eve of the second Test.

The Indian skipper was both categorical and objective in his reply when asked about his hotly-debated batting slot after returning from a brief paternity break.

A team man to the core, the 37-year-old Rohit explained part by part the need for continuity.

"How I came to that decision of, you know, batting down the order is clearly, you know, we want results. We want success," Rohit was categorical about his decision to take a step back after opening the innings for five years.

He was also objective about the rationale.

"Those two guys (Jaiswal and Rahul) at the top, just looking at this one Test match, they batted brilliantly. I was at home with my newborn (son



Ahaan) in my arms and I was watching how KL batted." Rohit didn't want to disturb Rahul but also said that the decision is based on current situation.

"It was brilliant to watch, to be honest. And I felt that there is no need to change that now. I don't know, may be in the future, things will be different."

Rahul has so far scored eight Test hundreds, and five of those tons have come in Australia, South Africa and England, and the skipper feels the Karnataka player is the most deserving to face the new ball.

"Based on what has happened and what KL has shown outside of India, you know, he probably deserves that place at this point in time. And, you know, it is something that has given us success in the first Test, to have that big partnership

with Jaiswal on the other side." With the team getting 500-odd runs in the second innings besides a double-century opening stand, Rohit doesn't want unnecessary tweaks which can become counter-productive.

"You know, when you come here in a place like Perth and you get 500 runs, it's a massive tick to the box. So, I don't see we need to change that."

"But what I saw from the outside looked brilliant. So, and there was no need to change anything. So, it was actually pretty simple for me."

While Rohit waxed eloquence on the 32-year-old Rahul, he didn't want to divulge the details of the conversation he had with the player.

"This is between me and him. It's a personal matter. I can't share it," he said.



## Indian women's team loses to Australia by five wickets in first ODI

PTI ■ BRISBANE

India put up a dismal show with the bat as Australia stamped their superiority over the visitors with a five-wicket win in the first Women's ODI here on Thursday.

Opting to bat, India collapsed to 100 all out in 34.2 overs with Australia pacer Megan Schutt returning an impressive five-wicket haul.

Australia did experience a minor stutter in the run chase, when Renuka Thakur struck twice in the same over, before coasting to victory in 16.2 overs.

Debutant opener Georgia Voll (46 not out off 42 balls) produced a measured knock to ensure a comfortable win. Her effort included a six off Renuka in the cow corner region.

Her opening partner Phoebe Litchfield (35 off 29 balls) was the aggressor in their 48-run stand, smashing six fours in a row, four of those coming off Renuka and two off debutant pacer Titas Sadhu.

The second ODI will be played at the Allan Border Field here on December 8.

Jemimah Rodrigues, who batted at number five, top-scored for India with a 23 off 42 balls.

Opting to bat, India failed to get off the blocks, losing the openers in the first seven overs. Priya Punia (3 off 17), playing in place of the dropped Shafali Verma, looked totally out of sorts in her comeback game.

Smriti Mandha (8 off 9) was caught behind, chasing a wide outswinger from Schutt. Punia, in her attempt to break the shackles, was caught at backward point off Schutt.

Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (23 off 42) was trapped in front by pacer Annabel Sutherland. Rodrigues looked comfortable in the middle until she was bowled by Kim Grath as she tried to run a delivery down to the third man.

From 62 for three, India were all out for 100 in 34.2 overs. Their last three batters got out with the score reading 100 on the board.

Schutt completed her maiden five-wicket haul by castling Priya Mishra.

It was a batting performance to forget for India.

**Brief Scores:**  
India Women: 100 all out in 34.2 overs (Jemimah Rodrigues 23; Megan Schutt 5/19).  
Australia 102/5 in 16.2 overs (Georgia Voll 46 not out; Renuka Thakur 3/45).

## Mbappé misses another penalty kick and Real Madrid loses to Athletic Bilbao 2-1

AP ■ MADRID

Kylian Mbappé missed a penalty kick again and Federico Valverde gifted a late goal as Real Madrid lost ground to Barcelona in the Spanish league after a 2-1 loss at Athletic Bilbao.

