

One Nation, One Election, One Decision

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre's call for 'One Nation, One Election' inched closer to realise its dreams of simultaneous polls by paving the way to table the proposal in the Parliament next week after the Union Cabinet on Thursday approved two bills, including one to amend the Constitution to implement 'One Nation, One Election'. Sources said the Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave nod to draft legislations to hold simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies only. While a high-level committee led by former president Ram Nath Kovind had also proposed holding the municipality and panchayat polls along with the national and state elections in a phased manner, the Cabinet decided not to touch the subject currently. The Constitution Amendment Bill to hold simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies will not require ratification by at least 50 per cent of the states, the sources noted. Another Constitution Bill proposed by the Kovind panel was aimed at creating provisions to hold simultaneous elections to municipalities and panchayats, along with the elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, by inserting a new Article 324A. It would have required ratification by half of the State Assemblies.



File photo: PTI

But the Union Cabinet has kept the local body polls out of its plan. The second Bill will be an ordinary one to amend provisions in three laws dealing with Union Territories that have Legislative Assemblies, Puducherry, Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir, to align the terms of these Houses with other legislative Assemblies and the Lok Sabha as proposed in the Constitution Amendment Bill. The statutes it proposes to amend are the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act-1991, the Government of Union Territories Act-1963 and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act-2019. The proposed Bill will be an

ordinary legislation, not requiring a change in the Constitution and will also not need ratification by the states. The Government is keen on holding wider consultations on bills that are likely to be referred to a parliamentary committee. The sources said the Government also wants to consult the speakers of various state legislative Assemblies through the committee. Moving ahead with its 'One Nation, One Election' plan, the Government in September accepted the recommendations of the high-level committee for holding simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha, state Assemblies and local bodies in a phased manner. In its report submitted to the

Government in March, just before the general election was announced, the panel recommended implementing 'One Nation, One Election' in two phases. While the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies are pushing for simultaneous polls, several opposition parties have opposed the idea. The Government is of the view that simultaneous polls will reduce expenditure in the long run and different parts of the country will not be under the Model Code of Conduct throughout the year due to various polls. Simultaneous polls were held for the first time between 1951 and 1967. The concept of simultaneous elections has featured in many reports and studies since 1983, essentially

implying a return to the previous practice of conducting polls concurrently. Congress reiterated its opposition to the very idea of simultaneous polls and accused the Government of trying to divert attention from "questions being raised on the electoral integrity of the democratic system".

ELECTIONS FOR THE LOK SABHA AND ALL STATE ASSEMBLIES CAN BE HELD TOGETHER:

- For synchronising the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, the President shall notify the date of the first sitting of the Lok Sabha after a general election as the "appointed date".
- Tenure of all State Assemblies formed via polls after the "appointed date" and before the expiry of the full term of the Lok Sabha will only be for the period ending up to the subsequent parliamentary polls. After this one-time transitory measure, all Lok Sabha and Assembly polls will be held simultaneously.
- Fresh elections could be held to constitute a new Lok Sabha in the event of a hung House or a no-confidence motion or any such event.
- Where fresh elections are held for the House of the People (Lok Sabha), the tenure of the House will be "only for the unexpired (remaining) term of the immediately preceding full term of the House".
- When fresh elections are held for state legislative Assemblies, then such new Assemblies — unless sooner dissolved — shall continue up to the end of the full term of the Lok Sabha.



AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal launches the 'Mukhya Mantri Mahila Samman Yojna' to give a monthly assistance of Rs 1,000 to women in Delhi. Photos: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

Eye on Polls, Kejriwal announces Mukhya Mantri Mahila Samman Yojna

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

With the Assembly polls drawing closer, after giving five 'revdis' (freebies) including free DTC bus rides to women, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday announced his sixth freebie, of giving monthly assistance of Rs 1,000 to women in Delhi each month, under the 'Mukhya Mantri Mahila Samman' Yojna. He also proposed the amount would be raised to Rs 2,100 if the AAP government returned to power. The scheme was approved by the Delhi Cabinet despite objections by the Planning Department and Finance Department. The scheme needs Rs 4,560 Crore annually for the year 2025-26. The scheme was initially announced in the 2024-25 Budget with an allocation of Rs 2,000 Crore. The scheme, however, seemed to have hit the bureaucratic

logjam with the Finance department flagging budgetary constraints. The scheme is on the lines of 'Mahila Laddi Bahin Yojana' in Maharashtra, 'Ladli Behna Yojna' in Madhya Pradesh, 'Grahalexmi' scheme of Kerala, 'Kalaigarni Magalir Urumal' of Tamil Nadu and 'Laxmir Bhandar' of West Bengal that played a major role for the ruling party to defeat anti-incumbency factor. Addressing a press conference along with Chief Minister Atishi, Kejriwal announced the Delhi Cabinet has approved the scheme and women can begin their registration from Friday. However, he clarified the elections are likely to be announced soon and therefore the money could be credited in beneficiaries' accounts only after the polls as the date for the crucial polls would be announced in the next 10 to 15 days.

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, meanwhile, said if the Model Code of Conduct comes into force after January 13, the first installment will be transferred into the bank accounts of eligible women before elections. The Planning Department in its noting said that as against the estimated Revenue Receipts of Rs 65034.69 Crore during 2024-25, total expenditure of Rs 77700 crore (including Expenditure on Programs/ Projects and Other Expenditure) is projected and the gap between receipts and total expenditure i.e. deficit is proposed to be covered by 'NSSF Loan' and unspent balance. As the opening balance is about to exhausted, therefore, implementation of proposed new scheme involves huge amount of funds i.e. Rs 4560 crore through Loan is not appropriate and good for the financial health of the Government.

'BJD will be history'



BJP to rule Odisha for 50 yrs: Assam CM

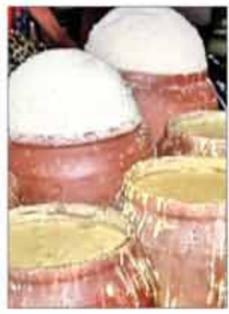
The BJD is destined to come to an end, said Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in Puri on Thursday. Sarma, who is in Odisha on a two-day visit, arrived in Bhubaneswar today and proceeded straight to Puri to pay his obeisance to Lord Jagannath. Replying to the queries of journalists, Sarma said, "BJD's history will come to an end."

The (BJP) government is doing well. BJP will be in Odisha for the next 50 years," he said. On Bangladeshi infiltrators, he said the National Register of Citizens (NRC) would go a long way in checking these infiltrators. To get an Aadhaar card, one's name must be in the NRC. From this, it would be easy to differentiate between who is an Indian and who is an infiltrator, he added. No reactions were received from the BJD on the Assam Chief Minister's statement.

Puri Mahaprasad prices to be regulated

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The price of Abadha (Mahaprasad) at the Jagannath Temple in Puri would be regulated soon, Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan said on Thursday.



According to sources, this comes in response to the temple administration (SJTA)'s previous initiative to issue a rate chart. In line with the recent emphasis on using pure ghee in the preparation of Mahaprasad, discussions are presently focused on addressing the associated challenges to ensure stable and affordable pricing for devotees.

By regulating prices, the temple authorities aim to alleviate the purchasing difficulties faced by devotees. "We will initiate the price regulation process very soon. After the use of 'pure ghee' was insisted, some cost-related issues sur-

facied," Harichandan told mediapersons. "The preparation cost and selling price are to be balanced so that the devotees would not face any difficulty in buying Mahaprasad. A final call in this regard will be taken in the near future," he added. Notably, before the start of holy Kartika month, the prices of Mahaprasad and other Prasads had gone up threefold causing severe inconvenience to devotees.

CM dedicates ERSS fleet for Twin City

To provide quick response in exigencies

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Thursday dedicated 30 new Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) vehicles to the Commissionerate police for immediate response during emergencies in the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.



The new fleet would operate in the twin cities and allow the Commissionerate police to introduce new services beyond security, including primary medical assistance, ambulance and fire services. The enhanced emergency response systems would function under the 'Dial 112' services and provide preliminary as well as additional assistance in cases of fire and medical emergencies. The 30 vehicles that were rolled out are equipped with

state-of-the-art infrastructure and tools to enable the Commissionerate police to deploy rapid emergency services across the twin cities. Oxygen tanks, stretchers, life-support systems and first-aid kits are installed in the new fleet of police vehicles which will help cops aid victims in cases like accidents with immediate healthcare as-

istance like an ambulance. The fire suppression systems, ladders, ropes and life jackets aim to equip police with rescue missions in cases of fire or other calamities. Additionally, these vehicles are also fitted with location-tracking features to provide swift assistance. Majhi said it is extremely important to have a dedicated

fleet of law enforcers who can act as first responders to tackle security situations in the twin cities. "While 22 of these 30 new vehicles will be deployed in Bhubaneswar, eight others will be in Cuttack. More such vehicles will be rolled out soon with assistance from the Central Government," the CM added.

In BBSR Badminton Centre opened



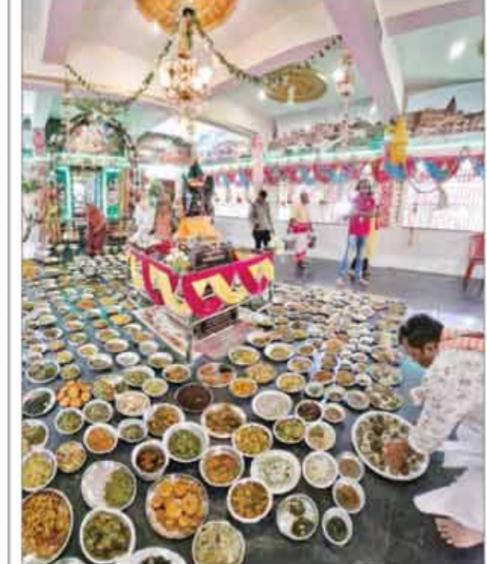
The State Transport Authority (STA) is taking several initiatives to reduce the number of road accidents during late night and wee hours during the prevailing winter season. As part of the initiatives, free tea is distributed by the regional offices of the STA along various highways from 3 am to 6 am every day. Local volunteers are helping STA employees distribute tea near roadside dhabas and tollgates. Free tea is mainly distributed to the drivers of buses, trucks and taxis on long journeys. Officials and employees of RTO and local volunteers are also creating awareness among people about road safety.

Free tea to drivers to check accidents in winter

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Transport Department has written to the RTOs to carry out the initiatives till December 31. As per reports, at least 16,287 people have lost their lives in road accidents in Odisha in the last three years. Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena's written response in the Assembly stated that road accident deaths were 5,081 in 2021; 5,467 in 2022 and 5,739 in 2023. According to experts, this alarming trend is increasing due to a combination of factors including inadequate enforcement of traffic regulations, poor road infrastructure and the rising number of vehicles on the roads.

Worth mentioning, the Kalinga Stadium is a premier sports complex of the State which is popular for its world-class facilities.



On the occasion of Byanjan Dwadashi, 851 food items are offered to Lord Krishna at the Baliapanda Mutt in Puri on Thursday. Photo: Ranjan Ganguly

5,000 Home Guard posts to be created

Recruitment of 2,416 positions soon: CM

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a major initiative, the Odisha Government has decided to create 5,000 new Home Guard posts. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi made the announcement in this regard on Thursday.

The government had earlier lifted the ban on recruitment of Home Guards, which was in force from February 2020.

According to CM Majhi, it has been decided that 2,416 Home Guard posts will be filled soon. He said that further appointments would be made after creating 5,000 posts.



"As Home Guards are doing a good work, I am directing the department to create 5,000 posts. Necessary steps in this direction should be taken immediately and the recruitment process should start," said Majhi.

"The Home Guards have often stated that the salary provided to them for their service is not enough. Our government has decided to increase their salary and other financial assistance. It will be implemented soon," he added.

Earlier in August, Majhi had announced extension of compassionate appointment to Home Guards killed in the line of duty. "A member of the family of a Home Guard killed in Naxal violence or in similar incidents will be provided government job," he said.

6-lane ramp at Srimandir for senior, divyang devotees

PNS ■ PURI

The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) announced on Thursday that a six-lane ramp facility would be arranged at the Srimandir in Puri for differently-abled individuals and senior citizens.

The move is aimed at facilitating smooth and hassle-free darshan to senior and divyang devotees at the shrine. The proposed arrangements followed an urgent meeting between the temple administration and the Odisha Bridge & Construction Corporation (OBCC) to discuss various developmental programmes to be undertaken at the Srimandir.

SJTA Chief Administrator Arabinda Padhee reviewed the progress of the proposed

darshan arrangements at the temple's Nata Mandap based on recommendations from the Management Committee and the Chhatisha Nijog.

Padhee urged the OBCC to expedite completion of the project in consultation with the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the temple's technical committee.

Notably, the OBCC is tasked with the Shree Mandira Parikrama Project (SMPP) which includes the making of a corridor of 75-m width around the Meghanada Pachheri of the temple, a multi-level car parking facility linked to NH via Shree Setu, improved access to the Jagannath Ballav Pilgrim Centre with a 2.3 km 4-lane road bridge, welcome gate and viewpoints, among other projects.

BJP to elect new Odisha president in Jan

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha BJP would elect its new president in January 2025, informed the party's State in-charge Vijaypal Singh Tomar on Thursday.

Speaking to the media here, Tomar said, "Ours is a democratic party, and the president will be elected through democratic means. A normal worker can become president."

"Organisational elections have already started, and Mandal elections are currently underway. The election for president will be held in the first week of January," Tomar added.

At present, Manmohan Samal is the president of the party, and during his tenure, the BJP formed the government for the first time in Odisha.

On being asked if anyone from the BJD is joining the saffron party soon, Tomar



said, "Many BJD MPs and MLAs are in contact with us."

Sambalpur BJP MLA Jayanarayan Mishra said, "Those who want to join BJP are welcome. We also want to increase our presence in Rajya Sabha. BJP never aims at dismantling BJD. But as I have already said, a whistle is enough to blow the conch party," Mishra added.

No comments from the BJD could be obtained over the claims.

Maoist activities: NIA conducts raid in M'giri

PNS ■ MALKANGIRI

A team from the National Investigation Agency (NIA) conducted a raid at Anantapalli village under the Motu police limits in Malkangiri district on Thursday.

The NIA team from Andhra Pradesh arrived early morning and targeted the residence of one Mantosh Mandal in the presence of a strong security force at the spot.

Sources suggested that the operation was linked to Maoist activities, specifically related to the supplying of weapons to Naxals.

"The NIA raided the residence of a man named Mantosh Mandal at Motu as well as two of his associates.

Incidentally, properties belonging to this suspect had also been searched before with crude weapons and explosives being seized then," said sources.

Meanwhile, simultaneous raids were also conducted at two locations within the Sukma area of neighbouring Chhattisgarh.

"The NIA is concerned with curbing activities of terror and Naxalism across the country. This instance appears to be a case of urban Naxalism, for which the agency will interrogate every suspect as well as the neighbouring locals to get to the root of the matter," stated a former police officer, Amaresh Panda. The NIA is yet to release an official statement related to the raid.

Dismembering Waltair dvn from ECoR It's unpardonable crime against Odisha: INTUC

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) has strongly criticized the decision to divide the East Coast Railway and transfer its most profitable division, Waltair, to the newly formed South Coast Railway.

Addressing the Press, INTUC national secretary Manas Choudhury called the move a betrayal of Odisha's economic interests and a direct attack on the State's self-reliance.

The other speakers in the

meeting said the Waltair Division, a symbol of Odia pride, has been the top revenue-earning division in the country for several years. Its transfer will severely impact the revenue of the East Coast Railway, headquartered in Bhubaneswar.

They said Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav, elected to the Rajya Sabha from Odisha, has failed to protect the State's interests. His actions appear to favour Andhra Pradesh under political pressure from the BJP leadership and former Vice President Venkaiah

Naidu. Besides, they questioned the very basis on which the railway divisions are being created.

Andhra Pradesh already has three railway divisions under the South Central Railway. A new zone could have been formed using these divisions without dismembering the East Coast Railway, they said.

They termed the move to create railway zones based on State borders as arbitrary as similar demands for the inclusion of Odisha's Rourkela region from the Chakradharpur

Division and Jharsuguda's IB Valley from the Bilaspur Division into the East Coast Railway have been ignored.

The INTUC demanded the reunification of Odisha's borders within the East Coast Railway, including creating a Baleswar Division by merging Mayurbhanj. The members threatened to launch a widespread agitation against the move, as dividing the East Coast Railway is seen as an unpardonable crime against Odisha. The INTUC also gave a call to all Odias to unite against the development.

Padmacharan's 100th birth anniv on Jan 30

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A preparatory meeting was held here on Wednesday to observe the 100th birth anniversary of Gandhian leader, former MLA and advisor of the prohibition movement Padmacharan Nayak on January 30.

In the meeting, Soumya Ranjan Patnaik was unanimously elected as the president of the 'Padmacharan Nayak Abhinandan Samiti'. Padmacharan Nayak, former Minister Panchanan Kanungo, Shailaj Rabi,



Sudhanshu Shekhar Mishra, Aribanda Behera, Ananta Prasad Jena, Bijay Kumar Swain, Aparna Nayak and Surendra Kumar Mishra

were present and held discussions on how to make the event successful.

The programme was coordinated by the Padmacharan

Nayak Abhinandan Samiti convener Dillip Dashsharma; and Malay Tripathy offered a vote of thanks.

'Make Abadha available at major rly stns in Odisha'

Puri MP Patra proposes to Railway Min

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Puri MP and BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra has put forth a proposal before the Railway Ministry to make 'Abadha' (Mahaprasad) of Srimandir available at major railway stations in Odisha.

During his address to the Parliament on Monday, Patra

suggested Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnav hold talks regarding the feasibility of delivering dry 'Prasad' with the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) as well as all other stakeholders such as the temple priests and the Puri Gajapati Maharaja.

This proposal aims at providing a spiritual experience to railway passengers passing through Odisha, he stated.

Patra noted that the move would allow train passengers

passing through Odisha to easily obtain the revered Prasad even if their destination is not Puri.

At present, the Abadha is only available at Ananda Bazar in the Jagannath Temple. As such, only devotees visiting the temple are able to obtain the Mahaprasad.

"Anyone travelling to or through Odisha wishes to have a darshan of Lord Jagannath, but this aspiration is not always realised due to

schedule and other constraints. Such people then wish to at least procure the holy Mahaprasad back home," said Patra.

Thus, these prasad distribution centres would help fulfill this wish of many devotees and enhance the spirituality of the Puri Jagannath Dham, observed Patra. The proposal added to open up such centres at major railway hubs of Odisha like Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Puri and Baleswar.

Dec 10 was Human Rights Day Stumbling blocks in rights realisation in India

Since its declaration in 1948, worldwide Human Rights Day is observed on December 10 to reaffirm our faith in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as an international point of reference. The UN General Assembly decided to annually observe this day to affirm its allegiance towards equitable globalization. The theme for the year 2024 is "Our Rights, Our Future, Right Now" which underlines that human rights are not just slogans but also an applicable instrument for empowering people to build a better human society.

There are many growing concerns of human rights violations very specific to communities, regions and countries but for India, the most visible concerns are social exclusion and poverty based on caste and gender-based discrimination that stand as the biggest hindrance on the path of marginalised sections to access equal opportunities in social life. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution guarantees justice, social, economic and political to all its



MANAS JENA

citizens and the Supreme Court in a different context expanding the connotation to a very larger view of justice as an integral part of human rights based on UDHR standard. Preamble is being recognized as the basic structure of the Indian Constitution.

