



# 40 lakh ghost ration card holders found so far 'Increase age limit to 43 years for UR candidates'

**Reveals Minister Patra**  
**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
There are more than 40 lakh ghost ration card holders in Odisha, informed Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra on Friday.



Speaking to the media, he said there are at least 1 lakh to 1.5 lakh ghost beneficiaries in each district.

"During eKYC, it was found that each district has 1 lakh to 1.5 lakh ghost ration card holders. So far, more than 40 lakh ghost ration card holders have been found," Patra said.

6,19,836 applications for new ration cards under the food security scheme in the State. The government has reportedly fixed 10 parameters for enrolment and issuance of new ration cards.

**Appeal govt job aspirants to CM**  
**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
A large number of aspirants of various competitive examinations have requested the Odisha Government to enhance the appearance age limit to 43 years for unreserved (UR) category candidates.

In a memorandum addressed to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, the aspirants have stated that the inordinate delay in filling government vacancies by the previous government has led to a situation where examination results were declared after four to five years, causing many aspirants to exceed the eligible age limit.

## Manmohan had special links with Odisha

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
The family of former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, who passed away in New Delhi on Thursday night, has notable connections to Odisha, underscored by family ties and personal visits.



This apart, Dr Singh was a huge admirer of Odisha, the land of Jagannath, and was attracted to Odisha's food, traditions and customs. He had visited Odisha both before and after taking the office of PM.

## Odisha Research Conclave held at FM University



**PNS ■ BALESWAR**  
The 4th Odisha Research Conclave (ORC) commenced at the New Campus of Fakir Mohan University here on Thursday with the theme 'Unveiling the Future: A Showcase of Cutting-Edge Research and Innovation'.

Prof Tripathy thanked the Government of Odisha for choosing the FM University for this auspicious congregation. He emphasised qualitative and value education along with the regional place-based researches, for instance, 'Dhana-Pana-Mina'.

## Govt to generate 75,000 jobs in 2 yrs: CM



**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
The Odisha Government would generate as many as 75,000 jobs in various sectors within two years, announced Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Friday.

## In Phulbani MLA's car set on fire in Circuit House premises



**PNS ■ PHULBANI**  
Unidentified miscreants on Thursday set fire to Phulbani BJP MLA Umma Charan Malik's vehicle and a couple of two-wheelers in the premises of the Circuit House in Phulbani. The MLA's vehicle was damaged in the arson.

## Will BJD crumble and Naveen be left alone?

**Intra-party rifts come to fore in several places**  
**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
The BJD is witnessing an unsettling fragmentation of its political landscape in several regions such as Paradip, Jatni in Khordha, Simulia in Baleswar, and Korei in Jajpur.



who have defected from the BJD. The defections have intensified internal divisions, particularly apparent during the BJD's foundation day celebrations in Jatni.

office. This comes amidst a flurry of political activity as leaders and their supporters navigate shifting alliances and agendas in the region.

## In city Woman found hanging in house

**Family alleges foul play; hubby detained**  
**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

A woman was found hanging under suspicious circumstances in her residence in the Patia area under the Infocity police station in Bhubaneswar on Friday.

# DAV CSpur alumni assn holds meet IIT-BBS's convocation fest today

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
The Alumni Association of DAV Public School, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar (DAVAA) organised its 29th annual meet, MILAAP - 2024 in the school premises recently.



The former students exchanged pleasantries and shared their school days with nostalgia. The association decided to honour the budding athletes from both the cam-

puses, felicitate the teachers who completed 25 years of continuous services or were superannuated from the school, organise socially useful activities, enrich the

alumni fund and facelift the newsletter Alumzine. Among others, association president Prateek Sinha, vice president Anita Dash, secretary Preetam Raj Swain,

treasurer Dipti Shukla and office bearers of the School Cabinet coordinated the event. The meet also witnessed quizzing and cultural programmes.

**Degrees for 1,388 students for two academic years**  
**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar is all set to celebrate its 12th and 13th Combined Convocation on December 28.



Addressing a Press conference, institute Director Prof Shreepad Karmalkar said Union Minister of Education, Dharmendra Pradhan will grace the occasion as the chief guest and will deliver the convocation address.

# Man trampled by elephant to death in S'pur

**NIMAI CHARAN SAHU ■ SAMBALPUR**  
A 55-year-old man died following an attack by a tusker in Badakuda village under the Badbahal Forest Range in the district around 11 am on Friday.  
The deceased, identified as Bipin Behera, had gone to his farmland near the village for the grazing of goats.  
Following the incident, locals and the victim's family gathered at the site and agitated against the forest staffs.  
The Forest Department negligence has been cited as a major concern. Villagers allege that officials and guards often leave the range during evenings, failing to monitor elephant movements. "The department has ignored our safety despite repeated complaints about the increasing elephant activity," said Kartik Behera, a villager.  
Badbahal Range Officer Prajnya Paramita Deep said, "The incident was very unfortunate. The allegations they are making are false; my staffs have been doing their

duty 24/7. It was a single elephant coming from the Athmallik forest. The incident happened in a fraction of a second as the elephant started walking at a speed. As per my information, the deceased had hearing issues."  
She added, "We have promised the family the government compensation of Rs 6 lakh after the official process of the postmortem report and investigation. Also, an immediate compensation of Rs 10,000 from the Red Cross fund will be sanctioned soon."