Mbappé had his penalty saved by Athletic goalkeeper Julen Agirrezabala in the 68th minute, and Valverde lost possession on defense to allow an easy winner by Gorka Guruzeta in the 80th.

"We knew that he is a good penalty taker," Agirrezabala said of Mbappé. "He missed the last one and I believed that he was going to choose the same side and luckily that's what happened."

Valverde had control of the ball but gave it away while trying to get past a few Athletic players instead of passing it to a teammate, leaving Guruzeta with an easy run into the area for his goal.



Alex Berenguer had put the hosts ahead in the 53rd and Jude Bellingham equalized for Madrid in the 78th.

Mbappé had also missed a penalty in Madrid's 2-0 loss at Liverpool in the Champions League last week. He didn't take the one for the club in a Spanish league match on Sunday, but he scored in the 2-0 win over Getafe to ease some of the pressure on him

and the club.

But it was another lackluster outing for Mbappé, who continues to struggle in his first season since finally joining the Spanish powerhouse.

"I won't evaluate the performance of a player because of a missed penalty. Obviously he is sad and disappointed, but you have to move on," Madrid coach

Carlo Ancelotti said about Mbappé. "He is not at his best level, but you have to give him time to adapt. You have to give him time to be able to do better."

The defeat left Madrid four points behind Barcelona, which on Tuesday ended a three-match winless streak in the league with a 5-1 rout at Mallorca. Madrid, which has a game in hand, had won three consecutive league games since a 4-0 loss at home in the "clasico" against Barcelona.

Madrid has lost five of its last 11 matches in all competitions.

Athletic moved to fourth place with the victory, its fourth consecutive across all competitions.

Both matches on Tuesday and Wednesday were moved forward in the schedule because the clubs will be playing in the Spanish Super Cup in January.

## Don't think Adelaide debacle of 2020 will haunt India in upcoming pink-ball Test: Shastri

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

The Adelaide debacle of 2020 is history now but it should be at the back of players' minds when they take field in the day/night Test against Australia, reckons Ravi Shastri, who was India's coach in that series.

India, under Virat Kohli, were shot out for their lowest-ever Test total of 36 in the second innings of the Adelaide Test that Australia won by eight wickets.

Bruised and battered, and with hardly anyone giving them a revival chance, India staged a remarkable comeback to win the four-Test series 2-1 to clinch the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

"I don't think it (Adelaide drubbing) will play any role but it should be at the back of their mind because you know things happen very quickly with a



pink ball," Shastri, who was the coach of the India team during the series, told The ICC Review.

A 1-0 lead in pocket, India will clash with the hosts in the second Test, starting Friday.

"You realise that in a session of play if things don't go your way and the bowling is good, things can happen rapidly," Shastri added that India's defeat in the match was a freak thing and that he had not seen so

many nicks flying to the fielders in his four decades of cricket. "What we did after that 36 was - like I said at that time - that I'd never seen, and I said it in the dressing room, I'd never seen so much of playing and nicking as opposed to playing and missing."

"And I'd watched cricket for about 40 years. And to be honest, that was a session where hardly any player played and missed. If he did anything, he got a nick. So it was not beating the bat. You know, the bowlers (being) unlucky... It was just the batsmen being unlucky on that day."

The legendary all-rounder added that the 1-0 lead in the ongoing series should act as a catalyst for India to further tighten their grip on the hosts, who he felt were under pressure.

"Now the fact that they are one-

up, should put them in a really great frame of mind going ahead in this Test match because I think it's a massive opportunity for India to tighten the screws further. The pressure will be on Australia."

"In my mind, it was very clear you can't do worse than that (Adelaide). You'll have a day when the luck is in your favour and you can bounce back. And that's exactly what happened."

## ICC Chairman Jay Shah vows to take cricket to 'unprecedented heights'

PTI ■ DUBAI

Newly-appointed ICC chairman Jay Shah on Thursday vowed to take cricket to "unprecedented heights" following his first visit to the headquarters of the game's global governing body as its head.