The Protection of Human Rights Act 1993 and the institution NHRC have provided space for intervention in cases of human rights vio-

lation. During last year the NHRC registered 65,973 cases and disposed of 66,378 cases including those carried forward from previous years. It is reported that during more than three decades of its existence it has registered a total 23,14,794 cases. This shows the large vulnerability of our common people because not just NHRC but there are also other such commissions such as NCSC, NCST, NCW, NCPCR and NCPD who are also getting a large number of cases of violation of rights of SCs, STs, women, children and PWD etc. Human rights are not limited to cases of violation of individuals but also largely about rights of communities getting deprived of their life and livelihood rights for generations. Even after 75 years of implementation of the Constitution, there are families, hamlets and communities in interior parts and slums getting deprived of basic amenities such as food, shelter, drinking water, education and health service for a dignified living. A recent trend is that the Union and State governments are with-

drawing from their constitutional responsibilities while depending on market forces to ensure basic amenities for people. The State has a major role in ensuring the realization of rights under constitutional governance. While marching towards building an egalitarian democratic society, we have to re-

SOCIAL CANVAS

move many forms of barriers that have been blocking our progress in realization of human rights of the people who live on the margin.

For many historical reasons, there is the prevalence of social exclusion and economic inequality in our socio-religious-economic sphere challenging our collective growth as equal citizens of a nation. Unfortunately the ideas of inequality are being enforced under the plea of so-called traditions and customs with religious sanctions to serve the interest of a few sections of people who are enjoying their

social privilege for a long time. The Constitution of India is a social contract and emerged in an era of anti-colonial and anti-feudal struggles for establishment of nation States with modern ideas of democracy, equality and liberty and a socialist pattern of economy. The Constitution of India has

brought a social revolution in the country to ensure justice -social, economic and political. The Preamble, Fundamental rights, Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Duties of every citizen are all very well designed for realization of equal rights of every citizen. There are provisions such as Article 14 that says equality before law or the equal protection of laws in the interest of administration of justice.

There are constitutional provisions and Supreme Court interpretations for protections against

many forms of discrimination against women, religious minorities, and persons of the North-Eastern States facing discrimination on grounds of race. Article 16 says equal opportunity in matters of public employment under State law and the provision of affirmative action has been implemented to ensure a fair representation of the left-out communities who are not yet adequately represented in various sectors of the State.

The spirit of human rights has been reflected in constitutional morality but unfortunately many of these important provisions so laboriously built have not been implemented due to lack of political will as well as lack of political literacy among the majority of masses. The State has failed in many ways to develop a discrimination free social environment in the workplaces of our country as well as in building equal access to opportunities. The basic step towards achieving equal rights is to universalize quality primary education for all. The many varieties of schools based on class and so-

cial identities create differences among our children. The most worrying fact is the deterioration of quality in primary education as it has been reported by a number of studies. We cannot achieve human rights by neglecting the basic foundation of our future citizens.

For the last 75 years, our constitutional governance has witnessed a poor execution of protective laws of criminal justice administration and development measures for which India is still among one of the most unequal countries of the world. There has been an increase in violence against the weaker sections reported by NCRB. Large numbers of the prisoners belonging to the weaker sections are languishing in jails without a fair trial. Our judiciary is not socially inclusive. During the last 74 years, the Collegium system failed to ensure a single judge belonging to ST in the Supreme Court, as well as a reasonable representation of different social groups in our courtrooms. All these have emerged as major challenges in visualizing human rights in our country. (manasbbsr15@gmail.com)

'Odisha needs to digitise all sectors to be 500-bn-dollar economy'



Says UCCI chief Mohanty

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Utkal Chamber Of Commerce and Industry Limited (UCCIL) president Dr Prabodh Mohanty said that as Odisha aims to become a 500-billion-dollar economy by 2036, it is imperative to embrace digital transformation in different sectors to drive efficiency and growth.

"To achieve this goal, the State needs to grow in all sectors of the economy for which digital transformation was required to make business sustainable," Dr Mohanty, said as chief guest at the inauguration of a day-long national seminar on the subject 'Navigating the future of Sustainable Business Development through Digital Transformation' organised by the Institute of Business and Computer Studies (IBCS), faculty of management sciences of Siksha 'O' Anusandhan Deemed to be University (SOA) here.

The mining and metal sector was the driving force of Odisha's economy. The State government had introduced digital transformation in the mining sector as it could propel efficiency and growth.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Block Chain were influencing digital transformation which was playing a crucial role in shaping the future, Dr Mohanty said.

The inaugural program was also addressed by Chief Executive Officer of Bhubaneswar City Knowledge Innovation

Cluster (BCKIC), Bhubaneswar Namrata Misra, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of BATOI, Ashwini Kumar Rath and Dean of IBBS, Anup Kumar Samantaray who presented the keynote address.

Dean (Students' Welfare), SOA, Jyoti Ranjan Das, Academic Head-MBA Program, IBBS Duryodhan Jena and Associate Professor, IBBS, Ashish Mohanty also spoke. Pro-Vice Chancellor, SOA Prasenjit Mohanty presided over the session.

In Bhadrak Doctor duped of Rs 75K by cybercriminals

PNS ■ BHADRAK
A doctor in the Dhamnagar Community Health Centre in Bhadrak allegedly lost Rs 75,000 by falling prey to a cyber fraud on Tuesday.



The victim, identified as Srimadhab Sethy, has lodged a complaint in this connection at the Dhamnagar police station and with the cyber police.

As per the complaint, he got a phone call from an unknown number when he was treating patients at the hospital. The caller claimed to have known him and said that one of his relatives was admitted to the hospital.

The caller further said he was not able to send money to the account of his relative and hence he has sent Rs 75,000 to the doctor's account. He requested the doctor to send the money to the number in the Google Pay screenshot that

was sent to his WhatsApp.

Subsequently, the doctor sent the amount without checking his account. However, to his utter shock, he found after his duty that Rs 75,000 was not sent to his account by the caller. Following the development, he realised that he had become a victim of cyber fraud. Subsequently, he lodged a complaint in this regard at the Dhamnagar police station and with the cyber police.

Meanwhile, the doctor has admitted that he became the victim of cyber fraud due to his foolish act.

Electrocution: Bhadrak deceased's kin get Rs 5L

After direction of NHRC to TPNODL

PNS ■ BALESWAR
The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has been informed by the Special Secretary, Energy Department that as directed by the former, Rs 5 lakh has been paid as compensation to the next of kin of deceased farmer, Ashwini Jena from Talagopbindha, Bhadrak district who died of electrocution.

The NHRC had passed an order after a petition was filed by Supreme Court advocate and rights activist Radhakanta Tripathy where

he alleged negligence on the part of the energy distribution company, TPNODL leading to the death of Jena.

The petitioner stated that due to negligence of the Energy Department, the poor farmer touched a live wire and died. He urged for compensation to the bereaved family and preventive action by the department.

After getting investigation reports from the authorities and analyzing the same with the petition, facts and circumstances, the NHRC was satisfied that there was negligence on the part of the TPNODL. It is an established case of violation of the fundamental rights, Tripathy said.

In Sundargarh Pregnant woman shot dead during robbery bid

PNS ■ SUNDARGARH



A pregnant woman was shot dead by miscreants outside her house at Jhirdapali under the Tikayatpali police station in the Bonaigarh area of Sundargarh district on Wednesday night.

The deceased was identified as Simamayee Behera. According to sources, a group of unidentified men tried to break into the house of Behera at midnight by forcing open the door.

Behera then opened the door after hearing the commotion. Upon seeing her, they tried to snatch her gold chain and mangalsutra but shot her and fled the scene when she resisted the robbery attempt, added sources.

The severely-injured woman was rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital but succumbed to her in-

juries on the way. She was seven months pregnant.

"At about 1 to 1.30 am today, a woman was brought in with gunshot injuries but was declared dead upon arrival. We found one bullet wound in her chest, but the cause of death can only be ascertained after postmortem," said Dr Sanjay Kumar of the DHH.

A police complaint was filed; and as per initial accounts reported by the deceased's family, two individuals were involved in the shooting.

Police are currently investigating to determine whether the shooting was solely for robbery or if there were other motives behind the act.

19th eye donation drive of B'pur club held

Deceased Rangeya Subudhi's corneas collected

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR



In a heartwarming display of generosity, the family of late Konchada Rangeya Subudhi popularly known as Jagga Rao came forward to donate his eyes, giving sight to two individuals in need.

This marks the 19th eye donation motivation by the Friends Helping Club in 2024 and the first one this month.

Subudhi (84) passed away on December 4 due to old age. Thanks to the initiative of V Satyanarayana of Friends Helping Club, and the efforts of Dr Pinaki Satapathy and Dr Alok Ranjan Sharma of Eye Bank, MKCG Hospital, the corneas of the deceased were collected at his residence at Venkateswara Temple Street of Sano Bazar area, Brahmapur.

He is survived by his two sons CAKV Satyanarayana Subudhi (Madhu), Er K Badrinarayana Subudhi (Manoj) and two daughters P Sudha and S Bhagyaxmi.

FMMCH staff demands Rs 10K for viscera report

Probe launched after plaint by woman whose child died of snakebite

SIDDAS KUNDU ■ BALESWAR

The authorities of the FM Medical College and Hospital (FMMCH) initiated a probe after a complaint was received against a contractual dealings staffer that he demanded money, Rs 10,000 for providing a postmortem report of a 19-year-old boy.

Mamata Manjari Parida, resident of Aairi under Soro police station besides stating that her son Vikash Parida died of snake bite on October 9, alleged that she couldn't get

the postmortem report till date although 2 months passed. She further alleged that Prafulla Behera, a contractual worker, had demanded Rs 10,000 to give her the autopsy report. And while she could give only Rs 3,000 in cash to him after managing with a lot of struggle Behera didn't give the report in the want of full payment.

"Against demand of Rs 10,000, which he claimed that the postmortem conducting doctor would take, I could give him Rs 3,000 cash. Even taking money he didn't give a report and on the other hand returned the amount (Rs 3,000) via PhonePe. I am running from pillar to post to get the report yet I couldn't have

it although I brought the matter to the notice of district administration," said Parida.

Against the allegation, Administrative Officer of the FMMCH, Manorama Bhuyan said, "We have received a complaint against Behera and a probe is initiated against him. Stern action would be taken if he is found guilty. On the other hand the cause of death of the boy couldn't be conclusively drawn by the doctor and viscera is preserved for further conclusive test."

Balasore Agitators of Remuna staged a road picketing by burning tyres after the death of a person in a road accident today in the demand of providing an ex-gratia amount for the deceased

and action against the culprit. The agitation was pacified following intervention of administration.

Reports said in the mishap man identified as Manas Panigrahi while died and his son received critical injuries after their bike collided with a dumper near Jagannathpur of Mahantipada village of Remuna.

Manas was going to drop his son at school this morning when a dumper coming from the other direction rammed into their vehicle resulting in the accident.

Locals rushed the father-son duo to a nearby healthcare centre and Manas was received dead, medical reports said.

Major Port Cultural Meet begins at Paradip



200 participants from 8 ports across country join

PNS ■ PARADIP

The Paradip Port Authority (PPA) along with Major Ports Sports Control Board is organising the 24th All India Major Port Cultural Meet 2024-25 at Paradip.

Deputy Chairman, PPA Nilabha Dasgupta inaugurated the cultural extravaganza on Thursday.

Guest of Honour, Advisor, Traffic, PPA AK Bose said that today representatives from vast Indian coastline have

congregated to display their skills through cultural performances. Around 200 participants from 8 Major Ports across the country are participating in the cultural meet, which will come to an end on December 15.

Chairman, Organising Committee DN Sondhi presided over the inaugural proceedings. Deputy Chairman Capt AC Sahoo and secretary of organising committee Dr DP Sethi also spoke on the occasion. Joint secretary, Ranjan Rashmi Beura compeered the programme. All the Major Ports are competing in categories like Classical Vocal, Light Vocal, Instrumental, Dance and Drama.

Rape accused kills girl CCTV footage of victim carried on bike surfaces

PNS ■ ROURKELA

Even as the dastardly act of a rape accused, who was out on bail, killing a minor girl and later chopping her body into pieces before dumping them in a drain in Rourkela has sent shockwaves across the State, CCTV footage of the accused carrying the victim on a bike before the crime has surfaced.



In the CCTV footage, obtained from the Beheramala area in Jharsuguda, the accused, identified as Kunu Kisan, can be seen carrying the girl on a bike. Though another person was spotted near the bike, his identity and involvement in the crime was yet to be ascertained.

As per the allegation, accused Kisan abducted and killed the girl on December 7. Later, during interrogation, Kisan confessed to his crime

and gave details to the probe team about the various grim sites where the dismembered parts were dumped.

While the limbs of the missing girl were found near the densely wooded area of Hanuman Vatika forest, the torso was found wrapped in a sack and the head was found in the Brahmani river near the Balughat area.

"The accused was previously involved in a POCSO case and was accorded bail two

months ago. The accused suspected that his conviction was sure if the minor girl had given a statement. Hence, he hatched a plan to eliminate the girl once and for all," Jharsuguda SP Parmar Smit Parshottamdas said.

"During the investigation, information about the girl was found from the CCTV footage. The girl had gone on a bike with two youths. One of the boys was caught and questioned. During interrogation, it was found that

the girl was murdered and the body was cut into pieces and thrown at two places," the SP added. Northern Range IG Himanshu Lal said, "Using technical forensics and CCTV footage of neighbouring areas, Kisan was identified. He was brought for interrogation where he confessed to the murder of the minor girl and disposing of the body parts in Brahmani river near Balughat and Tarkera nullah of Rourkela."

Odisha shines with 7 Nat'l Panchayat Awards

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha has made its mark on the national stage by securing seven prestigious awards under the National Panchayat Awards 2022-23. The awards were presented by President Droupadi Murmu during a grand ceremony organised by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.

These accolades recognized the outstanding performance of 45 Panchayati Raj Institutions across 15 categories.

In Ganjam district, Kelaupalli Gram Panchayat of Rangelunda block received the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar for being a Healthy Gram Panchayat. Sahapur Gram Panchayat of Hinjili block achieved second place

nationally for its remarkable self-sufficiency.

Sundargarh district also gained recognition, with Kendrikela Panchayat in Bonaigarh block securing the second prize in the Carbon Neutral Vishesh Panchayat Puraskar category, receiving Rs 75 lakh cash award. Kasira Panchayat of Koida block was awarded Rs 50 lakh under the Gram Urja Swaraj Vishesh Panchayat Puraskar category for achieving third place nationally.

The State Institute for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (SIRD & PR) brought laurels to the State by securing second place nationally as the Panchayat Kshamta Nirmaan Sarvottam Sansthan Puraskar, earning Rs 75 lakh.

Chatrapur block in Ganjam was awarded the Nanaji Deshmukh Sarvottam Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar for being the Best Block Panchayat, receiving a cash prize of Rs 2 crore.

Koraput district added to the achievements by being recognized as the second-best Zilla Parishad at the national level, earning Rs 3 crore. In total, Odisha received Rs 8.5 crore across seven categories, gaining national acclaim.

President Murmu commended the efforts of the awardees.

The awards, based on nine thematic areas aligned with the localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reflect Odisha's commitment to sustainable development and effective governance.

Address nutritional deficiency, boost farmers income Bio-fortified rice varieties taken up in Balangir

SUDHIR MISHRA ■ BALANGIR

In one of the major rice-producing districts of Odisha Bolangir, a new initiative, cultivation of bio-fortified rice is underway, which aims not only to secure the future of rice farming but also to enhance the nutritional aspect of the farmers who cultivate and consume it.

Balangir district has long faced significant challenges in tackling malnutrition, with high rates of zinc and iron deficiencies, particularly among children and women. Rice, a staple food for millions in India, has often been considered a simple, calorie-providing crop. However, with the growing recognition of the importance of nutrition, the focus is shifting toward enhancing rice with additional health benefits.



The collaboration between the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Empowerment is set to introduce value-added rice varieties that promise to address both the food and health security of people and farmers.

The selected varieties of rice to be taken up in the district

include BRRI-69, Telangana Sona, DRR-48, DRR-63, DRR-58, Zinco Rice MS, BRRI-100, and BRRI-84. CR-315, CR-310, CR-311, CR-411, PROTOZEN, DRR-49 and DRR-45.

Varieties like BRRI-84, CR-315 are high in zinc, which is critical in immunity and growth. Iron-fortified rice varieties, such as Swarna Shakti Dhan address iron deficiency

from the community with 105 students enrolling for the first batch of the training programme. The skills training centre is equipped with contemporary infrastructure, featuring a multipurpose hall, a digital training room, training rooms for various trades and separate hostel facility for both boys and girls.

Vedanta Aluminium COO Sunil Gupta said, "Skilling the youth lies at the heart of our mission to uplift the socio-economic fabric of the region."

The centre offers courses on sewing machine operation, electrical maintenance, and food and beverage services. The project aims to train 700 rural youths over the next three years.

long relied on traditional rice varieties; the new varieties promise to bring higher yields, better resistance to pests, and improved nutritional content-all crucial for improving the overall well-being of the community, said Chief District Agriculture Officer Babuli Charan Sethy.

To generate awareness among farmers and local agricultural extension workers, an initiative platform (Field Day) was organized recently in the Government RE farm here where 17 different bio-fortified rice varieties were demonstrated, which was attended by seed producers, farmers, dealers, and local government representatives. Already some of these varieties have been grown by local farmers in 334 hectares in Agalpur, Balangir, Puintala and Loisinga.

India's air pollution cost 1.5 Million lives annually, claims new study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Long-term exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5) pollution, a significant environmental and health hazard across India, has claimed a staggering 1.5 million lives reported annually between 2009 and 2019, as per a recent study published in The Lancet Planetary Health journal. Highlighting the severe health impacts of toxic pollutants on the citizens, researchers found that the entire 1.4 billion population of the

country lives in areas with PM2.5 levels exceeding the WHO recommended threshold of five micrograms per cubic meter for a yearly average. The study by the Consortium for Climate, Health, and Air Pollution Research in India (CHAIR-India) also highlighted that nearly 82 per cent of the population, or about 1.1 billion people, resided in regions where the PM2.5 levels surpassed the Indian National Ambient Air Quality Standards, which set a limit of 40 microns per cubic meter annually. PM2.5 refers to fine particulate mat-

ter measuring less than 2.5 microns in diameter, and exposure to these pollutants is linked to a range of health problems, including respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. PM2.5 air pollution comes from the burning of fossil fuels and biomass in sectors such as transportation, residential homes, coal-burning power plants, industrial activities, and wildfires. These emissions not only impact people's health but also contribute to the greenhouse gases that are warming the planet. The study observed a significant correlation between PM2.5 pollution



A commuter walks to their office amid low visibility due to smog in New Delhi.

levels and mortality rates, with a 10-micron per cubic meter increase in yearly pollution linked to an 8.6 per cent rise in annual deaths. The researchers from CHAIR-India, a global consortium of academic institutions including Ashoka University, Karolinska Institutet (Sweden), Harvard University, and Ben-Gurion University (Israel) used data from satellite observations and over 1,000 ground-monitoring stations, and also gathered death statistics from the Civil Registration System.

The findings underscore the widespread nature of PM2.5 exposure across the country. While the lowest annual PM2.5 level recorded in Lower Subansiri district, Arunachal Pradesh, at 11.2 microns per cubic meter in 2019, the highest levels were recorded in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi, where PM2.5 concentrations soared to 119 microns per cubic meter in 2016. The study reveals the pressing need for robust air quality monitoring and stricter pollution control measures in India, given the country's large and consistent exposure to harmful air pollutants.