# In Brahmapur Electric vehicle showroom gutted in mishap

**PNS ■ BRAHMAMAPUR**  
A major fire broke out at an electric vehicle showroom near Reddy Garage Square in Brahmampur on Friday, causing significant damages to the two-storied building and the vehicles housed within.  
The blaze, which was suspected to have been caused by an electrical short circuit, erupted suddenly, engulfing the premises in flames. Many vehicles, including both two-wheelers and four-wheelers, were severely damaged in the mishap. Firefighters were promptly dispatched to the scene to extinguish the fire and ensure the safety of the area. The quick response by the fire brigade helped in containing the blaze and preventing further damages.  
As per the latest report, effort was underway to extinguish the fire fully. It was getting difficult to douse the fire completely due to the heavy smoke emanating from the building.  
Investigations were ongoing to ascertain the exact cause of the fire. Local authorities have urged nearby businesses to review their fire safety measures to prevent fire mishaps. Fortunately, no casualties were reported in this incident.



The fire at the electric vehicle showroom in Brahmampur was extinguished after a few hours. The damage to the building and vehicles is significant.

# ASI found hanging from tree in N'rangpur

**PNS ■ NABARANGPUR**  
An Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) of Police was found hanging from a tree near the Raisingh Jodi canal at Mangaradara area under the Tentulikhunti police station in Nabarangpur district on Friday.  
The deceased was identified as Renu Prasad Pradhan of the Tentulikhunti police station. Pradhan was last seen on duty on September 23, when he set out for Nabarangpur but did not return. He was wearing the end of his career with his superannuation only two months away.  
Authorities have yet to ascertain the circumstances surrounding his death. Police officials have launched an investigation into the incident.  
"ASI Pradhan had last talked with his wife at around 9.30 am on Monday. Then, his mobile phone was switched off. Subsequently, his body was found hanging from a tree in a forest. From the preliminary probe, it is suspected that Pradhan might have committed suicide. However, it could only be ascertained following a postmortem and a thorough probe into the incident," said Nabarangpur SDPO Krushnachandra Bhatara.

# In Ganjam Couple held over series of temple thefts



**PNS ■ BRAHMAMAPUR**  
A couple was arrested by police in Ganjam district for allegedly stealing cash from donation boxes and other valuables of temples.  
As per reports, the couple, who was on a scooter, was intercepted at Keshpur Square along National Highway-16 during a routine vehicle check by the Khallikote police.  
As per sources, the accused, identified as residents of Rambha, had been masquerading as devotees but with a motive to commit the thefts. Following their arrest, the couple confessed to their involvement in the thefts.  
Police seized Rs 30,000 in cash, gold ornaments, two silver chains and one of the stolen donation boxes from their possession. They admitted targeting temples in the Khallikote, Keshpur and Rambha areas.  
"Following regular thefts at temples in the Khallikote area, we carried out an investigation and got a CCTV video footage in the process. We found a couple riding a scooter from the footage. We became suspicious of them and intensified our investigation. After they were detained and interrogated, they confessed their crime," said Chhatrapur SDPO Gourahari Sahu.  
"The couple has admitted to thefts at three temples in the Khallikote area and one temple in Rambha area," he added.

# 'Withdraw notification for online delivery of drugs'

**PNS ■ BRAHMAMAPUR**  
The Ganjam and Phulbani Chemists' and Druggists' Association (GPCDA) has threatened to intensify its agitation with 12.40 lakh members if the government does not revoke a notification, GSR 220 (E), issued during the Covid-19 pandemic permitting pharma companies/medicine shops to deliver medicines at the doorsteps of the consumers.  
The AIOCD which represents all chemists and distributors of the States across India has written a letter to the Secretary, Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for the third time appealing to revoke the notification published in March 2020, on the pretext that it was being grossly misused.  
The notification was issued only under circumstances wherein the movement of public was restricted due to the Covid pandemic threat. Moreover, supply of medicines was allowed on conditions laid down under section 26-B of the Drugs Act to regulate the manufacture, sale and distribution of medicines. Under the above rule, the door-step delivery of medicines was allowed and the requirement to stamp the prescription for the sale of medicines under Rule-65 was temporarily set aside only under special circumstances, said the president of GPCDA Bishnu Prasad Panda and secretary P Satyanarayana in a joint Press release here on Monday.  
Keeping the misuse of illegal online platforms and threat to public health in mind, the AIOCD urged upon the Central Government to immediately withdraw the notification in public interest. Similarly, AIOCD president JS Shinde and general secretary Rajiv Singhal also said that the main purpose of the notification was to deliver medicines at the door steps only in emergency situations through local chemists which is being misused by Swiggy and several such digital platforms to deliver medicines at home without following necessary regulatory safety measures.  
Now, the AIOCD, UCDA, and GPCDA demanded for withdrawal of the government notification required to maintain public health and safety.