Elected unopposed in August, the 36-year-old Shah became the youngest and fifth Indian to take over as the ICC chair.

His term began on December 1.

Shah visited the ICC Headquarters in Dubai for the first time in his role as chairman as he described it as "productive and inspiring."

"While I am encouraged by what I have seen, I recognise that this is just the beginning," Shah stated in an ICC release.

"The hard work to elevate cricket to unprecedented heights starts now, and I am confident that together, we will deliver on this vision."

Speaking after meeting with ICC Board Directors and staff, Shah emphasised the importance of collaboration in shaping the future of cricket.

"This visit provided an invaluable opportunity to connect with my colleagues on the ICC Board where we discussed the initial roadmap and strategies to shape the future of this incredible sport."



"I was equally delighted to meet with the dedicated ICC team working tirelessly behind the scenes to propel cricket forward," ICC deputy chairman Imran Khawaja commended Shah for his ambitious vision for the sport.

"On behalf of the Board I would like to welcome Jay Shah to the role and share our enthusiasm for his tenure," Khawaja said.

"Shah's ambition and experience will be instrumental in guiding the ICC and the sport into the future. It has been a very productive visit for everyone, and we look forward to working alongside him, the Members and ICC team in achieving success."

Shah succeeded Greg Barclay, who had held the post of ICC chairman since 2020.

**NOTICE**  
It is hereby informed to all members of Indian Gateball Union that the General Body Meeting will be held on 25th of December at Gouri Cottage near Ravi Talkies Square, Bhubaneswar. Time 7 pm  
Convener - Trustees.

**AFFIDAVIT**  
I, Unnoti Adhikari aged about 33 years, W/O Sukanta Kumar Adhikari, resident of Village/PO Bandhagada, PS Phiringia, District Kandhamal, Odisha declare by the affidavit before Notary Public, Phulbani, dtd - 5-12-2024 that my actual name is Unnoti Adhikari as per adhar card and pass port issued by govt of India. In the pass port of my daughter my name has been wrongly mentioned as Unnati Adhikari instead of Unnoti Adhikari. Unnoti Adhikari and Unnati Adhikari is one and same person. I shall be known as Unnoti Adhikari for all purposes.  
Sd/-  
DEPONENT

## Border-Gavaskar Trophy victory is one last thing to tick off for lot of us, says Cummins

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

He has won the ODI World Cup, the Ashes and also the Test Championship mace but the Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India remains the "one last" unchecked item in the bucket list of Australia skipper Pat Cummins, who is confident of pulling it off this time despite the opening Test debacle.

Cummins, who made his Test debut in 2011, played a Test against India for the first time in 2017. Since 2014-15, Australia have not won an India series either at home or away. The pacer is determined to change this stat despite the 295-run drubbing in the Perth game last month.

"For half of the (Australian) change room, we haven't won the Border Gavaskar Trophy. It is one last thing to



tick off for a lot of us. Almost every challenge that we faced in last few years, we have stepped up and done well," Cummins spoke with a lot of determination on the eve of the second Test against India in Adelaide.

"I think we need to do that for another home summer and series. From two-three season thing, it has suddenly been a half a generation thing," he added.

Mitchell Starc, Josh

Hazlewood (not playing this Test), Mitchell Marsh, and Nathan Lyon are some of the players, who were part of the 2-0 win back in 2014-15. From that point onwards, India have won all four series - two at home (2017 and 2023) and two overseas (2018-19, 2020-21). So, is there pressure on him to win it back this time?

"I don't think it's pressure. You are playing at home and you want to do well. We

know they (India) are a really strong side and lot of us were part of those recent three series (defeats).

"Yeah, it's a big series and kind of not looking too far in the past. And every summer, when we play against them we want to do well," Cummins said.

The 31-year-old, who has 272 wickets from 63 Tests, didn't want to compare the Ashes with the Border-Gavaskar Trophy (BGT) but termed the battle with Indian teams as the most closely contested over the years.