Shah to visit Naxal-affected areas of Chhattisgarh



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will be on a three-day visit to Chhattisgarh's Naxal-affected areas from December 14 during which he will review the law-and-order situation in the state and interact with surrendered Naxals and locals, sources said on Thursday. Last week, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Dev Sai Shah here and conveyed to him that the Bastar and Kondagaon districts, once infested by Naxals, were completely free from the extremists and operations were on to wipe them out from other areas. The Union home minister will be on a visit to Chhattisgarh from December 14-16 during which he will participate in various programmes related to

security and peace, sources said. Besides chairing a security review meeting in Raipur, Shah will also present the President's Colour Award to the Chhattisgarh Police. He will travel to Jagdalpur, where he will hold interaction with surrendered Naxals, locals and intellectuals, they said. The Union home minister will also attend the closing ceremony of the Bastar olympics and pay tributes to martyrs in Jagdalpur besides meeting the families of the victims of left-wing extremism. Shah will visit security camps and oversee developmental works besides having lunch with jawans of security forces there. 'President's Colour' is expected to boost the morale of Chhattisgarh Police after their excellent work in tackling the Naxals over the years, the sources said. This medal will give new impetus to the sense of duty of these police personnel who are committed to the service and security of the people of the state, they said. "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, operations are being conducted against Naxalism with a 'Zero Tolerance' policy and ultra-modern methods," a source said.

Bihar registers officials on skill building platform

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Bihar government has boarded over 2.4 lakh officials on an online training platform, according to an official statement issued on Thursday. Under the Mission Karmayogi initiative, an MoU was signed on October 7 between the Capacity Building Commission (CBC), Karmayogi Bharat (a special purpose vehicle), and the Bihar Institute of Public Administration and Rural Development (BIPARD). This agreement aims to strengthen the capabilities of government officials and employees in Bihar so that all public servants can become role-based instead of rule-based, said the statement issued by the Personnel Ministry. This will be achieved through the iGOT (integrated government online training) Karmayogi platform, which is a flagship digital initiative aimed at empowering government servants. It will also function as a robust e-learning hub, the statement said. development for Bihar's civil servants, ultimately ensuring better public service delivery, the statement said.

Road accidents on the rise, says Gadkari

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said here "When I go to attend international conferences where there is a discussion on road accidents, I try to hide my face." He also underlined that he had set a target to reduce accidents by 50 per cent when he first took charge as the Road Transport and Highways Minister. During a discussion on road accidents in Lok Sabha, "Forget about reducing the number of accidents, I have no hesitation to admit that it has been increased. When I go to attend international conferences where there is a discussion on road accidents, I try to hide my face." He was replying to a supplementary question during the Question Hour. The minister said for things to improve



The minister added, "When I go to attend international conferences where there is a discussion on road accidents, I try to hide my face."

human behaviour in India has to change, society has to change and rule of law has to be respected. Gadkari said he and his family met with a major accident some years ago and he needed to be hospitalised for a long time. "By the grace of God, I and my

family were saved. So I have my personal experience of accidents." He said parking of trucks on road is a major cause for accidents and many of the trucks don't follow lane discipline. The minister said he has ordered for following international standards in

making bus body in India. There has to be a hammer near a bus window so that it can be broken easily in case of accidents, he said. Earlier, Gadkari said road accidents claim 1.78 lakh lives annually in the country and 60 per cent of the victims are in the age group of 18-34 years. He said while Uttar Pradesh leads the chart among states, Delhi tops the list for cities. In UP, over 23,000 people (or 13.7 per cent of the total deaths due to road accidents) died, followed by Tamil Nadu with over 18,000 (10.6 per cent) deaths. In Maharashtra, the figure stands at over 15,000 (or nine per cent of the total deaths), followed by Madhya Pradesh with over 13,000 (eight per cent) deaths. Delhi leads the city chart with over 1,400 deaths, followed by Bengaluru with 915 deaths. Jaipur registers 850 deaths due to road accidents.

CISF security personnel sanctioned for Noida and Navi Mumbai airports

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union government has sanctioned a combined strength of more than 2,800 Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel to guard two soon-to-be operational international airports in Noida and in Maharashtra's Navi Mumbai, official sources said Thursday. The ministry of home affairs (MHA), under whose command the CISF works, had sanctioned 1,840 posts for the Navi Mumbai airport and 1,030 for the Noida International Airport (NIA) in Uttar Pradesh. The total CISF manpower sanctioned for providing a counter-terrorist cover to the two upcoming airports is 2,870. The sanction of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) manpower is for the first phase of operationalisation of the two airports. The force's strength will be enhanced once these airports finish phase II, sources said. The security units, to be headed by Deputy Inspector General rank officers, will take charge once the infrastructure to install security gadgets and other logistics get ready at both the facilities. Being developed by the Adani

Group, the Navi Mumbai International Airport project will be completed in five phases and will have a total handling capacity of 9 crore passengers per annum. The first phase will have a capacity to handle 2 crore passengers per annum. Commercial operations at this airport, second in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region after the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, are expected to begin by March-April, 2025. The NIA greenfield facility is being built in the Jewar area of Gautam Buddh Nagar district in Uttar Pradesh, about 75 km from Delhi, and will be the national capital region's second international civil aviation facility after the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport. It is also expected to get operational for passenger operations by April next year. The CISF is the national civil aviation security force that guards 68 airports at present. It provides a counter-terrorist cover to these facilities, thronged by lakhs of domestic and international passengers every day. The force frisks passengers, checks their baggage and undertakes anti-sabotage, counter-terrorist and counter-hijack checks in coordination with other agencies.

Sagarika moves privilege motion against Rijiju for derogatory remarks



Ghose said, "Mr. Kiren Rijiju, instead of doing his best to run Parliament smoothly, has chosen to repeatedly insult the Opposition."

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Trinamool Congress' Rajya Sabha MP Sagarika Ghose on Thursday submitted a privilege motion notice against Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju for making a derogatory remark against opposition leaders in the Upper House. The notice has been signed by 60 leaders from opposition parties, a source said. "Yesterday in the house, addressing the opposition, Mr. Rijiju said you all are not worthy of being in this house... The Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. Kiren Rijiju,

instead of doing his best to run Parliament smoothly, has chosen to repeatedly insult the opposition," Ghose told reporters. "Rijiju has insulted opposition members and used personal terms both inside and outside Parliament. This is totally unbecoming of the high office he holds and amounts to total misuse of his position," TMC's deputy leader in the Rajya Sabha said. She said she had moved a privilege motion against Rijiju for abusing his office with his "diatribes and unparliamentary language" against opposition. The motion has been signed by senior leaders of all

opposition parties, she added. Opposition MPs are "not worthy of being in the House", Rijiju said on Wednesday while hitting out at opposition parties over their attacks on Vice President and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar. "If you cannot respect the chair you have no right to be a member of this House," Rijiju said. Sixty MPs from the opposition INDIA bloc on Tuesday submitted a notice in the Rajya Sabha for moving a no-confidence motion against Dhankhar. They have accused him of being "extremely partisan" in his role as the chairman of the Upper House.

TMC pitches for Didi to lead INDIA

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) has said that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is more interested in dislodging the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government at the Centre than leading the Indian National Democratic Inclusive Alliance (INDIA). Close on the heels of some senior INDIA leaders advocating Banerjee's cause for leading the opposition alliance, senior TMC leader Kunal Ghosh said that "Mamata Banerjee has made it clear that she is not interested in any 'chair' in Delhi. She is more interested in building an alternative platform which can defeat the BJP." Curiously, instead of dwelling on

the Banerjee's cause that was recently upheld by her party MP Sagarika Ghosh and often discussed in the TMC mouthpiece Jago Bangla, Ghosh tended to shift the fulcrum of discussion on the Congress' failure to lead the Opposition in Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and more recently Maharashtra saying a time had come when the Congress party should start doing some self-introspection on the causes of its repeated failures. Incidentally the Bengal Chief Minister who has been touring East Midnapore earlier expressed gratitude to the senior INDIA leaders for reposing faith on her but avoided making any assertive statement on the contentious issue. "I am grateful to all the leaders

who have honoured me. I wish good health to all of them. May they be well, may their party be well. May India be well," she said in a brief statement. However voicing her frustration post INDIA's repeated defeats in a number of States as also in Delhi Banerjee had said "I created the 'INDIA' alliance. If those leading it cannot manage it well, then give me a chance. I am ready to lead the alliance from Bengal." Early this week senior INDIA leader and RJD patriarch Lalu Yadav once known for his unwavering faith in Rahul Gandhi said "Mamata Banerjee should be chosen as the leader of the 'INDIA' alliance. There's no point in Congress opposing this. She should be made the leader."

Fadnavis reaches Delhi for Cabinet expansion talks

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis will undertake first-ever expansion of his new Cabinet during the weekend, ahead of the brief three-day winter session beginning in Nagpur on December 16. Ahead of the State Cabinet expansion, Fadnavis met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Ministers Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Rajnath Singh and National BJP president JP Nadda in New Delhi.



ings and standing firm behind Maharashtra. In the last 10 years, with your support Maharashtra is Number 1 in almost every sector and now aims to take this journey of VIKAS to the next level under your leadership and guidance. You have always been an inspiration to crores of BJP Karyakarta like us to work even harder". Talking separately to the media, Fadnavis said: "I had a good meeting with the Prime Minister and issues related to Maharashtra were discussed. He extended full support to the state government". During the meeting with Shah, Fadnavis is understood to have discussed various issues relating

to Maharashtra, including the impending State Cabinet expansion and portfolio allocations. Interacting with the media, Fadnavis said: "Our list of ministers would be finalised by the BJP high-command. On the other hand, Shinde Saheb would take a call on Shiv Sena members to be inducted in the ministry. Ajit Dada Pawar will decide on who will be there from his party in the State Cabinet". Interestingly enough, Fadnavis and deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar are in New Delhi. However, deputy chief minister Eknath Shinde has chosen not to accompany Fadnavis to the national capital. Sources close to Shinde attributed Shinde's decision to accom-

pany Fadnavis to New Delhi is that he is not happy with the portfolio allocations proposed by Fadnavis. For, the ruling BJP is not willing to give important portfolios like Home, Urban Development and Revenue to the Shiv Sena (Shinde), a thing that has not gone well with Shinde who was demanding one or two of the three major portfolios. Asked if Shinde had chosen not to accompany him to the national capital because he was upset with the portfolio allocations proposed by the BJP, Fadnavis said: "My purpose of visit is different...Ajit Dada's purpose and engagements are different...Shinde Saheb has some work in Mumbai."

On his part, Ajit Pawar said that he along with his wife and Rajya Sabha member Sunetra Pawar, NCP Working President Praful Patel and state party president Sunil Tatkar met NCP (SP) supremo Sharad Pawar and his wife Pratibha Pawar. "Today is (Pawar) Saheb's birthday... Tomorrow is Kaki's (Pratibha Patil's) birthday...we all wished them...some relations are beyond politics... (late Congress stalwart and first Chief Minister) Yashwantrao Chavan has taught us how to do cultured politics and we try to follow him," said Pawar. Queried if politics was discussed, Ajit Pawar said: "Pawar Saheb discussed issues related to Maharashtra... right from Parbhani violence to Parliament disruption, state cabinet expansion among others." Meanwhile, Fadnavis, Shinde and Ajit Pawar have reported arrived at a consensus on the size and division of the State Cabinet. Since the Maharashtra Assembly comprises 288 members, there will be a maximum of 43 ministers in the State Cabinet -- a number that accounts for 15 per cent of total members in the lower House of the State Legislature. In the normal course, the BJP will get 21 ministerial berths in the 43-member Cabinet, while the Shinde Shiv Sena is entitled for 12 ministers and the Ajit Pawar-led NCP will have to be satisfied with 10 berths.

Ajit Doval, Chinese counterpart to hold talks on border issue

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

National Security Advisor(NSA) Ajit Doval and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, who is also foreign minister, will discuss later this month here all aspects of the boundary issue between the two nations. The likely meeting under the aegis of Special Representative(SR) talks, will take place as armies of India and China have disengaged a few weeks ago from the Line of Actual Control(LAC) in Ladakh after four years, sources said here on Thursday. The high-level talks between the two Special Representatives will mark the first parleys since the Galwan valley clash in 2020. The previous SR talks were held in December 2019. The upcoming dialogue comes in the wake of recent disengagement of troops from both the sides from friction points at Depsang and Demchok. The parleys may see a breakthrough in the broader resolution of the border dispute. The SR talks are expected to involve multilayered discussions aimed at defining and delineating the LAC more clearly, with the ultimate goal of achieving a lasting resolution. Sources indicate that the outcome of these talks will determine the timeline for the next Corps Commander-level meeting, which will focus on operational issues regarding the ongoing patrolling

and buffer zones to prevent further confrontations. India and China have engaged in a series of military and diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the situation along the LAC since 2020. The SR level talks represent a crucial opportunity for both nations to address their differences, enhance trust, and establish a more stable framework for managing their contested border. The SR talks come days after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh held talks with his Chinese counterpart Admiral Dong Jun in Vientiane, Lao PDR on November 20 on the sidelines of 11th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus. This was the first meeting of the two Defence Ministers following the recent disengagement agreements, and the meeting of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of BRICS summit. Rajnath highlighted the fact that amicable relations between India and China, the two largest nations in the world, would have positive implications for global peace and prosperity. Considering that both countries are and will continue to remain neighbours, he mentioned that "we need to focus on cooperation rather than conflict". Rajnath called for reflecting on the lessons learnt from the unfortunate border clashes of 2020, take measures to prevent recurrence of such events and safeguard peace and tranquility along the India-China border.

Mahakumbh 2025 aims to set four Guinness World Records

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
PRAYAGRAJ

The Prayagraj Mela Authority has announced an ambitious plan to set four Guinness World Records during Mahakumbh 2025, the world's largest religious gathering, scheduled to begin on January 13. The proposed records include the largest synchronized sweeping drive, the largest e-vehicle parade, the most handprint paintings created in eight hours, and the largest river-cleaning campaign.

The first record attempt will involve 15,000 volunteers participating in a synchronized cleaning drive. ADM (Kumbh Mela) Vivek Chaturvedi said the effort symbolizes environmental stewardship and communal responsibility. "The drive will highlight the spiritual significance of cleanliness and environmental preservation," he added. The second initiative will feature a parade of 1,000 e-rickshaws and electric vehicles, promoting eco-friendly transport. "This initiative underscores Mahakumbh's commitment to sustainable transport solutions, reducing carbon emissions, and improving last-mile connectivity," Chaturvedi stated. The third record will involve 10,000 participants contributing their handprints on canvas, representing unity and diversity. Each print will symbolize the shared spiritual values and collective harmony of Mahakumbh. The final record attempt will



see 300 volunteers cleaning riverbanks at multiple locations. This drive highlights ecological conservation and the spiritual connection between humanity and nature, central themes of the religious gathering. To ensure compliance with Guinness World Records' stringent guidelines, a special coordination team will be formed in collaboration with the Prayagraj Mela Authority. The team will manage logistics, ensure accurate record-keeping, and oversee procedural adherence. "Our team will coordinate with Guinness World Records officials to finalize contracts, interpret performance guidelines, and develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)," Chaturvedi

explained. He emphasized that all processes, from participant registration to event execution, will follow approved guidelines. The records, if achieved, will reinforce Mahakumbh's legacy as a globally significant cultural and spiritual event, combining tradition with environmental consciousness and community engagement. Mahakumbh Mela 2025 is set to be more than just a spiritual event; it promises to be a major economic driver for Uttar Pradesh. The upcoming Mahakumbh expected to generate ₹25,000 crore in revenue for the state. Covering approximately 4,000 hectares, the Mahakumbh is projected to attract 40-45 crore pilgrims, making it the largest religious gathering in the world. The

event's estimated budget stands at ₹6,382 crore, with ₹5,600 crore already allocated for event management and infrastructure development. The ghats of Prayagraj, a key site for devotees and tourists, are being given a grand makeover. On the lines of Kashi's ghats, the UP government is renovating seven prominent ghats along the Ganga and Yamuna rivers to offer a more refined and welcoming experience. The renovation focuses on creating an environment where visitors can comfortably spend time, reflecting the significance of the Kumbh Mela. The project is being carried out by the Construction and Design Division of Jal Nigam at a cost of Rs 11.01 crore.

PM Modi to lay foundation stone for river linking project in MP

PTI ■ BHOPAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone of the Ken-Betwa river linking project in Madhya Pradesh on December 25, the birth anniversary of former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee, said Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Thursday. Yadav was speaking to reporters on the completion of one year of his government in the state. On December 11, 2023, Yadav was formally elected as the BJP legislative party leader and took oath as the CM two days later. "On the 100th birth anniversary of former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who dreamt of inter-connecting the country's rivers to augment water resources, PM Modi will lay the foundation stone of the ambitious Ken-Betwa National River Linking Project on December 25 in MP's Chhatarpur district," said Yadav. The project to link the Ken and Betwa rivers will benefit Chhatarpur, Panna,



Tikamgarh, Niwadi, Damoh, Shivpuri, Datia, Raisen, Vidisha and Sagar districts of the state, he said. It will provide water for irrigation in 10.62 lakh hectares in the Bundelkhand region, spread across Madhya Pradesh (8.11 lakh hectares) and Uttar Pradesh (2.51 lakh hectares), besides supplying drinking water to 41 lakh population in MP and 21 lakh in UP, he said. MP has also decided to imple-

ment the Parvati-Kalisindh-Chambal river linking project which will benefit Guna, Shivpuri, Sehore, Dewas, Rajgarh, Ujjain, Agar-Malwa, Indore, Shajapur, Mandsaur and Morena districts of the state, said Yadav. This project will provide water for irrigation in 6.13 lakh hectares in MP and PM Modi will lay its foundation stone on December 17 in Jaipur, Yadav said. Yadav said MP will observe

2025 as the 'Industries Year' and Modi will inaugurate the Global Investors Summit, which will be held in Bhopal on February 24-25. Ahead of the investors' meet, the state government has been organising Regional Industry Conclaves across MP and conducting roadshows and conferences in the state and abroad, he said. Because of these joint efforts, the state has received investment proposals worth Rs 4 lakh crore which will generate 3 lakh jobs, he said. The CM said that on the completion of one year of the BJP government in MP, two programmes were launched to highlight the development works of his administration and link more eligible people with welfare schemes. 'Jankalyan Parv' (public welfare festival) and 'Mukhyamantri Jankalyan Abhiyan' (public welfare campaign) will run in December and January. During Janlakyen Parv, to be held between December 11 and December 26, foundation stones of several develop-

Ramlala's first anniversary to be celebrated over 3 days from January 11

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
AYODHYA

Preparations for the first anniversary of Shri Ramlala's consecration are in full swing, alongside the accelerated construction of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple. Among the temple's five sanctum towers, the pinnacle of the Rang Mandap has been fully completed. Champat Rai, General Secretary of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, announced that the temple's first anniversary will be celebrated as per the Hindu calendar on January 11, 2025, corresponding to Paush Shukla Paksha Dwadashi. He said that the consecration of Shri Ramlala was performed on January 22, 2024, according to the Hindu lunar calendar, and its first anniversary falls on January 11, 2025. "All major Hindu festivals such as Janmashtami, Ram Navami, Vivah Panchami, Shivratri, Mauni Amavasya,



Purnima, and Ekadashi are celebrated according to the Hindu calendar, and so will the first anniversary of Shri Ramlala's consecration, Rai said. He added: "To ensure smooth planning, the Trust has formed a four-member committee that will finalize the event details soon." Construction of several temples within the temple complex, including the Saptarishi

Mandir dedicated to Lord Shiva, Surya, Maa Durga, Devi Annapurna, Lord Ganesha, and Hanumanji, has also picked up pace. He added that 18 additional temples are being constructed within the temple complex, with work progressing steadily. The first-floor mandap is nearing completion, where the Ram Darbar will be established.