# Atal statue unveiled in Brahmampur

**PNS ■ BRAHMAMAPUR**  
Marking the 100th birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna and former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a grand statue of the statesman was unveiled at Ramalingeswar Park in Brahmampur on Sunday.  
The unveiling ceremony was led by BJP State president Manmohan Samal, who lauded Vajpayee's visionary leadership in promoting peace and harmony globally.  
Speaking on the occasion, Samal said that Vajpayee's sole objective was to establish love and friendship among nations and foster global peace. He announced that the BJP has resolved to commemorate Vajpayee's legacy throughout the year by spreading his ideals in households, schools, colleges, and villages across the State.  
Brahmampur MP Dr Pradeep Kumar Panigrahy emphasized the significance of realizing Vajpayee's dreams of good governance, unity, and progress, urging everyone to draw inspiration from his life.  
Brahmapur MLA K Anil Kumar presided over the event, which also saw the presence of Chhatrapur MLA Krishna Nayak, Chikiti MLA Manoranjan Dyansamantaray, former Deputy Speaker Ramachandra Panda, and several senior BJP leaders.  
Notable attendees included State spokesperson T Gopi, former MLA Siba Sahani, State executive member Babita Patra, and prominent BJP leaders Saroj Sabat, Bishnu Subudhi, Ashok Shukla, Pradeep Nayak, and Gauri Samantaray. The event also saw participation from BJP mayoral candidate Sabita Souar and several other senior leaders and party activists.  
Despite continuous rain, a large number of Brahmampur residents gathered to witness the ceremony. The swift and meticulous installation of the statue drew widespread praise, with MLA Anil Kumar receiving accolades from various sections of the public for his efforts.



# DA case: Vig arrests Koraput ARI 17 plots, Rs 84L bank deposits detected

**PNS ■ KORAPUT**  
The Vigilance police on Friday arrested Surendra Kumar Tanti, an Assistant Revenue Inspector (ARI) posted at Borigumma Tehsil of Koraput district, after detecting massive assets amassed allegedly beyond his known income sources.  
The arrest came a day after the Vigilance officials conducted simultaneous raids on the properties of Tanti at several places in Borigumma.  
The Vigilance officials detected three double-storied houses in Borigumma. They also detected 17 plots, bank deposits amounting to Rs 84 lakh and various luxury items in the names of Tanti and his family members.  
Further enquiries disclosed the possession of 150 grams of gold, cash totalling Rs 1.5 lakh and three four-wheelers.



# NAAC Peer Team visits Govindpur College

**SUGYAN CHOUDHURY ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
A NAAC Peer Team visited the Govindpur College, Govindpur, Cuttack, last week for the 1st Cycle Accreditation by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, Bengaluru.  
The three-member team was led by Prof K Sabukuttan, former Professor, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala as the Chairperson and also comprised Prof Nangomaihem Rokendra Singh as Member Coordinator and Dr Subash Bhadange, former Principal, Sri Shivaji College of Arts, Commerce & Science, Akila, Maharashtra.  
The college was put under scanner by the team in the seven-criterion matrixes like Technical Learning & Evaluation, Research, Innovation and Extension, Infrastructure and learning resource, student support and progression, grievances leadership and management and institutional values and best practices.  
The team was accorded a warm ovation by Principal Kailash Chandra Das, Chairman of PG Council Dr Gagan Beura along with IQAC Coordinator Subhankar Mohanty and members Dr Ratnakar Ray, Dr Pradipta Ku Panda, former Secretary of GB Kalandi Chandra Paikaray and former president of GB management and institutional values and best practices.  
The team undertook a microscopic and a macroscopic verification of the college beginning with Administrative Departments, Accounts, Admission, Results, Examination System, Library and Reading Room facilities, provisions for students amenities, sports facilities, social extension services and outreach programmes both by the teachers and students, availability of free wi-fi in the campus, adoptability of new technologies, innovation and incubation centres.  
They interacted directly with all stakeholders like HODs of all teaching and non-teaching departments, conducted several meetings with the present students, meeting with parents and guardians, discussions with alumni of the college. Besides, Prof Dr Rudra Narayan Mohapatra, HOD, PG Department of Odia, Utkal University and Dr. Pareswar Sahu of Utkal University along with GB members also joined the NAAC team and took part in the discussion at the luncheon meeting.  
The members of team expressed their satisfaction in many fronts while suggesting remedial measures for improvement in certain other sectors. The team was highly impressed by the cultural extravaganza performed by the students of the college.  
In their second day inspection, the NAAC members examined the extension and the outreach programme by directly interacting with residents of a nearby Tardapada village and were appraised of the constructive endeavours of the NSS unit of the college that rendered a yeoman's job starting from the Covid pandemic times till date and were overwhelmed.  
The team submitted their final report after which a farewell meeting was held by the college authorities on the concluding day. A wave of joyous enthusiasm pervaded the college as the team announced the accreditation of the first cycle of NAAC. The Principal of the college extended a vote of thanks to the team on behalf of all stakeholders.