"I think it has been the most closely fought. I think the Ashes has got a rich history and (it is) watched as well but I think Border-Gavaskar Trophy has been a very tight series that I have kind of seen in recent times.

"Both teams play quite similar at times. For the first

time (since 1991-92), it is a five-Test series and that adds a bit extra. It really gets attritional with its history as well so it is a big one," the skipper said.

All praise for Nitish Reddy With Rishabh Pant coming in at number five and one among Shubman Gill or Rohit Sharma at number six followed by Washington Sundar and Nitish Reddy, India's top-order does have a scary look. But Cummins backed his bowlers.

"Pretty scary five, six and seven I think. If they come in and bowlers have already had plenty of overs into them, then they are a scary proposition.

"Just like we have seen, when we have been two, three or four down, then (Mitchell) Marshy or (Travis) Heady have put out a 100. That changes dynamics pretty quickly," Cummins said.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION**  
**KHORDHA**  
Tel No. (06755) 221502E-mail: semidkhd@yaho.com  
Letter No. 4716 Dt.04.12.2024  
**Invitation for Bids**  
**Bid Identification. SEMIDKHD 11/2024-25**

1	The Superintending Engineer, Minor Irrigation Division, Khordha, on behalf of the Governor of Odisha, invites Percentage Rate Bids in Single and double Cover system in Online Mode only for civil works in MIPs under DPIW and MIPSP Scheme as detailed in the table below from the eligible class of Contractors.	
2	Nature of Work	Civil works in MIPs under DPIW and MIPSP Scheme in different Blocks of Khordha District
3	No of Works	3(Three)Nos.Only
4	Cost of Bid Document	Rs. 8,000/- and 4000/- (through online) only.
5	Tender Value	Rs.41.54 to 8.40 lakhs
6	Class of Contractor	D, C and 'B' Class as applicable
7	Availability of Bid Documents Online	10.00A.M to 08.12.2024 to 5.00P.M of Dt.16.12.2024
8	Last Date and Time for receipt of Bids in the Portal	5.00 P.M of Dt. 16.12.2024
9	Date of Opening of Bids	11.00A.M of Dt.17.12.2024
10	The Bidders shall have to participate online in bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: <a href="https://tendersodisha.gov.in">https://tendersodisha.gov.in</a> in Any addendum/Corrigendum/Cancellation/Bid canals obseerininthesaidwebsite.The Authority reserves the right to defer/reject/accept any or all the bids without assigning any reason whatsoever. The Authority shall in no way be held liable for such action nor will make any obligation to inform the Bidder the ground for the same.	

OIPR-32042/11/0008/2425  
Superintending Engineer  
Minor Irrigation Division  
Khordha.

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, KHORDHA (R&B) DIVISION, KHORDHA**  
**INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)**  
E-mail: [pwdoff\\_khd@yahoo.com](mailto:pwdoff_khd@yahoo.com)  
**Tender Call Notice**  
**Bid Identification No. S.E.-KHD-(R&B)-26/2024-25**  
**Letter No. 5940 dtd. 3.12.24**

The Executive Engineer, Khordha (R&B) Division, Khordha on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage rate bid in Single cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible class of Electrical contractors having valid registration certificate for execution of the Electrical works as detailed below:

1.	Nature of Work	Electrical Works
2.	No of Work	1 Nos.
3.	Tender Cost	Rs.6000.00 (Online)
4.	Class of Contractor	HT license
5.	Available of Bid documents in the web site.	From Dt. 07.12.2024 at 12.00 Noon to Dt. 6.12.2024 at 5.00 PM
6.	Date of opening of Bids	Dt 17.12.2024 at 11.30 AM
7.	Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the Website: <a href="https://tenderodisha.gov.in">https://tenderodisha.gov.in</a> . Any information regarding Addendum / Corrigendum / Cancellation of tender can be available in the said website.	

OIPR-34095/11/0021/2425  
Superintending Engineer  
Khordha (R&B) Division, Khordha