After ritual cancelled, bad luck follows Guruvayur temple priest

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The cancellation of Udayasthama Pooja at the age-old Lord Krishna Temple at Guruvayur has led to strange and unfortunate happenings. The ritual is a unique worship performed on Ekadashi Days from sunrise (Udaya) to sunset (asthamaana) without break and hundreds of thousands of devotees throng the temple considering it a privilege to offer prayers on that occasion. The Guruvayur Devaswom, the Kerala Government body packed with CPI(M) leaders that administers the temple, describes the Udayasthama Pooja as the most dearest and coveted of all offerings to Lord Krishna. It is believed that Sage Narada accompanied by Srimad Sankaracharya visited Guruvayur Temple on Ekadashi Day. The Bhagavad Gita was advised by Lord Krishna to Arjuna on this day. It is also believed that Melpathur Narayana Bhattathirippadu, Sanskrit scholar par excellence, whose life period was from 1560 to 1603 completed the composition of Narayaneeyam (a poetic work of tribute to Lord Krishna) on Shukla Paksha Ekadasi in the month of Agrayayana which makes it the most auspicious time to get Darshan of the presiding deity. Early this month, the Devaswam issued an order cancelling the Udayasthama Pooja citing problems associated with crowd control. The Government order drew widespread condemnation with Vedic scholars asking the Devaswam to withdraw the decision as the ritual has been observed from time immemorial. Thousands of people throng the temple from all over the country. "Hantha! Bhagyam Jananam" (Oh Lord, How fortunate it is to be born in this temple city) is the catchword in Narayaneeyam, the poetic work eulogizing the virtues of Lord Krishna. Parappanangadi Unnikrishnan Panickar, Kerala's ace Vedic scholar, in a release had



requested the Government not to meddle with the custom and allow the pooja to proceed without trouble. Pandappillil Gopala Menon, Tantrik scholar had sounded alarm bell by forecasting that untoward incidents were bound to happen. The Government's move to do away with the pooja had the concurrence of Chennas Dineshan Namboodirippadu, the Thanthri (chief priest) of the temple for reasons known to him only. The petition filed by a group of devotees was dismissed by a Division Bench of Kerala High Court on late Saturday. Though they approached the apex court challenging the division bench order, it was too late. But what happened on Tuesday turned out to be shocking. A close relation of the Thanthri, who was in the best of her health passed away all of a sudden on Tuesday making Dineshan Namboodirippadu ineligible to enter the temple premise for the next 12 days as he was the one to perform he last rites. "It is one thing that you believe or not in God. But one should never question or challenge age-old rituals as there are reasons behind every pooja performed in temples," said Dr M G Gireshan, an electronics scientist working in a defense laboratory at Hyderabad. Kizhiyedam Raman Namboodiri, second-in-command of the Thanthri, was weeping while he recounted the incidents that followed the post-Kerala High Court decision dismissing the petition by believers. All that Namboodiri could say was "Hantha! Bhagyam Jananam" and "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna".

CM Yogi reviews Mahakumbh preparations ahead of Modi's visit

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath visited Prayagraj on Thursday to oversee preparations for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's highly anticipated visit on Friday where PM is set to inaugurate projects worth thousands of crores for Mahakumbh 2025. During his visit, CM Yogi conducted a comprehensive ground inspection of Mahakumbh Nagar and key sites, including the Sangam Nose, where the Prime Minister is scheduled to perform rituals. He provided clear directives to officials to ensure smooth execution of the events and seamless arrangements for devotees and dignitaries. Mela Officer Vijay Kiran

Anand briefed CM Yogi on arrangements for the PM's cruise tour, and the Chief Minister provided essential guidelines while emphasizing the need to maintain the Ganga's cleanliness. The Chief Minister also visited several important locations, such as the temporary 100-bed hospital built in Sector One Parade. During his inspection, CM Yogi reviewed critical areas like the Emergency Ward, ICU, OPD, and the operation theatre. The hospital boasts advanced facilities, including AI-powered cameras in the ICU and a state-of-the-art laboratory. Pleased with the innovations, CM Yogi emphasized the need for proper staffing, availability of medicines, and enhanced ventilation to ensure top-notch care for devotees during the



Mahakumbh. The temporary hospital, built with support from the Cantt Board and Medanta doctors, is set to serve as a critical healthcare facility for Mahakumbh 2025, including a 10-bed ICU. CM Yogi expressed satisfaction with the arrangements, urging

officials to ensure efficient functioning. At the Akshay Vat Corridor within the Prayag Fort, CM Yogi inspected the ongoing Smart City development work. He appreciated the corridor's beautification and praised highlights such as the child form statue of Shri

Krishna and the Sapt Rishis' artwork. CM Yogi also visited the Bade Hanuman Mandir Corridor on the Sangam coast, where Phase-1 development is underway by the Prayagraj Development Authority (PDA). After reviewing the progress, he performed aarti and prayed for the well-being of all citizens. He urged the PDA to accelerate work to ensure timely completion of the temple corridor. The CM also visited Akharas in Sector 20, inspecting arrangements at Shri Panchayati Akhara Bada Udasin, Shri Panchayati Akhara Niranjani, and Anand Akhara. He interacted with saints and assured them of his future visit. CM Yogi also reviewed external arrangements at other Akharas to ensure they meet expectations.

Finally, CM Yogi conducted a final inspection at Triveni Marg, Ganga Riverfront Road Jhansi, and Chhatnag Ghat, directing officials to ensure all necessary facilities are in place for the devotees during Mahakumbh 2025. Throughout his visit, CM Yogi was accompanied by Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya, Jal Shakti Minister Swatantrdev Singh, Industrial Development Minister Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi, Tourism Minister Jaiver Singh, former minister and MLA Siddharth Singh, along with other leaders and officials. The meticulous inspections and directives issued by CM Yogi aim to ensure a seamless and spiritually enriching experience for the millions of devotees expected to attend the grand Mahakumbh 2025.

Need to prepare NRC like document to differentiate Indians, infiltrators: Assam CM

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

There is a need to prepare an NRC (National Register of Citizens) like document to differentiate Indians and infiltrators, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said in Puri on Thursday. Speaking to media persons after visiting Jagannath temple at Puri, Sarma said the Assam government on Wednesday decided that one should have his/her name registered in the NRC for obtaining an Aadhaar card. If the applicant's name is not there in the NRC, he/she will not get an Aadhaar card, he said. "I desire that NRC-type documents should be prepared so that we can easily differentiate who are Indians and who are infiltrators," Sarma said. It is difficult to make fencing on the Bangladesh boundary in Assam and West Bengal because many such areas have rivers. However, the boundary can be secured using technology, he stated. "The government of India has introduced technological interventions in Assam and



Tripura. But, the West Bengal government is not fully cooperating. If Bengal cooperates, we can stop infiltration," Sarma said. On the alleged attack on Hindu community in Bangladesh, he said, "It is very unfortunate and a matter of concern. But, I am hopeful that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will definitely take some steps at a diplomatic level for the protection of the Hindu people in Bangladesh." He said the Prime Minister had recently sent Foreign secretary to Bangladesh and hoped that peace would be restored in the country with the efforts made by the PM in a diplomatic way. Slamming the Congress over

the issue, the Assam CM said, "Neither Rahul Gandhi nor the Congress party ever stood with the Hindu community. They will not stand with them in future too. Even many times, communal harmony was disturbed in the country for them." Speaking in favour of the 'one nation, one election' system, he said, "In Assam, the Assembly and Parliament elections are being held at different times. During elections, the developmental works usually hamper almost the entire year." So, the Prime Minister wants to have 'one nation, one election' so that development works would not hamper, he added. To implement it, there is a need to bring amendments to the Constitution with a 2/3rd majority in both houses of Parliament. And, the Prime Minister will surely do it, he claimed. When journalists asked him about the fate of Naveen Patnaik-led BJD, he said, "BJD's era has ended now and the BJP government will remain in Odisha for at least 50 years."

Widespread rains lash TN

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Widespread rains lashed parts of Tamil Nadu on Thursday, prompting authorities to declare a holiday for schools in Chennai and many other districts. With the water-level fast rising in the reservoirs in the state, the Public Works Department officials opened the shutters of two dams in Chennai suburbs and another in Thiruvannamalai district. About 13,000 cusecs water was released from Sathanur dam in Thiruvannamalai, while 3,500 cusecs water from Chembarambakkam dam, and another 1,000 cusecs water was discharged from the Poondi reservoir, as the level of water in these dams dangerously inched towards the full reservoir capacity levels. Following the heavy rainfall warning issued by the IMD, six NDRF teams have been alerted to swing into rescue and relief activity in case of emergency, the government said. It also urged the people in the low-lying areas in the state to remain vigilant and take appropriate action. Overnight rains lashed Chennai and the neighbouring Tiruvallur, Chengelpet and



Kancheepuram, besides Villupuram and some areas in the Cauvery delta region. Following sharp showers, authorities declared a day's holiday for schools in districts, including Chennai, Tiruvallur, Chengelpet, Kancheepuram, Villupuram, Ramanathapuram, Thanjavur, Mayiladuthurai and Cuddalore. The regional weather office has forecast more spells of rain in Chennai, Tiruvallur, Chengelpet and Kancheepuram, Villupuram, Kallakurichi, Tiruvallur, Thanjavur districts in the state, besides the neighbouring union territory Puducherry. In Thiruvannamalai, the Sri Arunachaleswar temple staff and volunteers braved the

downpour to carry the 6.5 feet high copper cauldron (koparai) with the Lord's name on their lips, to place it atop the 2,668 feet high mountain to light the Maha Deepam on December 13 evening. The lighting of the deepam marks the conclusion of the annual 10-day Karthiga deepam festival at the renowned temple. The Bharani deepam will be lit at the temple on Friday morning. Wednesday's Well Marked Low Pressure Area over the Southwest and adjoining Southeast Bay of Bengal brought heavy rain in the southern districts as well. The interior districts in the state have also experienced a heavy spell since this morning.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Empowering young innovators

Prime Minister Modi highlights the role of young minds in tackling real-world challenges with creativity and technology

The best way to predict the future is to invent it, said Alan Kay. And indeed how true it is for a nation. A nation that invents and finds solution to its problems marches on the path to progress. Echoing the same sentiment, Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the pivotal role of innovation in nation-building during his interaction at the Smart India Hackathon (SIH) 2024, emphasising how young minds are shaping the future through creativity and technological ingenuity. The event, which included participation from over 1,300 student teams across India, showcased groundbreaking ideas aimed at solving real-world challenges. The SIH is a testament to the transformative power of education and innovation in building a self-reliant India. The event not only bridges the gap between academia and industry but also fosters a culture of collaboration and problem-solving. At the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar, which hosted the grand finale of the software edition for the first time, 25 exceptional teams from 21 states convened to present their innovative solutions.



The hackathon addressed 250 problem statements submitted by 54 ministries, departments, state governments, public sector units (PSUs), and industries, covering sectors like healthcare, sustainability, education, disaster management and agriculture. With a 240 per cent increase in participation compared to the previous year, SIH 2024 is the largest edition to date, involving over 86,000 teams at the institute level and 49,000 at the national level. Among the standout participants was the 'Big Brains Team' from NIT Srinagar, led by Syeeda Aiemen D Saleem. The team worked on an AI-powered Virtual Reality Friend, a tool designed to assist children with autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disabilities. The project, developed under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, aims to help children enhance social and interactive skills in a simulated environment. PM Modi lauded the team's empathetic approach, emphasising the global relevance of such solutions and their potential to transform lives. PM Modi's interaction with the participants highlighted his vision of leveraging local innovation to address global challenges. He stressed that solutions tailored for India's unique needs could resonate globally, contributing to the world's progress. "Every child has the right to grow and prosper, and innovative solutions like these ensure no one is left behind," he remarked. By providing a platform for young minds to explore, collaborate and innovate, the Smart India Hackathon is shaping the next generation of problem-solvers and leaders. As India aims to establish itself as a global innovation hub, initiatives like SIH play a crucial role in realising this vision, reaffirming the transformative power of education and technology in nation-building.

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PICTALK



Young women visit a snow covered park after snowfall in Shimla

AI's boost to the spirit of service

From streamlining efforts to enhancing inclusivity, AI is reshaping how volunteers connect, contribute and make an impact



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Volunteering has long been a vital pillar of community development, social change, and global solidarity, offering individuals a meaningful way to contribute to society while fostering personal growth. In today's interconnected and fast-paced world, the concept of volunteering is undergoing a dynamic transformation, largely driven by advances in technology. The International Volunteer Day (IVD), celebrated globally on December 5, 2024, under the theme "Economic and Social Development," highlighted the pivotal role of volunteers in shaping a better world. Sub-themes emphasised their contributions to alleviating crises and supporting underprivileged populations affected by natural disasters, man-made crises, or socio-economic challenges. Volunteers have consistently been on the frontlines of crisis management, stepping in where governments and organisations often encounter limitations. Whether during pandemics, natural disasters, or humanitarian emergencies, their role remains indispensable, particularly for vulnerable populations. The advent of advanced technologies, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), is significantly reshaping the landscape of volunteerism. AI enhances the efficiency, inclusivity, and accessibility of volunteering initiatives, ensuring they have a far-reaching impact. By leveraging AI-driven tools, organisations are creating platforms that align volunteer skills with opportunities, reduce mismatches, and optimise efforts. This transformation not only improves the volunteer experience but also amplifies the positive outcomes for communities in need. AI-powered platforms such as "HelpFinder" are revolutionising how volunteers are matched with organisations. By analysing data on individual skills, interests, and locations, these platforms ensure that volunteers are placed where they can make the most meaningful contributions. This precision reduces mismatches, boosts retention rates, and fosters a sense of accomplishment among volunteers. During crises, AI-powered systems can quickly



analyse data to identify affected areas and volunteer availability, enabling swift deployment to critical zones. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, AI-driven platforms like "OneRescue" coordinated volunteer initiatives for contact tracing, mental health support, and supply distribution, proving invaluable in mitigating the crisis. Corporate social responsibility initiatives also benefit from AI. Tools like "Benevity" facilitate employee engagement by connecting them with volunteer opportunities that align with organisational goals. These solutions ensure streamlined coordination, impactful volunteering, and sustained enthusiasm among participants. AI-powered chatbots further enhance volunteer experiences by providing instant support, answering queries and assisting with training. In India, a nation of 1.45 billion people, the ethos of service is deeply ingrained in its culture. Family values, religious teachings, and community traditions emphasise the importance of helping others. Today, AI is augmenting these efforts. Chatbots are used to handle volunteer queries related to vaccination drives, maternal health, women's and children's safety, and more. In the UK, AI-driven systems have optimised food bank logistics and facilitated grocery deliveries to vulnerable individuals, demonstrating how technology empowers volunteers to make a tangible difference. Innovative applications like "Be My Eyes" enable volunteers to assist visually impaired individuals remotely, while platforms like "GoodSAM" connect trained volunteers with emergency services in real time. For example, volunteers alerted through GoodSAM can provide critical assistance such as CPR or use an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) before professional help arrives. Virtual volunteering has further expanded opportunities for professionals to contribute their expertise remotely. Platforms like "Catchafire" and the UN's Online Volunteering Service facilitate mentoring, legal advice, language translation, and more, breaking geographical barriers and making volunteering more inclusive. Digital tools have eliminated traditional obstacles to volunteering, such as physical distance, time constraints, and accessibility issues. People with disabilities, caregivers, or those in remote locations can now volunteer from their homes. This inclusivity aligns with the 2024 IVD theme, fostering collaboration among diverse communities toward the shared goal of economic and social development. By harnessing the right technology and resources, volun-



AI ENHANCES THE EFFICIENCY, INCLUSIVITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF VOLUNTEERING INITIATIVES, ENSURING THEY HAVE A FAR-REACHING IMPACT. BY LEVERAGING AI-DRIVEN TOOLS, ORGANISATIONS ARE CREATING PLATFORMS THAT ALIGN VOLUNTEER SKILLS WITH OPPORTUNITIES, REDUCE MISMATCHES AND OPTIMISE EFFORTS

teers can work together to address pressing global challenges. In natural disasters like hurricanes, earthquakes, and floods, volunteers equipped with drones and AI tools can map affected areas and deliver supplies more efficiently. Apps like "Zello" enable seamless communication during emergencies, transforming smartphones into walkie-talkies for coordination. In efforts to combat poverty and hunger, volunteers support food banks, organise community kitchens, and deliver resources. Digital tools like "ShareTheMeal," a United Nations World Food Programme crowdfunding app, empower individuals to donate meals with a simple tap, making a significant impact on global hunger. Education is another critical sector where volunteering, supported by technology, has made remarkable strides. Online platforms have democratised access to education, reaching remote and underserved communities. Initiatives like "Code.org" empower volunteers to teach coding skills, equipping students with the tools needed for a technology-driven future. Gender-focused volunteer programmes address inequality by providing legal aid, counseling and advocacy for women's rights, further demonstrating the transformative power of volunteering. (The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INDIA'S SOFT POWER POLICY

Madam — The ongoing conflict in Gaza and Israel's military action against Hamas have drawn global attention. In this context, Israeli Ambassador to India, Reuven Azar, praised India's soft power policy, underlining its relevance in international diplomacy. He acknowledged that Israel, due to its heavy reliance on military strength, has lagged in areas like information management and public relations. India has strengthened its global position through diplomacy, cultural influence, and dialogue as key tools of soft power. Initiatives like yoga, cultural exchanges, and multilateral diplomacy have not only earned India international goodwill but also enhanced its global image. Despite its firm stance against terrorism, India has effectively combined dialogue and public relations to make its policies inspirational for the global community. In contrast, Israel's excessive reliance on military power weakens it in ideological battles, further complicated by adversarial propaganda from Arab media. Military strength alone is insufficient; tools of soft power, such as dialogue, empathy, and media management, are essential for long-term success. India's example demonstrates that balancing soft and hard power not only safeguards national interests but also garners global acceptance. Israel should take inspiration from India's strategy to refine its policies and strengthen its information and public relations framework. R K Jain | Barwani

al techniques, students who participated in project-based programs demonstrated superior application of information to real-life circumstances, according to a 2022 research by Edutopia. **4. Future Ready:** Through more engaging and relevant instruction, interactive learning equips students to overcome obstacles more effectively than traditional approaches ever could. To educate students for the uncertain and constantly changing times, education must emphasise abilities like problem-solving, teamwork, and flexibility in today's competitive labor market. Interactive approaches also boost motivation and encourage teamwork, which aids students in honing their communication and teamwork abilities. The global EdTech market is expected to grow to \$404 billion by 2025, according to EdTechXGlobal. Students that use an interactive learning technique not only perform better academically but are also better prepared to handle problems in the real world. (The writer is Founder Zamit; views are personal)

UNEP honours Madhav Gadgil



India's veteran ecologist and nature scientist Madhav Gadgil has been named as one of the six 'Champions of the Earth' by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for 2024. He is renowned for his seminal work in the ecologically fragile Western Ghats region of India, which is a unique global biodiversity hotspot. Gadgil made an extensive study on the Western Ghats region, chairing the Western