# Inter Xavier's Talent Competition held in B'pur

**RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAMAPUR**  
The Inter Xavier's Talent Competition, held for three days at the St Xavier's High School campus in Brahmampur concluded with the school's annual celebration on Tuesday. The final day saw participation from students of Xavier's Schools across Odisha, including Ganjam, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.  
Various competitions were held, with distinguished judges such as Sabana Das, Smriti Panda, Abha Panigrahi, Ashok Brahma, Karisma Khan, Yamini Kant Das, Dr Bandita Panda and Professor Agni Behera, playing key roles.  
On the second day of the event, prominent guests included Minister Nityananda Gond, BeMC Mayor Sanghamitra Dalai, Xavier's Director Dr PC Mohanty, CEO Mukesh Saraf, Secretary Priyambada Das and School Principal Professor KC Panda.  
On the third and final day, the chief guest was DIG of South Odisha, Dr Sarthak Sarangi. Honourable guests included Ollywood Superstar Shubhasish Sharma, singer Anuradha Panigrahi, Sahitya Akademi awardee Susmita Das and international trainer B Ramesh Pattnaik, among others.  
The event began with a welcome speech by school director Dr Gauri Shankar Panda, followed by an introduction to the event by chairman and event coordinator Dr GS Pattnaik. Master of Ceremonies Kunal Kaushik Panda provided insights into the event's objectives.  
All faculty members, staff and students contributed to the success of the event. Cultural programmes followed.

# In Baleswar Rs 3L looted and spent in playing PUBG

**PNS ■ BALESWAR**  
Police on Thursday uncovered a unique case where the perpetrators used money stolen from a medical shop to fund their online gaming activities, especially through PUBG.  
Based on the complaint of the shop owner, police launched a probe. During the investigation, they apprehended two individuals linked to the crime. Upon their arrest, the cops recovered several items, including Rs 2,63,700 in cash, four mobile phones, a motorcycle and other materials.  
During questioning, the accused admitted to having spent approximately Rs 30,000 of the stolen money on online gaming and indulging in other activities.  
Baleswar SP Raj Prasad said, "The accused had deposited Rs 2,58,000 in a Canara Bank account, lent Rs 5,000 to someone and lost Rs 30,000 in the online game PUBG."  
The thieves reportedly accessed the premises by breaking through the skylight to decamp with Rs 3 lakh.  
The incident came to light after a theft from a medical store owned by one Siddhartha Sarathi Das in Nialibag area under the Sahadevkhunta police on December 18.

# In Kandhamal Minor girl rape accused gets 20-yr RI

**PNS ■ PHULBANI**  
Phulbani Special Judge POCSO Court Rajesh Dash on Thursday, after hearing a minor girl rape case, on the basis of the statements of 12 witnesses and the medical report of the victim, convicted the accused Mahasek Mutha Majhi and sentenced him to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) and a fine of Rs 45,000.  
The fine is non-refundable and he shall have to undergo an additional 11 months in jail, the judge said in his verdict.  
The court also directed the Legal Services Authority to pay Rs 5 lakh as compensation to the victim.  
According to the information, a complaint had been filed at the Kotgarh police station in Kandhamal district on 8/5/2018 by the victim's family. According to the complaint, the Kotgarh police registered a case and arrested Mahasek Mutha Majhi, who was tried in the court.  
The judge pronounced the verdict after hearing the case, which was handled by the government's Special Public Prosecutor Asim Parharaj.



# 56 Cyber warriors to digitally safeguard devotees at Mahakumbh

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The Yogi Adityanath government has implemented comprehensive cyber security measures to protect devotees attending the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj. To ensure the digital safety of an estimated 45 crore attendees, including international visitors, a team of 56 specially trained cyber warriors has been deployed. Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rajesh Dwivedi, under the Chief Minister's directives, is overseeing the "Digital Mahakumbh" initiative, which aims to tackle cybercrime through a detailed action plan. Special cyber help desks are being established in all 56 police stations across Mahakumbh Nagar. These help desks will be staffed by experts conducting round-the-clock cyber patrolling to prevent fraud and ensure a secure environment. Awareness campaigns are being launched to educate devotees about potential



cyber threats. Films explaining cybersecurity measures will be displayed on 40 Variable Messaging Displays (VMDs) strategically installed across the fairgrounds and commissionerates. Social media platforms like Facebook, X, and Instagram, along with advanced AI tools, are being leveraged to disseminate information and alerts, ensuring devotees remain vigilant against cybercriminals. A dedicated cyber police station has been set up to address threats from fake

websites, fraudulent links, and other cyber scams. Devotees can report suspicious activities, and prompt action will be taken. The government has also introduced a helpline number, 1920, for inquiries and support related to the Mahakumbh. Attendees are advised to rely on government websites with the ".gov.in" domain for authentic information, while any fake websites can be reported to local police. As part of its pre-emptive measures, the state's cyber team has identified around 50

suspicious websites, and action against these is already underway. Mobile cyber teams have also been deployed to raise awareness among devotees and address online threats on a real-time basis. SSP Rajesh Dwivedi emphasized that the integration of technology with security will ensure a safe experience for all attendees. He added that the government's efforts, including setting up cyber help desks, screening informational films, and taking strict action against cybercriminals, are aimed at making this Mahakumbh a seamless and secure event for devotees. This year's Mahakumbh is not only envisioned as a grand spiritual gathering but also a high-tech event, where tradition and modernity come together. With these measures, the Yogi government has set a benchmark for ensuring digital safety in large-scale religious gatherings, making this Mahakumbh a model for future events.

# Didi wants to remove Suvendu thorn before polls, says BJP leader Arjun

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Senior Bengal BJP leader Sand former Barrackpore MP Arjun Singh has refused to budge from his stated position accusing Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of harbouring fundamentalist elements in the State for pursuing her vote bank politics. Singh who was on Friday summoned by the State Police but evade appearance at the Jagaddal Police Station in North 24 Parganas reiterated his stance on Friday saying he had only expressed his views regarding the threat perception on State Opposition Leader Suvendu Adhikari accusing the Chief Minister of allowing fundamentalist elements to carve out dens in the State. Singh had earlier said that "Mamata Banerjee has joined hands with the jihadi elements in order to get rid of her political opponents ... she wants to eliminate Suvendu Adhikari before the 2026 Assembly elections ... because she knows that once she can do that her road to victory will be clear."



Singh's statement came almost in tandem with central intelligence reports that some extremist groups of Bangladesh were making plans to attack Adhikari for his "plain speak" against the fundamentalist elements who were daydreaming of dismembering India. Adhikari however said that if there was any threat from the organizations like Lashkar e Toiba or Harkat ul Mujahideen then the people of Bengal and India would protect him. "I was earlier attacked by the CPIM and TMC ... now I hear that the terrorist outfits are targeting me but the peo-

ple of Bengal have always responded against such actions ... Let the subversive activists do their job, and I will do mine... and if there is an attack then the people will give a reply," he said. Referring to the recent arrests of terror moles from Murshidabad and South 24 Parganas --- by the Assam and Jammu and Kashmir Police --- and subsequent revelations that they had acquired aadhar cards, pan cards and even passports and voter ID cards, Singh said that mos4t of the civic volunteers who had been appointed to assist the police by the Trinamool Congress

Government were members of Jamaat. "You will find Jamaat terrorists in every police station. Ninety percent of the civic volunteers who check our passports are Jamaat supporters ... it is unfortunate that the Assam Police are capturing terrorists in Bengal. They work for the country whereas the Bengal Police only work for the State and the party," Singh said. Subsequently a police complaint was filed against the former Barrackpore MP by a local TMC leader who alleged that Singh's defamatory comments had blemished the Chief Minister's image and caused injury to her. Meanwhile, Bengal Minister Firhad Hakim once again accused Singh and other BJP leaders for trying to malign the Mamata Banerjee Government saying there was no terrorist in Bengal. "There is no terrorist in Bengal ... it is the ploy of these BJP leaders who have been repeatedly defeated in the elections to malign the TMC Government," he said.

# Former SPG commando recalls Manmohan Singh's love for Maruti 800

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

In a heartfelt tribute, Asim Arun, a former IPS officer and Special Protection Group (SPG) commando during Manmohan Singh's tenure as Prime Minister, reminisced about the late leader's deep attachment to his humble Maruti 800, a reflection of his unassuming nature and middle-class roots. Now an MLA from Uttar Pradesh's Kannauj Sadar, Arun took to social media platform X to share his memories following Singh's demise at the age of 92 on Thursday night at AIIMS Delhi. Arun's poignant post captured the simplicity that defined Singh's personality, even during his time as the head of the nation. Reflecting on his time as Singh's bodyguard from 2004 onwards, Arun wrote, "Dr. Singh owned just one car—a modest Maruti 800. It was always parked behind the shiny BMWs at the Prime Minister's residence. Despite the grandeur surrounding him, his heart remained with his Maruti." Singh often expressed his longing for the car, Arun recalled. "He would say to me, 'Asim, I don't like traveling in this car (BMW); my vehicle is this one (the Maruti).' I would explain that the BMW was equipped with essential security features, but whenever the convoy passed the Maruti, he would look at it fondly, as if reaffirming his identity as