Ghats Ecology Expert Panel in 2011, and came out with a list of grim and grave findings for the Western Ghats region. The panel's report, which is popularly known as the Gadgil report, recommended in 2011 that the entire hill range be declared an ecologically sensitive area and recommended a ban on mining, quarrying, industries, new thermal power plants, hydropower projects, and large-scale wind energy projects. Gadgil's bold and honest recommendations faced opposition from some of the state governments, political bigwigs, industries, and local communities. Braving all odds, he championed the protection of the earth and the environment. Gadgil's research has helped to protect marginalised people, promote community-driven conservation of ecosystems and influence policymaking at the highest level. M Pradyu | Kannur

demonstrations against atrocities on Hindus in Bangladesh and Bangladeshi illegal immigrants. The issue of illegal immigrants, whether from Bangladesh, African countries, or any other country, being detrimental to the integrity of the country, law and order, and social fabric and homogeneity poses potential challenges of demographic change, crime control, drug menace, security, and anarchy. However, this is a very formidable challenge for the government to work out the strategy and implement it in view of the opposition from the immigrants and their local political harborers. A question will certainly arise why only in Delhi and why not in the entire country. There may be a spate of court cases as well in view of the large-scale illegal issue of identity cards of Aadhar, PAN, or BPL. It is, therefore, imperative that a nationwide strategy should be evolved and implemented firmly. Of course, the political parties following an appeasement agenda and vote bank politics will leave no stone unturned to disrupt it, but

it is a national priority and a security threat. Vinod Johri | Delhi

VOTERS' NAME DELETED Madam — The deletion of the eligible voter's name before the election has encroached about the entire country and is intensifying terrifically. The senior AAP leader Sanjay Singh highlighted an application for the deletion of 3,800 voters' names in just the RK Puram constituency. Such incidents are frequently observed before polls, which wrest the voting rights and thwart them to contribute to choosing preferred leaders. It's an out-and-out violation of the Universal Adult Franchise" in the largest democratic country. It's a grave issue that demands urgent action. The EC must not turn into a complaint tool instead of a neutral body and deploy every effort to address it and ensure the voter's right. Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The transformative role of interactive learning in education

This modern approach is not just a shift in teaching strategies but a leap toward preparing students for the dynamic demands of the future workforce

The landscape of education has evolved significantly, with technological advancements and the integration of AI, making interactive learning a favoured approach. Because interactive learning fosters engagement, critical thinking and long-term memory, it makes it possible for knowledge to be assimilated more thoroughly. This is unquestionably an improvement over the conventional approaches, which mostly emphasise rote memory and depend largely on textbook-based techniques. The abilities needed in today's dynamic environment are better suited for interactive learning. Passively absorbing knowledge using conventional teaching approaches results in surface learning, which is ultimately counterproductive. According to National Training Laboratories research, passive learning techniques like reading and lectures only have recall rates of 5-10 per cent. **The Advent of Interactive Learning:** A more hands-on approach is provided by interactive learning, which combines technology, teamwork,



and real-world problem-solving. This increases engagement and extends retention. Digital tools, project-based learning, and group discussions are all included in this approach's scope. Students in interactive classrooms outperformed those in traditional lectures by 6 per cent on examinations, according to Harvard University research. Here are some ways that interactive learning approaches work better than conventional strategies: **1. Enhanced Retention:** According to National Training Laboratories research, active learning strategies like practice-by-doing and group discussions had higher retention rates, ranging from 50 to 75 per cent. Students may directly apply STEM principles

through hands-on experiences. According to research from the American Society for Engineering Education, pupils who participated in interactive STEM activities learned much more than those who received standard instruction. **2. Encouraging Critical Thinking:** Interactive learning promotes creativity and critical thinking by allowing students to investigate other viewpoints and pose questions. According to a McKinsey & Company research, interactive learning environments foster critical thinking and reflection while increasing student engagement and fostering productive social interactions. Another immersive method of student engagement is gamification, which boosts students' incentive to tackle challenging issues and permits in-depth learning. **3. Real-World Application:** Project-based learning, which links education to real-world issues and increases the applicability of information in practical contexts, is a crucial element of interactive learning. In contrast to students who studied using tradition-



AARUL MALAVIYA

al techniques, students who participated in project-based programs demonstrated superior application of information to real-life circumstances, according to a 2022 research by Edutopia. **4. Future Ready:** Through more engaging and relevant instruction, interactive learning equips students to overcome obstacles more effectively than traditional approaches ever could. To educate students for the uncertain and constantly changing times, education must emphasise abilities like problem-solving, teamwork, and flexibility in today's competitive labor market. Interactive approaches also boost motivation and encourage teamwork, which aids students in honing their communication and teamwork abilities. The global EdTech market is expected to grow to \$404 billion by 2025, according to EdTechXGlobal. Students that use an interactive learning technique not only perform better academically but are also better prepared to handle problems in the real world. (The writer is Founder Zamit; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

INDIA SHARES ITS VISION FOR WEST ASIA

The Manama Dialogue provided India with a platform to outline its vision for regional stability



KUMARDEEP BANARJEE

Even as Syria was undergoing huge regime change, with a possibility of leaving a long-lasting impact on the geo-political mix of West Asia, India's external affairs minister was delivering a lecture on the changing dynamics of international cooperation at the Manama Dialogue. The Manama dialogue is a platform to bring policy makers, and ministers to discuss and debate the strategic defence, security and foreign challenges of West Asia. The dialogue happening against the backdrop of the fast-changing narrative in Syria provided India with a unique opportunity to weigh on its most pressing concerns in and for the region. Syria has been ruled by the Assad dynasty for nearly 50 years. However, this dynastic rule converted the country, on the border of Turkey and Jordan into a brutal police state. Russia and Iran had been supportive of the Assad dynasty, for strategic reasons. Iran supported the regime, to build its axis of resistance against Israel, while Russia, has air force and naval bases in Syria. Global leaders are watching the Syria theatre closely even as Israel continues its war in the neighbourhood. The storming of Israeli troops in Gaza and Ukraine, distracted Iran and Russia, which led to the exit of Bashar Al Assad last week. However, what is of concern to many would be, the rise of rebel leader Abu Mohammed al-Jawfani, an ex-Al Qaeda member.

Syria despite the dynastic rule managed to maintain a secular political outlook where minorities and diverse groups did not feel any discrimination. Many fear that the rebel leader with Al Qaeda credentials, may push the state to a hardline Islamist nation. Almost every nation in the neighbourhood including Israel is watching the unfolding situation care-



fully. Delhi has been agnostic to the regime change, even though the Assad dynasty has been supportive of India's position on Kashmir, and its stance with Islamabad. Any unfriendly regime in the region would weaken India's position and could be a security concern as well.

Against this backdrop, the Manama dialogue, with several leaders from the West Asia and the Indo-Pacific, provided an important platform for engagement. Mentioning the ongoing conflicts impacting the region S Jaishankar said, "And this today would extend from Gaza to Lebanon and now to Syria as well. But at the same time, we have to be realistic about competing interests in this region... The second political-diplomatic cooperation that we can think of is really at a time when the world is polarised if not downright violent, how do you prevent an escalation of tensions, how do you prevent conflict from spreading further. In recent times, for all of us, the relationship or absence of it between Israel and Iran has been particularly a source of concern, so some of our diplomatic efforts has focused on that particular aspect. There has been the situation in the Red Sea as well. On a more positive note, the third aspect of the political-diplomatic, I would say, we are also looking at certain trend lines coming out of this region. We have been a supporter of the Abraham Accords and some years ago, we started a grouping called I2U2, which involves India, Israel, the US and the UAE. It is still at a relatively early stage and we certainly hope that in the coming days that its a group that will grow."

India in the past decade, has a trade-oriented foreign policy outlook, where, it knows that nothing binds countries more than an economic partnership. Mr Jaishankar mentioned that India has nearly \$170- 180 billion with the ten-member Gulf Cooperation Council and significant economic relations with countries in the Mediterranean. A new US president from January would also be a key benchmark to watch out for days to come. The relationships are most likely to be economic and based on mutual interests.

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

The dawn of a new era: Syria's path forward

As Syria comes to terms with Assad's departure, the road ahead promises opportunities for renewal but is fraught with risks that will test the resolve of its new leadership



NISHAKANT OJHA



The fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime and the appointment of Mohammed al-Bashir as Syria's Prime Minister on December 10, 2024, mark a watershed moment in the nation's history, offering a mix of promise and uncertainty. This transition signals the end of an era defined by authoritarian rule, civil war and foreign interventions, ushering in a period of both opportunity and immense challenge. Assad's departure, driven by a combination of Russian withdrawal and external pressures, has created a power vacuum with significant implications. Mohammed al-Bashir, a moderate politician known for his diplomatic acumen, has pledged to prioritise national reconciliation and reconstruction. His leadership represents a shift from the autocratic governance of the past toward a more inclusive and reform-oriented approach. However, stabilising Syria remains an uphill battle. Despite al-Bashir's efforts, large swathes of the country remain fragmented, with control divided among Kurdish forces, remnants of opposition groups, and radical elements. Moreover, millions of Syrians continue to suffer from displacement, poverty and inadequate access to basic services, underscoring the dire need for humanitarian aid and international support. Compounding these challenges is Syria's shattered economy, which demands both immediate stabilisation and long-term rebuilding strategies. The role of covert operations by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the fall of Assad's regime cannot be overlooked. Since the early years of the Syrian Civil War, the CIA has employed programmes such as Operation Timber Sycamore to train and arm select rebel factions, aiming to counter Assad's government, which had strong backing from Russia and Iran. These operations evolved



PRIME MINISTER AL-BASHIR HAS OUTLINED A ROADMAP FOR SYRIA'S RECOVERY, FOCUSING ON POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL REFORMS

to include intelligence gathering, cyberattacks, and psychological warfare. Although they played a critical role in destabilising Assad's regime, the complexities of such interventions also fueled unintended consequences, such as the empowerment of extremist factions. For the US, this strategy yielded key geopolitical advantages, including weakening Iranian influence, reducing Russia's foothold in the region, and bolstering counterterrorism efforts. Prime Minister al-Bashir has outlined a roadmap for Syria's recovery, focusing on political, economic, and social reforms. Politically, his plans include forming a transitional government representing Syria's diverse ethnic and political groups and drafting a new constitution that decentralises power and protects minority rights. On the economic front, his administration is prioritising infrastructure development, attracting international investments, and combating corruption to lay the foundation for sustainable growth. Socially, reintegration programs aim to facilitate the return of displaced Syrians and rehabilitate former combatants, while expanded healthcare and education services seek to address the needs of the war-affected population. The fall of Assad and the emergence of al-Bashir have far-reaching implications for the broader West Asia. Regionally, these developments could recalibrate power dynamics, reducing Iran's influence in Syria while opening avenues for normalisation with Israel, partic-

ularly in areas of border security and economic cooperation. On a global scale, Russia's diminished role in Syria marks a strategic loss for Moscow, while China may see opportunities to extend its Belt and Road Initiative into the region's reconstruction phase. Russia's longstanding support for Assad, which began with its military intervention in 2015, faced significant challenges in recent years. Strained by its involvement in Ukraine and Western sanctions, Moscow has grappled with resource constraints, prompting a recalibration of its Middle Eastern strategy. Domestic criticism of prolonged military engagements has further pressured the Kremlin to scale back its commitments in Syria, leaving Assad vulnerable to internal and external pressures. Globally, the Syrian transition carries profound security implications. The power vacuum left by Assad's fall risks a resurgence of extremist groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda, which could exploit the instability to regain strength and pose threats beyond Syria's borders. The ongoing refugee crisis also looms large, with continued instability potentially driving more Syrians to seek asylum abroad, challenging neighboring countries and Europe alike. Additionally, proxy conflicts fueled by regional rivalries and superpower tensions threaten to entangle Syria in broader geopolitical frictions. The transition from Assad to al-Bashir represents a pivotal juncture in Syria's history, offering a chance for renewal amid deep-seated

challenges. While the road to stability and prosperity is fraught with obstacles, a coordinated international effort combined with meaningful domestic reform holds the potential to guide Syria toward a more peaceful and resilient future. The coming months will be decisive in determining whether this new chapter in Syria's turbulent narrative leads to lasting progress. The transition from Bashar al-Assad's regime to Mohammed al-Bashir's leadership marks a critical turning point in Syria's history, offering a glimmer of hope amid a legacy of conflict and instability. Al-Bashir's vision for political reform, economic recovery, and social inclusion aims to chart a new course for a nation shattered by years of war. However, the challenges are immense: fragmented control, a dire humanitarian crisis, and a collapsed economy require urgent attention and sustained international support. On the global stage, the fall of Assad has reshaped regional dynamics, reducing Iranian influence and opening new avenues for diplomacy while exposing Syria to the risks of renewed extremism and geopolitical competition. Whether Syria's new leadership can successfully navigate these complexities and steer the nation toward stability depends on the cohesion of its domestic efforts and the willingness of the international community to provide coordinated and meaningful support. *(The writer is an eminent expert on counter terrorism and West Asian affairs; views are personal)*

Bridging India's urban-rural divide: Empowering rural learners through skilling

India's vast diversity extends beyond culture and language, manifesting in unequal access to education, skilling and employment opportunities

India is a country with great linguistic, cultural, racial, social and economic diversity. People living in urban areas have access to opportunities for skilling, education and employment that are not easily available to people in semi-urban and rural areas. Over the last decade or two, there has been considerable growth and development in the skilling and education ecosystem due to a multitude of factors. Governments - both central and state - have realised that the only way India can benefit from its tremendous demographic dividend is by ensuring that individuals in the working age are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to thrive in increasingly global workplaces.



NAGESH SINGH

Central and state skilling entities have created massive systems that reach every district around India and make top-quality resources available to hitherto underserved audiences. The corporate sector, leveraging the prevalent Corporate Social Responsibility laws, has also contributed significantly to this by collaborating with government agencies and supporting them with co-

funding, content, certification and job opportunities. The Directorate General of Training (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship) manages a network of tens of thousands of institutions that collaborate with the corporate sector and civil society to make high-quality skilling available to hundreds of thousands of learners every year. All India Council for Technical Education, through its network of thousands of engineering institutions, offers cutting-edge training and internship opportunities to learners around India, irrespective of their location or socio-economic limitations. Edunet Foundation, for example, makes courseware and skills across the IT spectrum

available to learners across engineering colleges, National Skills Training Institutes and Industrial Training Institutes nationally, directly working with lakhs of learners every year. These programs are offered in blended mode, leveraging classroom learning, synchronous video, online content and hands-on project work. While there is availability of skilling and education opportunities, there are several issues that limit the benefits of these programs. The foremost problem is access to technology. Since the courses are offered in blended mode, learners need access to computers with high bandwidth internet connectivity and not just mobile phones. Almost every household in



India has access to mobile phones but larger devices that are more conducive to experiential learning in technology are not widely available. Both government and corporate stakeholders can make a huge difference by making current technology platforms available to learners in rural areas by donating and/or set-

ting up labs and digital libraries within the premises of existing educational institutions in these areas. The second issue is access to local employment. Most jobs - especially the technology-centric ones - are centred around major cities and towns. For learners who are unable to migrate to employ-

ment, this is a huge barrier. Additionally, of course, there are many problems associated with mass migration to urban areas. There is a need to create local career opportunities that allow people to gainfully work wherever they are, without the need to migrate to a larger city or town. This may be done by a steady focus on entrepreneurship that creates jobs locally and helps in the development of rural areas. Rural micro-entrepreneurship, especially focused on agriculture and associated areas, can solve many of the problems associated with mass-migration and lopsided economic development. Local businesses, thus created, will drive the local economy and create local

employment. A stronger focus on rural enterprise will help India by ensuring inclusive economic development. There are several programs by the government and the corporate sector that are trying to achieve this, but they need to be enhanced and made more potent with support from civil society. In an environment where rural learners have access to technology and employment opportunities, skilling initiatives by the government and the corporate sector will make a bigger impact. Learners will be able to learn and earn locally, thereby bridging the urban-rural divide. *(The writer is chairman, Edunet Foundation; views are personal)*

Biden commutes roughly 1,500 sentences, pardons 39 people in biggest single-day act of clemency

WASHINGTON ■ President Joe Biden is commuting the sentences of roughly 1,500 people who were released from prison and placed on home confinement during the coronavirus pandemic and is pardoning 39 Americans convicted of nonviolent crimes. It's the largest single-day act of clemency in modern history. The commutations announced Thursday are for people who have served out home confinement sentences for at least one year after they were released. Prisons were uniquely bad for spreading the virus and some inmates were released in part to stop the spread. At one point, 1 in 5 prisoners had COVID-19, according to a tally kept by The Associated Press. Biden said he would be taking more steps in the weeks ahead and would continue to review clemency petitions. The second largest single-day act of clemency was by Barack Obama, with 330, shortly before leaving office in 2017. "America was built on the promise of possibility and second

chances," Biden said in a statement. "As president, I have the great privilege of extending mercy to people who have demonstrated remorse and rehabilitation, restoring opportunity for Americans to participate in daily life and contribute to their communities, and taking steps to remove sentencing disparities for non-violent offenders, especially those convicted of drug offenses." The clemency follows a broad pardon for his son Hunter, who was prosecuted for gun and tax crimes. Biden is under pressure from advocacy groups to pardon broad swaths of people, including those on federal death row, before the Trump administration takes over in January. He's also weighing whether to issue preemptive pardons to those who investigated Trump's effort to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election and are facing possible retribution when he takes office. Those pardoned Thursday had been convicted of nonviolent crimes such as drug offenses and turned their lives around, White House lawyers said. They include

a woman who led emergency response teams during natural disasters; a church deacon who has worked as an addiction counsellor and youth counsellor; a doctoral student in molecular biosciences; and a decorated military veteran. The president had previously issued 122 commutations and 21 other pardons. He's also broadly pardoned those convicted of use and simple possession of marijuana on federal lands and in the District of Columbia, and pardoned former US service members convicted of violating a now-repealed military ban on consensual gay sex. Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., and 34 other lawmakers are urging the president to pardon environmental and human rights lawyer Steven Donziger, who was imprisoned or under house arrest for three years because of a contempt of court charge related to his work representing Indigenous farmers in a lawsuit against Chevron. Others are advocating for Biden to commute the sentences of federal death row prisoners. His attorney general, Merrick

Garland, paused federal executions. Biden had said on the campaign trail in 2020 that he wanted to end the death penalty but he never did, and now, with Trump coming back into office, it's likely executions will resume. During his first term, Trump presided over an unprecedented number of federal executions, carried out during the height of the pandemic. More pardons are coming before Biden leaves office on Jan. 20, but it's not clear whether he'll take action to guard against possible prosecution by Trump, an untested use of the power. The president has been taking the idea seriously and has been thinking about it for as much as six months — before the presidential election — but has been concerned about the precedent it would set, according to people familiar with the matter who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss internal discussions. But those who received the pardons would have to accept them. New California Sen. Adam Schiff, who was the chairman of the congressional committee that investigated the violent Jan. 6

insurrection, said such a pardon from Biden would be "unnecessary," and that the president shouldn't be spending his waning days in office worrying about this. A president has the power to both pardon, in which a person is relieved of guilt and punishment, or commute a sentence, which reduces or eliminates the punishment but doesn't exonerate the wrongdoer. It's customary for a president to grant mercy at the end of his term, using the power of the office to wipe away records or end prison terms. Before pardoning his son, Biden had repeatedly pledged not to do so. He said in a statement explaining his reversal that the prosecution had been poisoned by politics. The decision prompted criminal justice advocates and lawmakers to put additional public pressure on the administration to use that same power for everyday Americans. It wasn't a very popular move; only about 2 in 10 Americans approved of his decision, according to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Centre for Public Affairs Research.