a middle-class person who cared deeply for the common man." Asim Arun also shed light on the unique role he played in Singh's life during those years. "The SPG provides the closest security for the Prime Minister. As Assistant Inspector General of the Close Protection Team, I was never far from him. If only one bodyguard was allowed, it would be me. My responsibility was to stay with him like a shadow," Arun wrote. Singh, known for his humility, intellect, and calm demeanor, served as India's Prime Minister from 2004 to 2014 and was widely celebrated as the architect of India's economic liberalization during his tenure as finance minister in 1991. "His attachment to the Maruti 800 wasn't just about nostalgia—it reflected the essence of who he was: a leader deeply rooted in simplicity and a

beacon of hope for the middle class," Arun added. Manmohan Singh's passing has left a wave of mourning across the country, but stories like these ensure his legacy of humility and service to the nation will endure for generations. Meanwhile, Uttar Pradesh government has declared a seven-day state mourning to honor the demise of former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, who passed away on Thursday night at AIIMS, New Delhi, at the age of 92. The mourning period will commence on December 26 and continue until January 1, 2025. During this period, the national flag will fly at half-mast across government buildings in the state, and no entertainment programs will be organized by the state government, as per official orders issued on Friday.

# Panjab University organised condolence meet to pay homage to alumnus Manmohan

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Panjab University Friday organised a condolence meeting to pay homage to former prime minister and distinguished alumnus Dr Manmohan Singh. The gathering was attended by Vice Chancellor Prof Renu Vig, Registrar Y P Verma and faculty and other staff. During the meeting, tributes were paid to Singh, as attendees reflected on his contributions to the nation and his association with the university. Another condolence meeting was also organised jointly by the Department of Economics and the Panjab University Alumni Association. Manmohan Singh did his Master's in Economics in 1954 from the university and came first in his class. He was a Senior Lecturer (1957-1959), Reader in Economics (1959-1963) and Professor of Economics (1963-1965) at PU. A Chair was established after him in the department. Smita Sharma, Associate Professor and chairperson of the Economics Department at PU, remembered him as the architect of economic reforms in the country. Sharma, who also studied at PU, showed the media the room where Singh used to sit with other faculty.



She said her teacher Prof V K Gupta was Manmohan Singh's student at the university. "Dr Singh is our university's most distinguished alumnus," she said. Former Union Minister and Congress' sitting MP from Chandigarh, Manish Tewari said his association with Manmohan Singh goes back to the time when his parents and the ex-PM were neighbours in Panjab University here. "He knew me almost from the day I opened my eyes in this world," Tewari said. "How strange are the ways of God. I was supposed to call on him tomorrow (Saturday) in the morning," Tewari posted on X, "Soft Spoken, Erudite, intelligent but firm he was an inspiration for millions of young people for whom he opened up

the doors of opportunity with the Economic liberalisation in 1991," he said. Tewari said through all these years he shared a personal relationship with him and also served as the Union Minister of Information & Broadcasting in his government. "I recall anchoring his Mega Press Conference on 3rd January 2014 where he gave an exhaustive overview of his 10 years as Prime Minister," said Tewari. Former Union Minister Pawan Kumar Bansal said Singh used to have a free discussion with his cabinet colleagues and used to encourage junior colleagues a lot. Bansal, a Congress leader and former MP from Chandigarh, recalled former US President Barack Obama once saying: "If there were to be

five leaders like Dr Manmohan Singh in the world, it would be a different world." Bansal said the nation will always be indebted to Singh for turning around the economy. "I had the privilege to work in his councils of ministers. A great administrator, he was a superb human being with unparalleled humility," he said. Former Punjab deputy chief minister and Congress leader O P Soni also paid tributes to Manmohan Singh. "I had met him three to four months ago at his Delhi home. He had so much love for Amritsar and Punjab. When he was PM, we got so much work done for Amritsar, its industry," Soni said. When asked if Amritsar is also known for its rich food, did Singh, who spent his childhood days in the holy city, have any preference for any local dish, Soni said, "he always preferred to have simple food. However, he used to love Sarson Ka Saag." Soni, who lives in the central part of Amritsar, said, "when my father passed away in 2015, he visited my house to offer condolence". Manmohan Singh, the architect of India's economic reforms, passed away on Thursday night at Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). He was 92.

# Manmohan was against corruption, says Anna Hazare

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Anti-graft activist Anna Hazare on Friday condoled the death of former prime minister Manmohan Singh and said he was against corruption. Hazare, who had led a massive agitation against corruption during Singh's tenure in the early 2010s, said the former PM took swift decisions concerning his demands for the Lokpal and Lokayukta Act. "Those who are born have to die, but some leave memories and their legacy behind. Singh gave a new direction to the country's economy," Hazare told PTI in his native village Ralegan Siddhi in Maharashtra's Ahilyanagar district. Recalling his protests against graft in the government led by Singh, the octogenarian activist said the former PM invited him for talks and took quick decisions. "He was against corruption and took immediate decisions regarding the Lokpal and Lokayukta Act. He always thought about the country and how best he could work for its people," Hazare said. He always prioritised the welfare of the country and society, said the activist.