Russian forces edge closer to key eastern Ukraine city

KYIV ■ Fighting around the key eastern Ukraine city of Pokrovsk is "extremely intense" after a monthslong Russian push, Ukraine's top military commander said, with analysts estimating Russian forces are now within just a few kilometres of the city. Ukrainian troops repelled nearly 40 Russian attempts to storm defences around Pokrovsk over the previous 24 hours, the General Staff said in a battlefield report Thursday. "Russian occupiers are throwing all available forces forward, attempting to break through the defences of our troops," Ukrainian army chief Gen. Oleksandr Syrskiy said in a Facebook post late Wednesday. His forces are outnumbered, he said. Ukraine's stretched defences in Donetsk have been creaking since early this year under a fierce Russian drive to capture its neighbour's entire eastern Donbas region. Russian forces are trying to overwhelm Ukraine's battle-

field defences with sheer numbers of troops and powerful glide bombs that blast fortifications to smithereens. Pokrovsk, which had a population of about 60,000 before Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, is one of Ukraine's main defensive strongholds and a key logistics hub in the Donetsk region. Its capture would compromise Ukraine's defensive abilities and supply routes and would bring Russia closer to its stated goal of seizing the entire Donetsk region. But Ukraine's dogged resistance and Western military aid have rendered the gains costly for the Kremlin in losses of troops and armour. A major worry for the Kyiv government is that tens of billions of dollars of key US military support to hold Russia at bay may dry up under President-elect Donald Trump. The Institute for the Study of War estimated late Wednesday that Russian forces have moved to within about 6 kilometres of Pokrovsk, approach-

ing from the south. The Donetsk operation has had "a massive cost" for Russian forces, the Washington-based think tank said. Those losses "will temper their ability to translate these gains into more far-reaching offensive operations" in the months ahead, it said. Though the Russian push has been slow moving, it has recently accelerated in Donetsk and compelled Ukrainian defenders to make localised retreats. Major battlefield victories have eluded the Russians. Ukrainian media have reported tensions between Ukraine's commanders as the military pressure has built. Unconfirmed reports said Syrskiy, the military chief, had personally taken charge of some brigades around Pokrovsk. A renowned Ukrainian military officer, Serhii Filimonov, commander of the 59th Motorized Brigade, described Pokrovsk's defence as a "disaster."

PUBLIC NOTICE

M/S SIGNATUREGLOBAL HOMES PRIVATE LIMITED (CIN: U70100DL2008PTC176641)
Registered Office: 13th Floor, Dr. Gopal Das Bhawan, 28, Barakhamba Road, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001, Phone: 0124-4908200, 011-49281700
Email: Compliance@signatureglobal.in

Whereas M/s Signatureglobal Homes Private Limited (hereinafter referred as "Company") is in the process of developing of an Independent Residential Floors namely: "Signature Global Park-II Phase-II" situated at village- Dhunela, Sector-36, Sohna, District- Gurugram, Haryana over an area measuring 2.70 Acres under License No. 39 of 2019 dated 01.03.2019 granted by Director, Town and Country Planning, Haryana and having RERA Registration No. 42 of 2021 Dated 27.07.2021, Extn. No. 16 of 2023 Dated 19.06.2023.

And Whereas the Company has applied for change in Bank Account from Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd. to Standard Chartered Bank and accordingly the company has obtained In-principal approval for change of bank accounts from Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority, Gurugram. Accordingly vide this public notice, the general public is hereby notified/informed that the following changes in bank accounts:

Particulars	Previous Bank Accounts	New Bank Accounts
Bank Name	Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd.	Standard Chartered Bank
IFSC Code	KKBK0000261	SCBL0036025
Master Collection Account No. (100%)	8045100105	53105107551
RERA Account No. (70%)	8045100099	53105107578
Promoter Free Account No. (30%)	8045951592	53105107586

M/s Signatureglobal Homes Private Limited Place: Gurugram
Date: 13/12/2024

PUBLIC NOTICE

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Email: Compliance@signatureglobal.in

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And Whereas the Company has applied for change in Bank Account from Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd. to Standard Chartered Bank and accordingly the company has obtained In-principal approval for change of bank accounts from Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority, Gurugram. Accordingly vide this public notice, the general public is hereby notified/informed that the following changes in bank accounts:

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M/s Signatureglobal Homes Private Limited Place: Gurugram
Date: 13/12/2024

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT UNDER THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY 2013 OF THE GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA

Applications are invited from the general public for booking of Residential Apartments in the Affordable Housing Project proposed to be developed as per terms and conditions of the policy prescribed by the Town & Country Planning Department, Government of Haryana vide Notification No.PF-2748921 dated 19.08.2013 (Details available at the Department website i.e. www.tcp.haryana.gov.in).

Sl. No.	Particulars	Details																														
1	Project Approvals	Coloniser/Developer: Sniflex Projects Private Limited. Licence No./Year: 133 of 2023 dated 26.06.2023, Building plans approved on 19.03.2024 vide Memo No. ZP-1862/JD(RA)/2024/10267 & RERA Registration No. RC/REP/HAREA/GGM/14/546/2024/41 dated 15.04.2024.																														
2	Location	Sector 4, Sohna, District - Gurugram, Haryana.																														
3	Provisions	Project land is 8.76875 Acre. However the same is developed phase-wise as per DTCP Phasing Approval ZP-1862/JD(RA)/2024/1092 dated 05/12/2023. Under the Phase I there were 1105 residential units however land admeasuring 1.9875 acre comprising 270 residential units was mortgaged with DTCP hence 835 units were allotted vide Draw of Lot held on 28/06/2024. Now balance 270 units are de-mortgaged vide release of mortgage deed dated 20.11.2024 bearing document no 11392 hence the present offer is for balance 270 units under Phase I, in the present offer of 270 units, 5% (13 units) are reserved for Management Quota and balance 95% (257 Units) are for general public. Community Facility - One Community Hall of more than 2000 sq. ft. and one Anganwad-cum-creche of more than 2000 sq. ft.																														
4	Apartment Details	Type I: 2 BHK - 108 no. of apartments of 644.65sq.ft. carpet area and balcony with an aggregated area of 99.67sq.ft. with a two-wheeler parking. Type II: 2 BHK - 95 no. of apartments of 644.65sq.ft. carpet area and balcony with an aggregated area of 145.74sq.ft. with a two-wheeler parking. Type III: 2 BHK - 54 no. of apartments of 637sq.ft. carpet area and balcony with an aggregated area of 93sq.ft. with a two-wheeler parking. Type II: MQ '2' BHK - 13 no. of apartments of 644.65sq.ft. carpet area and balcony with an aggregated area of 145.74sq.ft. with a two-wheeler parking.																														
		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>S. No.</th> <th>Unit Type</th> <th>Carpet Area (Sq. Ft.)</th> <th>Total Units of General Category</th> <th>Total Units of Management Quota</th> <th>No. of Units</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Type-I</td> <td>644.65</td> <td>108</td> <td></td> <td>108</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Type-II</td> <td>644.65</td> <td>95</td> <td>13</td> <td>108</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Type-III</td> <td>637.00</td> <td>54</td> <td></td> <td>54</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Total</td> <td></td> <td>257</td> <td>13</td> <td>270</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	S. No.	Unit Type	Carpet Area (Sq. Ft.)	Total Units of General Category	Total Units of Management Quota	No. of Units	1	Type-I	644.65	108		108	2	Type-II	644.65	95	13	108	3	Type-III	637.00	54		54		Total		257	13	270
S. No.	Unit Type	Carpet Area (Sq. Ft.)	Total Units of General Category	Total Units of Management Quota	No. of Units																											
1	Type-I	644.65	108		108																											
2	Type-II	644.65	95	13	108																											
3	Type-III	637.00	54		54																											
	Total		257	13	270																											
5	Allotment Rate of Apartment (All inclusive)+ Taxes & other charges as applicable will be extra	Type I: Rs. 30,20,533/- per apartment + Taxes as applicable extra. Type II: Rs. 30,20,925/- per apartment + Taxes as applicable extra. Type III: Rs. 29,78,100/- per apartment + Taxes as applicable extra. The above rates are as per the rates prescribed under the Affordable Housing Policy, 2013 of the Government of Haryana vide Notification No. PF-2748921 dated 19.08.2013 including the amendments thereof (Details available at Department website i.e. www.tcp.haryana.gov.in). However, possession charges and registration fees etc. are extra.																														
6	Payment Terms	i. With Application: Booking amount i.e. 5% of Carpet area of apartment: Type I: Total amount of Rs. 1,45,046/- Type II: Total amount of Rs. 1,45,046/- Type III: Total amount of Rs. 1,43,325/- ii. 20% of total cost shall be payable on Allotment and the balance consideration amount shall be paid according to the construction-linked payment plan of the project duly approved by HARERA, as applicable in terms of construction stages at the relevant point in time. No interest shall accrue before the due date of payment. Any default in payment shall attract interest at the rate specified in Rule 15 of the Rules 2017 by HARERA.																														
7	Board Specifications of the Apartment	Drawing Room/ Lobby Flooring: Tiles / IPS Drawing Room/ Lobby Wall Ceiling finish: OBD / Color Wash Bedrooms Flooring: Tiles / IPS Bedroom Wall Ceiling finish: OBD / Color Wash Toilet Walls Finish: Tiles Up to 4 feet and OBD/ Color wash in balance area Toilet Flooring: Tiles / IPS Kitchen Flooring: Tiles / IPS Kitchen Wall Finish: Tiles Up to 2 Feet high above stone/ Tile Counter and OBD / Color wash in balance area Fixture & Fittings: Single bowl steel sink & CP / PVC/ PTMT Fittings Balcony Flooring: Tiles / IPS Windows: MS-Z-section & Glass / Alu steels & Glass Door Frame / Doors: MS/ Fiber Door frames with flush Door/ Fiber Door Common Area Flooring: Stone / Tiles / IPS Lift Lobby: Stone / Tiles/ IPS Chinaware: Standard Fittings Electrical: ISI marked products for wiring, Switches and circuits Security: Gated Complex																														
8	Applications Timelines	i. Application form will be filled online by Registration on http://edraw.tcp.haryana.gov.in/tcp-dms/home ii. Booking start from 14/12/24 00:01 iii. Payment closure date 28/12/2024 23:59 iv. Last date of submission of application form is 30/12/2024 23:59																														

Eligibility:

- The applicant should not be debarred from entering into legally binding contract under any prevailing law.
- Any person can apply, however, preference will be given to PMAY beneficiaries, including their spouse or dependent children, identified by the Urban Local Bodies Department, Haryana, under the "Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna for All" program. First priority shall be given to the identified beneficiaries of the state of Haryana. Thereafter, for the remaining flats, preference will be given to persons, including their spouse or dependent children, who do not own any flat/plot in any HUDA developed Colony/sector or any licensed colony in the urban areas in Haryana, UT of Chandigarh, and NCT.
- Any applicant can submit only one application. A successful applicant under this policy shall not be eligible for the allotment of any other flat under this policy in another colony. In the event that he/she is successful in more than one colony, he/she will have the choice to retain only one flat. Supportive affidavits and certificates suggesting eligibility are mandatory to be uploaded on the TCP website while submitting the application for allotment.

Allotment Criteria:

- The allotment of apartments shall be done through e-draw of lots in the presence of a committee consisting of Deputy Commissioner or his representative (at least of the cadre of Haryana Civil Services), Senior Town Planner (Circle Office), DTP of the concerned district and the representative of colonizer concerned.
- After fixation of date for draw of lots, an advertisement shall be issued by the Developer informing the applicants about the details regarding date/time and venue of the draw of lots in the same newspapers on which the original advertisement was issued.
- For detailed criteria and time-frame to be adopted for scrutiny and allotment, the applicants may also refer to the details in the Affordable Housing Policy, 2013 including the amendments thereof notified vide No. PF-2748921 dated 19.08.2013 (Available at the Department website i.e. www.tcp.haryana.gov.in).

Disclaimer:

- The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act 2016 and the rules made thereunder have brought significant changes to the real estate sector. The Promoter/Developer is fully committed to comply with the provisions laid down under RERA. The promoter/developer urges every applicant to inspect the site where the project is proposed to be constructed and not rely merely upon or be influenced by any architectural impression, plan, or sales brochure. Therefore, applicants are requested to exercise personal judgment prior to submitting an application for booking.
- The images shown on TCP Site / offer of Application are indicative designs and for illustrative purposes only. Further designs may vary in form and finish for the above project details. Specifications can also be accessed at the Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority website, i.e., <https://haryana.era.gov.in>.

Indian student dead, 4 injured in UK road accident

LONDON ■ A 32-year-old Indian student has died in a road accident in eastern England's Leicestershire while four other people were hospitalised with serious injuries, according to

police. Chiranjeevi Panguluri died on the spot as a passenger in a car that ended up in a ditch and three co-passengers, one woman and two men, and the driver were all taken to hospital, the Leicestershire Police

said of the accident which was reported on Tuesday morning. A 27-year-old man, arrested on suspicion of causing death by dangerous driving, has since been released on bail. "Chiranjeevi Panguluri, 32, was

the passenger in a grey Mazda 3 Tamura, which was travelling county bound from Leicester towards Market Harborough, before leaving the road and coming to rest in a ditch," a police statement read.

PUBLIC NOTICE

REG: FREE HOLD DDA Built-up MIG Flat No. 39-D, on First floor, Block-BB, Category-MIG. Situated at Janak Puri Residential Scheme, Janak Puri, New Delhi-110058, "hereinafter referred to as the 'Seller'." In this connection, the seller has informed the purchaser that they are the joint owners of the said property. The seller is further informed that the purchaser that the said property was owned by Mr. Veshnu Kumar Sharma vide Conveyance Deed executed by POI through DDA. The said Deed is registered as Document No. 11760 on 25.05.2022 (SRO-IIB-Janak Puri). Thus, Mr. Ajay Sharma and Mr. Rajeev Sharma (present seller) became the joint owners of the said property. The seller has also informed the purchaser that the said property is not mortgaged anywhere and there is no charge or dispute or any litigation pending regarding the said property. Any person including Bank's, Financial Institution's, relative's having any claim, right, title or any interest of any nature whatsoever into or upon the aforesaid property is hereby called upon to make the same known, in writing, with documentary evidence, by Registered AD Post, to the undersigned at the address mentioned herein below within 07 days of publication of this notice and in the event of no response having been received to the notice, the title of the seller to the said property shall be deemed to be clear of any charge or encumbrance of any nature whatsoever and any subsequent claim shall not bind our client/Purchaser, in any manner whatsoever. Shivkant Arora, Advocate M/s Intelective Law Offices A-74, LCF Defence Colony, New Delhi-110024

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that I, Deepak Kumar Talukadar S/o Late P. C. Talukadar, Flat No.-118-B, Pocket-B, MIG Flat Dilshad Garden, Delhi-110095 have lost my DDA Possession Letter, Electricity and Water NOC issued by DDA against MIG Flat No.-118-B, Pocket-B, Dilshad Garden, Delhi-110095 against File No. L022(1010)86/DG/NP. An NCR to this effect has been lodged in the police station Delhi (LR No.2376337/2024 Dated 07.12.2024) Any person claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents may write/contact me/us at the above address/phone : 9873922945 within 15 days from the publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to the this property can personally inform or write to Dy. Director LAB or Director (H-1), D-Block, 3rd Floor, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Shiba Warsi had acquired Upper Ground Floor Front Side with roof rights area measuring 70 sq. yds., Built up property bearing No. J-74-75, Kharsa No. 54/6, situated in the area of Village Kharsa, above of J. Eden Laxmi Nagar, Ilaga Shahdara, Delhi vide Regd. G.P.A dt 25.11.2019 along with ATS & Will executed by Mrs. Shalini Jain and Now Mrs. Shiba Warsi is the undisputed owner of the said property. OR Any person / firm / institution / company having any claim or right in respect of the said Property by way of inheritance, share, sale, agreement, lease, license, gift, possession, legal heirs, partners or encumbrance howsoever or otherwise is hereby required to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice of his/her share or claim, if any, with all supporting documents at below mentioned address. After expiration of notice period, the claims, if any, of such person shall be treated null and void and also treated as waived and not binding on our client. Ajay Kumar Giri (Advocate) H.No. 26/161, Basement, Vikram Vihar, Lajpat Nagar 4, New Delhi -110024

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is publicly notified that E-286B, SECTOR-22, NOIDA, DISTT- GAUTAM BUDDHA NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH-201301 has been allotted in the name of DEEPAK SHARMA S/O BP SHARMA R/O B-4/28, SAFDARJUNG ENCLAVE, NEW DELHI and will be executed in favour of MR. RAMESH BEHAL S/O LATE SHRI H. BEHAL RESIDENT OF E-286B, SECTOR-22, NOIDA, DISTT-GAUTAM BUDDHA NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH-201301 and will be executed at Noida so with the help of the notice it is informed the transfer of the above house in favour of MR. RAMESH BEHAL S/O LATE SHRI H. BEHAL RESIDENT OF E- 286B, SECTOR-22, NOIDA, DISTT-GAUTAM BUDDHA NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH-201301. If any one has any objection her/ste may submit his/her, objection in the Housing Department of Noida. Authority alongwith sufficient proofs within 30 days of the publication of this notice

कार्यालय नगर परिषद बदनावर, जिला-धार

बदनावर, दिनांक 11.12.2024

क्रमांक/ई-टेंडर/2197/2024

ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना (द्वितीय) -

एतद् द्वारा समस्त समक्ष श्रेणी पंजीकृत ठेकेदार/फर्म को सूचित किया जाता है कि, निम्नलिखित कार्य को निविदा ऑनलाइन ई-प्रोक्यूमेंट पोर्टल www.mptenders.gov.in के माध्यम से आमंत्रित को जाती है।

ई-टेंडर आई.डी. क्रमांक	कार्य का विवरण	कार्य की अनुमानित लागत रु. एवं समयावधि	निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य एवं अमानत राशि रु.	निविदा द प्रस्तुत करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय
2024_UAD 387597_1	Interception & diversion of Nallahs with STP works Project of Badnawar town for Balwari river under SBM 2.0	1111.00 लाख 18 माह	30,000/- 5,55,500/-	26.12.2024 5:30 PM

नोट :- उपरोक्त कार्य के Amendments केवल वेबसाइट पर ही Corrigendum/addendum details अन्तर्गत प्रकाशित किये जावेंगे। अन्य विवरण उपरोक्त पोर्टल पर अथवा कार्यालय में कार्यालयीन समय पर देखे जा सकते हैं।

मौना शोकर यादव अध्यक्ष नगर परिषद बदनावर

राजेंद्र सिंह पवार (फुदा बापू) उपाध्यक्ष नगर परिषद बदनावर

अनिता टिपक जादव निर्माण सभापति नगर परिषद बदनावर

संतराम चौहान मुख्य नगर पालिका अधिकारी नगर परिषद बदनावर

PUBLIC NOTICE

M/S SIGNATUREGLOBAL HOMES PRIVATE LIMITED (CIN: U70100DL2008PTC176641)
Registered Office: 13th Floor, Dr. Gopal Das Bhawan, 28, Barakhamba Road, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001, Phone: 0124-4908200, 011-49281700
Email: Compliance@signatureglobal.in

Whereas M/s Signatureglobal Homes Private Limited (hereinafter referred as "Company") is in the process of developing of an Independent Residential Floors namely: "Signature Global Park-I (1)" situated at village- Dhunela, Sector-36, Sohna, District- Gurugram, Haryana over an area measuring 3.91 Acres under License No. 18 of 2021 dated 16.04.2021 granted by Director, Town and Country Planning, Haryana and having RERA Registration No. 62 of 2021 dated 11.10.2021.

And Whereas the Company has applied for change in Bank Account from SBM Bank Ltd. to Standard Chartered Bank and accordingly the company has obtained In-principal approval for change of bank accounts from Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority, Gurugram. Accordingly vide this public notice, the general public is hereby notified/informed that the following changes in bank accounts:

Particulars	Previous Bank Accounts	New Bank Accounts
Bank Name	SBM Bank (India) Ltd.	Standard Chartered Bank
IFSC Code	STCB0000065	SCBL0036025
Master Collection Account No. (100%)	20052021001867	53105107527
RERA Account No. (70%)	20052021001874	53105107535
Promoter Free Account No. (30%)	20052021001881	53105107543

M/s Signatureglobal Homes Private Limited Place: Gurugram
Date: 13/12/2024

PUBLIC NOTICE

M/S SIGNATUREGLOBAL HOMES PRIVATE LIMITED (CIN: U70100DL2008PTC176641)
Registered Office: 13th Floor, Dr. Gopal Das Bhawan, 28, Barakhamba Road, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001, Phone: 0124-4908200, 011-49281700
Email: Compliance@signatureglobal.in

Whereas M/s Signatureglobal Homes Private Limited (hereinafter referred as "Company") is in the process of developing of an Independent Residential Floors namely: "Signature Global Park-I (2)" situated at village- Dhunela, Sector-36, Sohna, District- Gurugram, Haryana over an area measuring 1.09 Acres under License No. 18 of 2021 dated 16.04.2021 granted by Director, Town and Country Planning, Haryana and having RERA Registration No. 02 of 2023 dated 02.01.2023.

And Whereas the Company has applied for change in Bank Account from SBM Bank Ltd. to Standard Chartered Bank and accordingly the company has obtained In-principal approval for change of bank accounts from Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority, Gurugram. Accordingly vide this public notice, the general public is hereby notified/informed that the following changes in bank accounts:

Particulars	Previous Bank Accounts	New Bank Accounts
Bank Name	SBM Bank (India) Ltd.	Standard Chartered Bank
IFSC Code	STCB0000065	SCBL0036025
Master Collection Account No. (100%)	20052021001867	53105107527
RERA Account No. (70%)	20052021001874	53105107535
Promoter Free Account No. (30%)	20052021001881	53105107543

M/s Signatureglobal Homes Private Limited Place: Gurugram
Date: 13/12/2024

PUBLIC NOTICE

M/S SIGNATUREGLOBAL HOMES PRIVATE LIMITED (CIN: U70100DL2008PTC176641)
Registered Office: 13th Floor, Dr. Gopal Das Bhawan, 28, Barakhamba Road, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001, Phone: 0124-4908200, 011-49281700
Email: Compliance@signatureglobal.in

Whereas M/s Signatureglobal Homes Private Limited (hereinafter referred as "Company") is in the process of developing of an Independent Residential Floors namely: "Signature Global Park-III (2)" situated at village- Dhunela, Sector-36, Sohna, District- Gurugram, Haryana over an area measuring 1.5375 Acres under License No. 40 of 2019 dated 01.03.2019 granted by Director, Town and Country Planning, Haryana and having RERA Registration No. 64 of 2021 Dated 13.10.2021.

And Whereas the Company has applied for change in Bank Account from Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd. to Standard Chartered Bank and accordingly the company has obtained In-principal approval for change of bank accounts from Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority, Gurugram. Accordingly vide this public notice, the general public is hereby notified/informed that the following changes in bank accounts:

Particulars	Previous Bank Accounts	New Bank Accounts
Bank Name	Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd.	Standard Chartered Bank
IFSC Code	KKBK0000261	SCBL0036025
Master Collection Account No. (100%)	8045100075	53105107594
RERA Account No. (70%)	8045100082	53105107608
Promoter Free Account No. (30%)	8045951608	53105107616

M/s Signatureglobal Homes Private Limited Place: Gurugram
Date: 13/12/2024

PUBLIC NOTICE

M/S SIGNATUREGLOBAL HOMES PRIVATE LIMITED (CIN: U70100DL2008PTC176641)
Registered Office: 13th Floor, Dr. Gopal Das Bhawan, 28, Barakhamba Road, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001, Phone: 0124-4908200, 011-49281700
Email: Compliance@signatureglobal.in

Whereas M/s Signatureglobal Homes Private Limited (hereinafter referred as "Company") is in the process of developing of an Independent Residential Floors namely: "Signature Global Park-III" situated at village- Dhunela, Sector-36, Sohna, District- Gurugram, Haryana over an area measuring 4.74 Acres under License No. 40 of 2019 dated 01.03.2019 granted by Director, Town and Country Planning, Haryana and having RERA Registration No. 40 of 2020 Dated 09.11.2020, Extn. No. 06 of 2023 Dated 20.03.2023.

And Whereas the Company has applied for change in Bank Account from Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd. to Standard Chartered Bank and accordingly the company has obtained In-principal approval for change of bank accounts from Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority, Gurugram. Accordingly vide this public notice, the general public is hereby notified/informed that the following changes in bank accounts:

Particulars	Previous Bank Accounts	New Bank Accounts
Bank Name	Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd.	Standard Chartered Bank
IFSC Code	KKBK0000261	SCBL0036025
Master Collection Account No. (100%)	8045100075	53105107594
RERA Account No. (70%)	8045100082	53105107608
Promoter Free Account No. (30%)	8045951608	53105107616

M/s Signatureglobal Homes Private Limited Place: Gurugram
Date: 13/12/2024

GNPA of PSBs declines to 3.12 per cent in Sept: FinMin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gross non-performing assets (NPAs) of public sector banks (PSBs) have declined to a decade low of 3.12 per cent at the end of September 2024 from a peak of 14.98 per cent in March 2018 on the back of measures like the 4Rs – recognition, recapitalisation, resolution, and reform – taken by the government, the finance ministry said on Thursday.

Since 2015, the government implemented a comprehensive 4Rs strategy of recognising NPAs transparently, resolution and recovery, recapitalising PSBs, and reforms in the financial system to address the challenges faced by PSBs, it said.

Capital adequacy ratio of PSBs improved 393 bps to reach 15.43 per cent in September 2024 from 11.45 per cent in March 2015, it said. During 2023-24, PSBs recorded the highest-ever aggregate net profit of



Rs 1.41 lakh crore against Rs 1.05 lakh crore in 2022-23, it said, adding that the figure was Rs 0.86 lakh crore in the first half of 2024-25.

the country to deepen financial inclusion. Their capital base has strengthened and their asset quality has improved. Now they are able to go to market and access capital instead of depending on the government for recapitalisation," it said.

To deepen financial inclusion in the country, 54 crore Jan Dhan accounts and more than 52 crore collateral-free loans under various flagship financial inclusion schemes – PM-Mudra, Stand-Up India, PM-SVANidhi, PM Vishwakarma – have been sanctioned, it said.

Under the Mudra scheme, 68 per cent of beneficiaries are women and under PM-SVANidhi scheme, 44 per cent of beneficiaries are women, the finance ministry said.

The number of bank branches has gone up from 1,17,990 in March 2014 to 1,60,501 in September 2024. Of 1,60,501 branches, 1,00,686 are in rural and semi-urban (RUSU) areas, it said.

KCC Scheme aims to provide the

short-term crop loan to farmers, it said, adding that the total number of operative KCC Accounts as on September 2024 stood at 7.71 crore with total outstanding of Rs. 9.88 lakh crore.

The Government of India (GoI) has consistently supported the MSME sector in terms of flow of credit at affordable rates through various initiatives, it said.

"The MSME advances registered a CAGR of 15 per cent during the last three years. Total MSME advances as on March 31, 2024 stood at Rs 28.04 lakh crore, posted an annual growth of 17.2 per cent," it said.

The gross advances of scheduled commercial banks, which grew from Rs 8.5 lakh crore to 61 lakh crore during 2004-2014, has significantly increased to Rs 175 lakh crore in March 2024, according to the finance ministry.

Besides, the government has also announced a slew of measures towards welfare of employees working in PSBs.



IIP growth slows to 3.5 per cent in Oct: Govt data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's industrial production (IIP) growth slowed to 3.5 per cent year-on-year in October 2024, mainly due to poor performance of mining, power and manufacturing, as per official data released on Thursday.

The IIP recorded a growth of 11.9 per cent in October 2023, according to a statement by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation.

However, on a sequential basis, the factory output in October 2024 rose to 3.5 per cent from 3.1 per cent in September and a contraction of 0.1 per cent in August this year.

The growth in the factory output, measured in terms of the IIP, in April-October worked out to be 4 per cent against 7 per cent in the year-ago period, the data showed.

As per the data, the mining output growth decelerated to 0.9 per cent in October from 13.1 per cent expansion in the year-ago month.

The manufacturing sector's growth decelerated to 4.1 per cent in October from 10.6 per cent a year ago.

Similarly, in power generation, the output growth slowed sharply to 2 per cent from a 20.4 per cent growth a year ago.

As per use-based classification, the capital goods segment growth decelerated to 3.1 per cent in October 2024 from 21.7 per cent in the year-ago period.

In October this year, consumer non-durables output growth slowed to 2.7 per cent compared to a 9.3 per cent growth in October 2023.

Consumer durable goods production grew by 5.9 per cent during the reporting month against a 15.9 per cent expansion in October 2023.

According to the data, infrastructure/construction goods reported a growth of 4 per cent in October 2024, down from a 12.6 per cent expansion in the year-ago period.

The data also showed that the output of primary goods logged a 2.6 per cent growth in October this year against 11.4 per cent a year earlier.

The expansion in the intermediate goods segment was 3.7 per cent in the month under review, lower than the 9.5 per cent a year ago.

India, UK talks on proposed trade agreement may start in Jan: Official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India and the UK are expected to hold the next round of talks for a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) in January to resolve the pending issues and close the negotiations, a senior official said on Thursday.

The talks for the proposed FTA began in January 2022. The 14th round of talks stalled as the two nations stepped into their general election cycles.

In November, an official statement said that the dates for the FTA talks in early 2025 would be finalised through diplomatic channels. The negotiations would resume the discussions from the progress achieved



previously and seek to bridge the gaps for expeditiously closing the trade deal.

The next round of talks is likely to start at January-end, the official said.

The Indian industry is demanding greater access for

as scotch whiskey, electric vehicles, lamb meat, chocolates and certain confectionary items.

Britain is also looking for more opportunities for UK services in Indian markets in segments like telecommunications, legal and financial services (banking and insurance).

The two countries are also negotiating a bilateral investment treaty (BIT).

There are 26 chapters in the agreement, which includes goods, services, investments and intellectual property rights.

The bilateral trade between India and the UK increased to USD 21.34 billion in 2023-24 from 20.36 billion in 2022-23.



Auto component industry grows 11 per cent to ₹3.32 lakh Crore in Apr-Sept: ACMA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The automotive components industry grew 11 per cent year-on-year to Rs 3.32 lakh crore in the first half of the current fiscal, industry body ACMA said on Thursday.

The turnover of the automotive component industry in the April-September period of last fiscal stood at Rs 2.98 lakh crore.

"With vehicle sales across all segments reaching pre-pandemic levels and despite geopolitical challenges on the exports front, the auto components sector witnessed a steady growth in both domestic and international markets in the first half of FY2024-25," Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India (ACMA) President Shradha Suri Marwah said.

She said the festive season brought significant sales across most segments of the vehicle industry.

"However, reflecting on the past eight months of this fiscal year, while two-wheelers have shown promising growth, sales of passenger vehicles and commercial vehicles have been relatively moderate," she added.

On the exports front, with geological challenges, delivery time and freight costs have once again gone up, Marwah said.

"That said, in value terms,

the industry remains in robust health, signalling stability and resilience amidst evolving market dynamics," she added.

The components industry continues to make investments for purposes of higher value addition, technology upgradation and localisation to stay relevant to both domestic and international customers, Marwah said.

ACMA Director General Vinnie Mehta said that with vehicle sales and exports displaying steady performance, the auto component industry demonstrated a growth of 11.3 per cent scaling a turnover of Rs 3.32 lakh crore in the first half of FY 2024-25.

Auto component supplies to all the segments – OEMs (original equipment manufacturers), exports as also the aftermarket remained steadfast, he added.

Exports grew by 7 per cent to USD 11.1 billion (Rs 93.34 lakh crore) while imports grew by 4 per cent to USD 11 billion (Rs 92.05 lakh crore) with USD 150 million in surplus, the industry body said.

The aftermarket, estimated at Rs 47,416 crore, also witnessed a growth of 5 per cent year-on-year, it added.

Similarly, component supplies to OEMs in the domestic market grew by 11 per cent year-on-year to Rs 2.83 lakh crore, ACMA said.

Cumulative capex of airports expected to grow 12 per cent at ₹60,000 Crore in three years: Report



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The cumulative capex (capital expenditure) of Indian airports is expected to grow 12 per cent at Rs 60,000 crore in the three years through FY27 from Rs 53,000 crore during 2022-2024, to add required infrastructure for about 65 million passengers per annum, ratings agency CRISIL said on Thursday.

CRISIL said 70 per cent of this capex is expected to be funded through debt.

The ratings agency said its projections are based on a study of 11 private airports in the country that account for 60 per cent of the total passenger traffic in FY24.

In addition to the expected growth in passenger traffic, increase in tariffs and spending within the airport ecosystem will lift revenue of private Indian airports at an

average growth rate of 17 per cent between FY25 and FY27, it said.

That, coupled with improved funding access and a predictable regulatory regime, will support the strong credit profiles of private airports.

"The number of passengers at Indian airports is expected to clock a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8-9 per cent over fiscals 2025-2027 from 376 million last fiscal. Growth in domestic traffic, which comprises over 80 per cent of overall volume, will ride on rising demand from the business and leisure segments and government push to increase penetration of air travel," said Manish Gupta, Senior Director and Deputy Chief Ratings Officer, CRISIL Ratings.

As of July 2024, the government had operationalised 84 airports

Retailers urge FM and GST Council not to go for higher 35 per cent tax rate

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Sellers Collective, an umbrella body of trade associations and sellers across the country, has urged the finance minister and the GST Council not to accept some of GST rate rationalisation suggestions, including the proposal for inclusion of a special rate of 35 per cent on some products.

The sellers body is of the view that a fifth GST slab of 35 per cent on demerit goods such as aerated beverages, cigarettes and tobacco, and pricing-based rate structure will materially and fundamentally alter the country's GST framework with devastating outcomes.

These recommendations violate both the letter and the spirit that it will be a 'good and simple tax', Indian Sellers Collective said in a statement on Thursday ahead of the 55th GST Council meeting to be held on December 21, 2024 at Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.

"On the contrary, it will hurt the profit margins of the retailers, lead to compliance nightmares and fuel a parallel economy. This move will primarily benefit Chinese producers who dominate the market of cheap products at



the cost of Indian producers," it said.

All the gains of the GST regime will be wiped out, with permanent damage to the vast age-old retailer network of India, if the GoM recommendations are adopted by the upcoming GST Council meeting, Abhay Raj Mishra, Member and National Coordinator, Indian Sellers Collective, said.

"A 35 per cent tax on demerit goods like tobacco and aerated beverages will exponentially grow their illicit market, and a large number of sellers will move out of the formal economy. A pricing-based rate structure will trigger either manipulation or re-engineering of business models to beat the system. For small and mid-tier sellers, this will mean compliance nightmares and a very high risk of litigation," he said.

Gold rises ₹500 per 10 gm; silver at ₹97,000 per kg

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices climbed Rs 500 to Rs 80,900 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday due to persistent buying by retailers and jewellers, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity finished at Rs 80,400 per 10 grams in the previous trading session. The yellow metal has jumped nearly Rs 2,000 in the past three sessions.

Silver also rallied Rs 700 to Rs 97,000 per kg on Thursday. The white metal settled at Rs 96,300 per kg in the previous session. The price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity also surged Rs 500 to Rs 80,500 per 10 grams. It ended at Rs 80,000 per 10 grams on Wednesday.

According to traders, persistent buying by jewellers and a firm trend in the international markets were among the factors that aided the rally in gold prices.

Meanwhile, in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for February delivery dipped Rs 114 or 0.14 per cent to Rs 78,888 per 10 grams.

Green shoots on consumption growth, food inflation expected to come down: FICCI President

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Green shoots are visible on the consumption front as food inflation has started receding, newly appointed FICCI President Harsha V Agarwal said.

Food inflation is expected to come down to its normal level in the next two quarters, Agarwal said, adding that he is hopeful for a revival in consumption growth, aided by a good crop and increased spending by the government on the big-ticket infra projects and rural schemes in the December quarter.

Government spending in the right areas – like increase in capex and ramping up infrastructure, rather than focusing on revenue expenditure – is helping the

overall economy, he said.

"We are seeing some green shoots where we believe food inflation is coming down... It has to come back to normal. It might take maybe one quarter or so. But we are seeing situations where it is improving, and hence we are hopeful that consumption should increase," Agarwal told PTI.

Government spending in the September quarter was low due to the general elections in the June quarter. However, it increased in the third quarter and is expected to continue in the fourth quarter as well, he said.

"Going forward, we see that increasing in Q3 and substantially in Q4. So cumulatively, with all these things, we are hopeful that

the consumption should improve going from here," he added.

The government is focused a lot on the rural economy, which has done well in the second quarter.

"What we hear is the kharif production is also going to be good this year. So from that perspective, overall, we are quite optimistic from the rural front. And from that is where you know the consumption also is coming and it should increase," said Agarwal.

Food inflation in India has been high in recent months, driven by rising prices of vegetables, fruits, oils, and fats. It has slowed down the consumption in urban areas, impacting purchase from the middle class.



"The government has been doing those kind of tax reforms as and where needed" to boost the consumption, Agarwal said. However, he added, "maybe the salary has not gone up to the extent... That is why they are feeling the pinch."

With cooling of inflation and increase in private investments, demand of

rural and premium products – are doing "much better".

"The challenge is more in the area of the lower middle class, and middle class consumers, where the real hit is. And since the discretionary spend as a percentage is anyway lower, any hit on the inflation has a direct impact," Agarwal said.

However, he was "very hopeful, once the inflation is under control, it should improve and things will be much better".

Over the cement sector, which faced a decline in price in last two quarters YoY, Agarwal said, "their prices might be declining, but still, all the cement companies are making good profit."

He further added it "may be because in the industry now,

consolidation is happening. Some of the larger players are fighting for the market share, etc."

Agarwal said government programmes, such as the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, have made a big difference in some key strategic sectors such as electronic, manufacturing of mobile phones, active pharmaceutical ingredients, etc.

"Going forward, what is important is India should not become like an assembly line... Like in electronics. How do we become self-resilient, even in terms of the components required for making electronics? So that may be another key focus area where the government can extend its PLI," he added.

DEEP DIVE INTO KOLKATA'S PAST



Devasis Chattopadhyay takes you through nine compelling stories of forgotten lives that shaped the cultural and historical history of Kolkata, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**

Harry Hobbs of *Kolkata and Other Forgotten Lives* is a compelling and richly detailed collection of nine meticulously researched stories that uncover the hidden aspects of Kolkata's past, many of which are unknown even to the city's residents and historians. Drawing on obscure and forgotten sources such as dusty old files, yellowed newspapers, private family papers, memoirs, and government archives, this book brings to life the untold stories of Kolkata's lesser-known figures and the city itself.

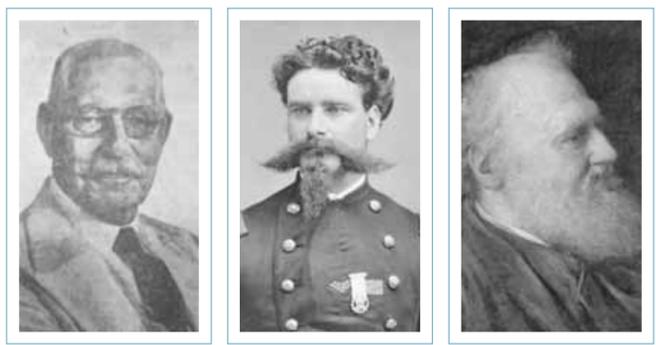
The book deep dives into the fascinating history of Kolkata, providing an unexplored jist of the city's origins. Some historians believe that Kolkata is mentioned in the Mahabharata, while others trace its roots back to the Mauryan and Gupta periods. The author, *Devasis Chattopadhyay*, then traces the transformation of the city into a metropolis, paying particular attention to its growth and changes in the 19th century. This period, marked by significant social, cultural, and economic shifts, is expertly and theoretically woven into the narrative.