# Gurugram Police Crime Branch arrests for killing youth over dispute

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

A crime branch team of the Gurugram police have arrested four accused for allegedly killing a 19-year-old youth over a dispute over a mobile phone, police said. The victim was identified as Ashish a resident of Bhangrola village of Gurugram, who was an auto driver. The accused have been identified as Brijesh alias Rinku, Umesh alias Nahne Arvinder Kumar, all residents of Uttar Pradesh, and Siyasan Sahu alias Sibbu of Madhya Pradesh. According to the police, on December 22, they received information that a body of a person was lying in the water filled in the green belt of Dwarka Expressway near the village of Harsaru. On receiving the information, the police team reached the spot and discovered the body. The spot was also inspected by the police's scene-of-crime, FSL and fingerprint teams. "After inspection of the deceased and the spot, efforts were made by the police team to identify the deceased, as a result of which the deceased was identified as Ashish," Varun Dahiya, ACP (crime) said.

The deceased's father told the police through a written complaint that his son Ashish used to drive an auto on rent. His son had injury marks on his head and his neck was tied with a muffler. Some unknown person has murdered his son. Based on his complaint, a case was registered under the relevant sections in Sector-10 police station, Gurugram. During interrogation, a police team of Inspector Jagveer Singh, Incharge Crime Branch Palam Vihar, Gurugram, nabbed the accused on Thursday from Kankarola Road, Gurugram. During police interrogation, it was found that the accused lived on rent in Kankarola. Brijesh was acquainted with Ashish, the deceased. "Ashish had forcibly taken the mobile phone of accused Brijesh. After this, on the night of December 21 and 22, Brijesh, along with his other companions, went to meet Ashish in Bhangrola village, and there they had an altercation with Ashish. After this, the accused hit Ashish on the head with a brick and put him in the auto and strangled him with a muffler and killed Ashish and threw the body in the green belt of Dwarka Expressway and fled," Dahiya said.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

## A silent crusader

Dr Manmohan Singh a reluctant politician yet a resilient leader and a gentleman is no more but his legacy lives on

The man with the vision and selfless dedication to the nation, Dr Manmohan Singh is no more. Dr Singh passed away on December 26, 2024, at the age of 92. Dr Singh, a towering figure in Indian politics and economics, breathed his last at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. His demise marks the end of an era defined by humility, intellect and steadfast dedication to nation-building. Dr Manmohan Singh's contributions to India's economic and political landscape are unparalleled. Widely regarded as the architect of India's 1991 economic reforms, Singh's tenure as Finance Minister under Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao was transformative. At a time when the Indian economy teetered on the brink of bankruptcy, Singh introduced a series of bold measures that liberalised the economy, dismantled the license raj and opened the doors to foreign investment. These reforms not only rescued India from an economic crisis but also set the stage for decades of robust growth and development. During his tenure, Singh's policies prioritised the devaluation of the rupee, moderation of taxes, privatisation of public sector enterprises and encouragement of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). These initiatives catalysed India's transition into a globally integrated economy and solidified his reputation as one of the nation's most accomplished economists.



Known as a reluctant politician, Dr Singh's foray into politics was driven by a profound sense of duty rather than ambition. When he assumed the role of Prime Minister in 2004, heading the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, he brought the same commitment and vision that had defined his career as an economist. Serving two consecutive terms until 2014, Singh's leadership was marked by both humility and resolve. One of the most defining moments of his tenure was the Indo-US nuclear deal in 2008, a landmark agreement that underscored his courage and conviction. Despite staunch opposition from the Left Front, which led to their withdrawal of support, Singh's government survived a vote of confidence, thanks to the support of the Samajwadi Party. The deal elevated India's status on the global stage and symbolised his unyielding dedication to the nation's strategic interests. Dr Singh was often described as a 'gentleman leader,' a man of integrity who preferred dialogue over confrontation. His humility was legendary, yet he was resolute when it came to principles. Throughout his career, he commanded respect across party lines, not just for his intellect but for his moral rectitude. His tenure as Prime Minister may have been criticised for perceived passivity, but his calm demeanour and quiet determination left an indelible mark on Indian governance. A seven-day period of mourning is a fitting tribute by the nation to a great visionary. His last rites will be conducted with full state honours. While his absence leaves a void, his contributions to India's progress and his example of selfless service will continue to inspire generations. Om Shanti.

### PICTALK



Tourists enjoy paragliding after fresh snowfall, in Solang valley in Manali

# Why RSS chief's push for large families is out of step



K S TOMAR

By advocating outdated solutions to demographic trends, Bhagwat's vision risks deepening societal divisions and ignoring the socio-economic realities of today

Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat's recent appeal for larger families, framed as a response to perceived demographic challenges, reveals a worldview rooted in traditionalism. This perspective clashes with the progressive social, cultural, and economic ethos of modern India. While presented as a solution to counter declining population trends, Bhagwat's remarks have ignited debates over their communal undertones, potential to deepen gender inequality, and disconnection from contemporary realities. Bhagwat's remarks are part of a larger discourse on demographic imbalances, often aimed at minority communities. This rhetoric fosters fear, undermines social harmony, and contradicts India's pluralistic traditions.