Chattopadhyay focuses on the lives of protagonists who were often overlooked by mainstream history as the middle and junior civil or military officials, puisne judges, and a wide array of other fascinating individuals. These

include an opera impresario, an entertainer, a piano tuner, a mercenary, a hotelier, a writer, a publisher, a lawyer, and even a real-life police detective turned crime writer. These characters, often forgotten by history, made remarkable contributions to the fabric of Kolkata during a time of upheaval and change. The book reflects on a significant period of transformation, when Kolkata's unique and syncretic



ABOUT THE BOOK
 Book: Harry Hobbs of Kolkata and Other Forgotten Lives by Devasis Chattopadhyay
 Publisher: Niyogi Books Private Limited
 Price: ₹595 Pages: 316



identity was shaped, in part, by European and American settlers. It was an era when many of the things we now take for granted like the social norms, institutions, and innovations that were still in their infancy. Yet, the individuals featured in the book were instrumental in creating the cultural and historical landscape of the city. *Chattopadhyay's* narrative uncovers these hidden histories, offering a fresh perspective on Kolkata's past.

One of the key figures in the book, Harry Hobbs, is also featured in the author's earlier work *Scoundrels and Scroungers*, where *Hobbs* noted that the principal cause of men's downfall up until the end of the 19th century was drinking. In his writings, he provides intriguing glimpses into a Kolkata of the past the one where European women worked as barmaids and a thriving but largely unspoken subterranean slave trade flourished. This was also a time when wealthy Bengali

Babus kept European concubines, and attending English theatre performances or listening to Italian opera was a common pastime among the city's elite. The book is divided into nine chapters, each focusing on a different historical figure: Major Harry H. Hobbs, The Shakespeare Family, Isaac Henry Townley Roberdeau, Richard Reid, Colonel Percy Wyndham, Shirley Tremearne, Henry Thoby Prinsep, David Nunez Cardozo, and others. Through these vivid and captivating stories, Harry Hobbs of Kolkata and Other Forgotten Lives provides a nuanced and fascinating portrait of Kolkata as a city in transition, shaped by diverse influences and inhabited by characters whose contributions to its rich history have long been forgotten. *Chattopadhyay's* work offers an enriching journey into the heart of Kolkata's past, illuminating the hidden lives that have shaped the city we know today.

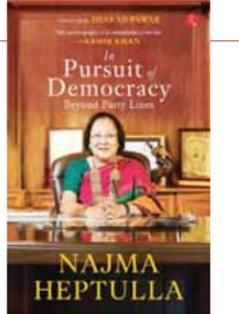
Najma's journey through politics

By **ABHISHEK SONKAR**



Heptulla's writing style is direct and conversational. It feels like she is talking to you, recounting her life over a cup of tea. She avoids heavy political

jargon, making the book a breeze even if you're not well-versed in politics. The narrative flows smoothly between her professional milestones and



ABOUT THE BOOK
 Book: In Pursuit of Democracy: Beyond Party Lines by Najma Heptulla
 Publisher: Rupa Publications
 Price: ₹695

A Transformative Journey

By **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

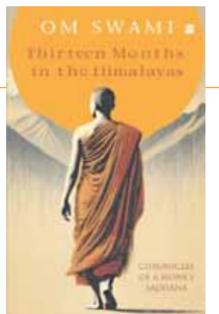
A Transformative Journey of Faith, Endurance, and the Divine Om Swami's *Thirteen Months in the Himalayas* is a spellbinding account of one man's relentless pursuit of spiritual truth and divine connection.

Om Swami's *Thirteen Months in the Himalayas* is an extraordinary account of one man's unwavering pursuit of spiritual truth and divine connection. Following his earlier memoir, 'If Truth Be Told', this book delves deeper into Swami's radical transformation from a successful entrepreneur to an ascetic devoted to discovering the Creator. Written with an almost poetic honesty, it presents a gripping narrative of discipline, endurance, and transcendence.

A Journey of the Soul: The Himalayas serve as more than just the backdrop for Swami's odyssey—they become a central character, mirroring the challenges and revelations of his inner world. The author's detailed descriptions of his austere lifestyle, rigorous sadhanas and encounters with celestial energies immerse readers in his spiritual journey. The book's raw and vivid prose captures the stark beauty of the mountains and the unforgiving nature of the terrain, where every moment is a test of will and faith.

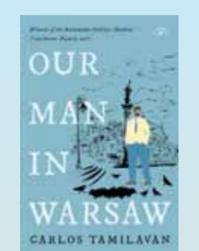
Spiritual Discipline Redefined: What makes this book especially compelling is its depiction of extreme spiritual discipline. Swami's daily routine of meditation, mantras, and fasting is as exhausting to read about as it is inspiring. His ability to persevere through physical deprivation, isolation, and moments of self-doubt speaks to an exceptional strength of spirit. His writing makes you feel the depth of his longing to encounter God, transforming what could have been a remote subject into something deeply relatable. At its core, *Thirteen Months in the Himalayas* is a meditation on faith and purpose. It challenges readers to reflect on their own lives and the sacrifices they are willing to make in pursuit of their truths. The book inspires by showing what is possible when one's commitment to a goal is absolute, even when the goal is as abstract and immense as experiencing the divine.

Accessible Yet Profound: Om Swami's journey is deeply personal, yet its lessons transcend individual experience. This book is a rare gem that inspires introspection, courage and hope. Highly recommended for anyone seeking inspiration to explore the limits of human potential and the boundless nature of the divine.

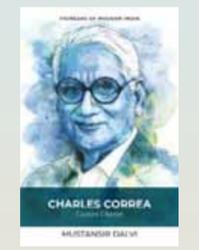


ABOUT THE BOOK
 Book: Thirteen Months in the Himalayas by Om Swami
 Publisher: HarperCollins
 Price: ₹499

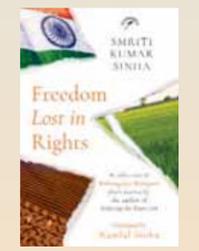
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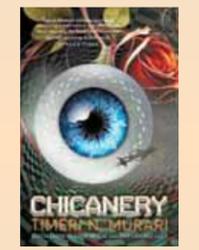
Book: Our Man in Warsaw
 Author: Carlos Tamilavan
 Publisher: Niyogi Books
 Price: ₹595



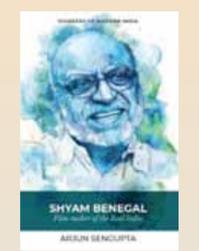
Book: Charles Correa: Citizen Charles
 Author: Mustansir Dalvi
 Publisher: Niyogi Books
 Price: ₹299



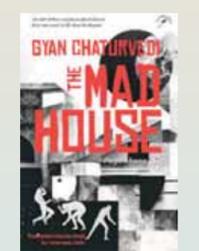
Book: Freedom Lost in Rights
 Author: Smriti Kumar Sinha
 Publisher: Niyogi Books
 Price: ₹395



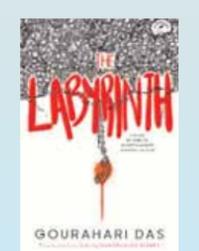
Book: Chicanery
 Author: Timern N. Murari
 Publisher: Niyogi Books
 Price: ₹695



Book: Shyam Benegal: Filmmaker of the real India
 Author: Arjun Sengupta
 Publisher: Niyogi Books
 Price: ₹299



Book: Madhouse: Pagalkhana
 Author: Gyan Chaturvedi
 Publisher: Niyogi Books
 Price: ₹595

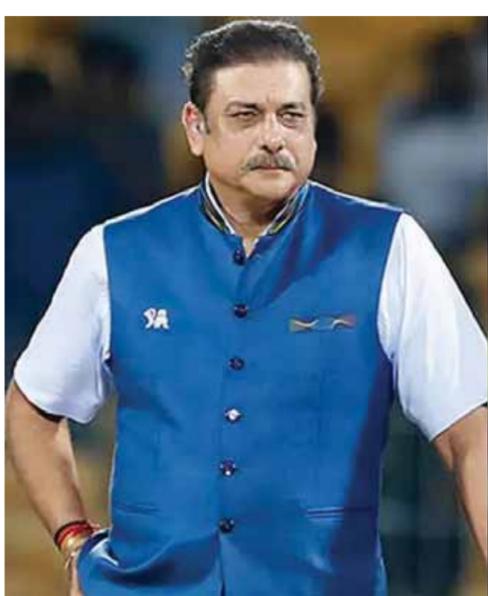


Book: The Labyrinth
 Author: Gourahari Das
 Publisher: Niyogi Books
 Price: ₹295

Rohit must return to opening if he has to throw the first punch: Shastri

PTI ■ BRISBANE

Former India head coach Ravi Shastri, who knows a thing or two about winning Test rubbers in Australia, on Thursday asked India skipper Rohit Sharma to return to the opening slot "if he has to throw the first punch" on an opponent brimming with confidence. Shastri was serving as team director when India won their maiden Test series in Australia in 2017-18 and was the head coach when the side rallied brilliantly to stun the hosts in the last tour in 2020-21. The move to slot Rohit at number six did not yield the desired results for India and they were hammered by 10 wickets in the second Test at Adelaide, leaving the five-match clash locked at 1-1 and with everything to play for in what Shastri believes could decide the fate of the series. "That's where he's (Rohit) been at his best over the last eight or nine years," Shastri was quoted as saying by "The



The triumph of 2021 is considered one of the greatest in the history of Indian cricket and Shastri, while speaking at the first annual Usman Khawaja



Foundation lunch at the Gabba, said the unity showed by the team, despite restrictions due to COVID-19, played a big part in the historic win.

"In COVID, the first Test match you start with five bowlers and the same five bowlers don't play the last Test. That says it all, it's like Australia playing without these five bowlers in the last Test of the series, it's a different ball game. Plus you didn't have quite a few batsmen as well. So it's a tribute to the players. "You can only do so much as a coach from behind the scenes. At the end of it, it's the players who have to go out there and do their job and they were magnificent." Four years ago, after getting bundled out for their lowest Test total of 36 in Adelaide, India made a magnificent comeback to win two of the remaining three games and emerge winners. Shastri fondly recalled a conversation between Rishabh Pant and Shubman Gill, who was helping out the latter with some useful tips right after his dismissal, as India went for the jugular to score 140 odd runs in the final session of play to shock the hosts at the Gabba, which was until then the home team's fortress. "I'll never forget it," Shastri said. "Last session, 140 runs to get. We had two different change rooms because of COVID. I went down from the coaches' room to have a chat with either Rishabh or (Chateshwar) Pujara. When I was about to reach the toilet, I heard a conversation between Gill and Pant. "Seventy-one overs bowled, Gill had got out for 91, and they were the two youngest players in the side, 21 and 22. "Nine overs left, they need the new ball, they'll bring (Marnus) Labuschagne on with his leg spin, you've got to score 45-50 runs there. "They are planning how they can reach closer to the end score, and no way was I going to stop them, I don't want to change that mindset. So I just walked past and said 'do what you have to do'. In the end, we chased down nearly 150 in that last session."



Virat Kohli addresses team ahead of 3rd Test in Brisbane

PTI ■ BRISBANE

He used to be the cynosure of all eyes at training sessions during his captaincy days and Virat Kohli was once again the centre of attention as he addressed his teammates here on Thursday. After the demoralising 10-wicket defeat in the Adelaide day/night game, the visitors needed a bit of inspiration going into the crucial third Test of the series, and the youngsters in the side couldn't have got a better mentor than 'King' Kohli himself to guide them with his words of wisdom. The team huddles before the start of the training session has been a constant feature for years now and Kohli used to do a lot of talking during his days in charge. He did take a back seat once he left captaincy but with skipper Rohit also under immense pressure after four straight defeats, the senior-most player (in terms of Test debut) had to take the initiative ahead of the match starting here on Saturday. With vice-captain Jasprit Bumrah by his side, Kohli was

Gujarat Giants appoint Pravin Tambe as bowling coach; Marsh takes over as batting coach

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Gujarat Giants on Thursday appointed former leg-spinner Pravin Tambe as their bowling coach, while Australian Daniel Marsh joined the side as batting coach ahead of Women's Premier League 2025. Michael Klinger, who joined the team last season, will continue as the Giants' head coach. Tambe, who made his IPL debut at the age of 41 back in 2013 for Rajasthan Royals, brings substantial coaching experience, having worked with Kolkata Knight Riders and Lucknow Super Giants. "I'm eager to work with this talented group of players to sharpen their skills and help



them excel," said Tambe. Marsh carries loads of experience, having served as head coach of the Tasmania men's team from 2013 to 2017 and was appointed as the assistant coach of the Australian women's cricket team in 2022. "I look forward to developing a fearless approach to our batting with the aim of

making our team one of the strongest batting units of the WPL," said Marsh. Ahead of the WPL 2025 auction to be held in Bengaluru on Sunday, the Giants had retained players such as Ashleigh Gardner and Beth Mooney. Gujarat Giants' retained players: Ashleigh Gardner, Beth Mooney, Dayalan Hemalatha, Harleen Deol, Laura Wolvaardt, Shabnam Shakil, Tanuja Kanwar, Phoebe Litchfield, Meghna Singh, Kashvee Gautam, Priya Mishra, Mannat Kashyap, Bharti Fulmali, Sayali Satghare. Released players: Sneha Rana, Kothryn Bryce, Trisha Poojitha, Veda Krishnamurthy, Tarannum Pathan, Lea Tahuu. **PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Prasar Bharati to broadcast Hockey India League

The upcoming Hockey India League, which is being revived after seven years, will be telecast live on the country's national broadcaster, Prasar Bharati. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in this regard was signed in a ceremony between Abhishek Agarwal, Deputy Director General Sports, Prasar Bharati, and Hockey India Secretary General Bhola Nath Singh. Set to commence on December 28 in Rourkela, HIL will be broadcast live across the nation through Doordarshan and Prasar Bharati's new OTT platform -- Waves. This edition of the HIL is path-breaking because it will feature the inaugural season of the women's league alongside the men's competition. While the men's competition will be played in Rourkela, a four-team maiden tournament for the women will be hosted at Ranchi. Navneet Sehgal, chairman Prasar Bharati, emphasised the importance of this partnership. "This is a proud moment for hockey, a sport that has captured the hearts of millions of Indians, and for Prasar Bharati, as we come together to bring the Hockey India League to every corner of the country. Our goal is to showcase this prestigious league to households across India, including remote towns and villages where future hockey stars are emerging. "With Doordarshan's extensive reach and our OTT platform, Waves, we will ensure that the Hockey India League becomes a national celebration, inspiring a deeper connection between the sport and its fans. Together, we aim to elevate hockey's prominence and turn it into a true festival for the entire nation," he said.

Momentum is with Australia after win at Adelaide, says Sunil Gavaskar

PTI ■ BRISBANE

The legendary Sunil Gavaskar feels Australia will have the momentum in the third Test against India starting on Saturday thanks to their victory in the Pink Ball Test at Adelaide last week. Australia levelled the five-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy 1-1 with a 10-wicket win in the day-night Test after losing the first Test at Perth by 295 runs. "The momentum that the Indian team got in Perth was lost during the 10-day gap. Now, the momentum is with Australia because they have won this Test match," Gavaskar told Star Sports. "After the Adelaide Test, a few days later, you are playing at The Gabba. So, the momentum is now with the



Australian team," he added. Speaking to the same channel, former spinner Harbhajan Singh said India should try to play their best cricket to register a win at the 'Gabba' before travelling to more favourable venues in Sydney and Melbourne. "Their best chances will be, I

think, in Sydney and Melbourne. Anyway, if you play your best cricket at The Gabba and win there, then you will definitely win one match out of Melbourne or Sydney," Harbhajan said. He said India have the ability to make a comeback into the series despite the heavy loss in Adelaide. "The equality of the first two Tests shows that both teams have the ability to come back. Australia has come back; now maybe it's India's turn to turn the tables," he said. The owner of 711 international wickets too agreed that the long interval between the first and second Test resulted in India losing the momentum. "This series is tough because both teams have had losses. What happened with Australia in Perth, maybe they didn't expect it. And what happened with India in Adelaide, maybe India also didn't expect it. "Although there was a very long gap in the middle between the two Tests, sometimes such a gap spoils the momentum, and it happened here," he said.

Manchester City crisis deepens with loss to Juventus in Champions League

AP ■ PARIS

Manchester City plunged deeper into trouble in the Champions League by losing 2-0 at Juventus, the latest setback in a scarcely believable run of poor results for the ailing English champions. City dropped to 22nd place in the 36-team standings, with only the top 24 advancing. Progressing to the next round of the new-look format looked a certainty before the season for a team that was European champion in 2023 and has won the last four Premier League titles. But not anymore as City manager Pep Guardiola battles injuries and an apparent loss of belief among his players. City has won just one of its last 10 matches in all competitions, with goals by Dušan Vlahovic and Weston McKennie inflicting the latest defeat and igniting Juventus' qualification hopes. City midfielder Ilkay Gundogan described the team's problem as a "mental issue." Opponents "are able to break our rhythm with the smallest of things," Gundogan said on Wednesday. "They don't even need to do much and it has such a big effect on us right now." Barcelona jumped into second place in the league standings, behind Liverpool, and is guaranteed to advance after a 3-2 win at Borussia Dortmund. Raphinha and Ferran Torres, with two goals, scored for Barca. Arsenal beat Monaco 3-0 mainly thanks to two goals by Bukayo Saka to move into third place and be the highest of six teams on 13 points. The top eight qualify directly for the last 16 and the teams placed No. 9-24 go into a two-legged playoff. Danger for City City has two games to save its faltering Champions League campaign and the first is against Paris Saint-Germain, another giant in trouble in 25th place — one spot out of the qualifying positions. Vlahovic put Juventus ahead in the 53rd when he powered a header goalward straight at City goalkeeper Ederson, who could only parry the ball over his own line. Two American substitutes



sealed the win for Juve, with McKennie volleying home from Timothy Weah's cross. Juventus moved into 14th place. Super-sub Torres Ferran Torres came off the bench to inspire Barcelona to a fifth win in six games and push Dortmund, last season's runner-up, out of the top eight. Torres came on in the 71st to replace Robert Lewandowski, who had a quiet game against his former club. Just four minutes

Raphinha gave Barcelona the lead before Guirassy equalised from the penalty spot. Raphinha and Guirassy are tied for second place in the scoring chart on six goals, behind Lewandowski's competition-high seven. Home comforts for Arsenal Arsenal secured a third straight home win without conceding in the league stage, with Saka scoring in the 34th and 78th minutes and sending in a shot that was turned into the net by substitute Kai Havertz in the 88th. Arsenal is ahead of Bayer Leverkusen, Aston Villa, Inter Milan, Brest and Lille on goal difference. Lille won 3-2 at home to Sturm Graz on Wednesday. In-form Alvarez Man City could sure do with Julian Alvarez at the moment. With a brilliant curling finish to open the scoring, the Argentina striker helped Atletico Madrid beat Slovan Bratislava 3-1 and provide a timely reminder of what City is missing after selling him for more than USD 100 million in August. Alvarez has 12 goals for the season, with four coming in the Champions League. Antoine Griezmann scored

Atletico's other two goals at Metropolitan stadium as the Spanish team climbed to 11th place after a 10th straight win in all competitions. Tribute to grieving teammate When Lukasz Lakomy gave Young Boys the lead against Stuttgart, he ran toward the sideline and held up teammate Meschack Elia's jersey as others gathered around him. The gesture was a tribute after Elia's son died unexpectedly this week after a short illness. Elia wasn't playing as he was on his way to his native Congo, where his son died, to be with his family. Both teams wore black armbands and there was a moment of silence before the game, which was won 5-1 by Stuttgart. Late winner Tammy Abraham scored an 87th-minute winner as AC Milan beat Red Star Belgrade 2-1 to move one point off the top eight. Milan lost Alvaro Morata and Ruben Loftus-Cheek to muscle injuries in the first half. Benfica's five-match winning streak ended with a 0-0 home draw against Bologna, and Feyenoord had a 4-2 win over Sparta Prague.