Today's youth prioritise quality of life over larger families, influenced by rising living costs, career aspirations, and financial stability. Bhagwat's appeal appears disconnected from these realities, highlighting a gap between traditionalist agendas and contemporary Indian values. The RSS chief's observations clash with India's family planning efforts from the late 1960s and 1970s when the emphasis was on small families. Even former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, during her tenure, highlighted the dangers of unchecked population growth, stressing the need for planned families.

Bhagwat's outdated stance ignores this historical context and the progress India has made in population stabilisation through education, healthcare, and women's empowerment. Bhagwat's proposal for families to have more children is based on the argument that declining fertility rates threaten the survival and dominance of certain communities. This narrative, often accompanied by alarmist rhetoric about population imbalances, underscores divisive politics. Although demographic trends warrant attention, his suggested solution disregards socio-economic realities and entrenches regressive norms. Interestingly, Andhra Pradesh

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has echoed similar sentiments, advocating for larger families in his state. However, such approaches seem out of step with modern India's aspirations. India is not experiencing a population decline but rather a slowdown in growth. According to the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has dropped to 2.0, below the replacement level of 2.1. This trend reflects advancements in education, healthcare, and women's autonomy. While policymakers globally view such developments as markers of progress, Bhagwat's remarks frame this demographic shift as a cultural and religious issue, perpetuating communal narratives that risk deepening societal divisions.

Bhagwat's outdated stance ignores this historical context and the progress India has made in population stabilisation through education, healthcare, and women's empowerment. The RSS's vision aligns with traditional family structures, where women are expected to prioritise domestic roles. By advocating for larger families, Bhagwat inadvertently reinforces these outdated norms, perpetuating cycles of



BHAGWAT'S OUTDATED STANCE IGNORES THIS HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THE PROGRESS INDIA HAS MADE IN POPULATION STABILIZATION THROUGH EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE, AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

dependency and limiting women's agency. Central to Bhagwat's argument is a patriarchal notion that reduces women to their reproductive roles. His call for more children disregards women's aspirations, autonomy, and wellbeing, placing an undue burden on them.

**Resource Constraints**  
With a population exceeding 1.4 billion, India faces severe resource constraints, including food insecurity, water scarcity, and unemployment. Increasing family sizes would exacerbate these issues, placing further strain on public services and natural resources. India's youth population, often hailed as a demographic dividend, grapples with high unemployment rates. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) reports that unemployment among those aged 15-29 exceeds 20 per cent. Without job creation, additional population growth risks turning this dividend into a liability. India is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change. Global policymakers advocate for sustainable development, making Bhagwat's vision seem misaligned with contemporary priorities.

**Cultural and Ethical Disconnect**  
India's ethos is rooted in diversity, balance, and individual

choice. Bhagwat's remarks dismiss these values, echoing authoritarian tendencies that clash with Indian democracy. Family planning decisions are deeply personal and should not be influenced by socio-political agendas. Intervening in such choices undermines personal freedoms and contradicts the principles of modern India. In a country where maternal mortality remains a concern and reproductive healthcare is uneven, urging women to have more children intensifies existing vulnerabilities. Instead of alarmist rhetoric, India's leadership should focus on forward-looking policies to address demographic concerns constructively: Improved access to education, particularly for girls, is key to stabilising population growth. Educated women are more likely to make informed reproductive choices, contributing to sustainable demographics and enhancing

Healthcare. Investing in maternal and child healthcare can reduce mortality rates and improve quality of life. Policies empowering the youth and enhancing employability can transform India's demographic potential into an asset.

(Writer is a senior political analyst and strategic affairs columnist; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### MANMOHAN SINGH PASSES AWAY

Madam — The sad demise of former PM Dr Manmohan Singh is an irreplaceable loss to the nation. Singh will be remembered as the statesman who saved the Indian economy from going over the edge. When he took over as finance minister in the minority government of Narasimha Rao in 1991, the Indian economy was very close to sovereign default. Foreign exchange reserves were barely enough to cover a month of imports, and the country had to suffer the ignominy of having to ship its gold reserves to England.

All of that would change with the famous 1991 Budget which Manmohan Singh presented, and the industrial deregulation that accompanied the Budget. Hailed as an architect of India's economic liberalisation, he served as Prime Minister from 2004 to 2014. During his tenure, he spearheaded transformative policies that shaped India's modern economic landscape. His leadership saw India achieve its highest GDP growth rates, and his role in the Indo-US nuclear deal significantly enhanced India's global stature. India is on its way to becoming the third-largest economy in the world in a couple of years, and the seeds of India's growth story were sown during the economic reforms. More than three decades later, there is as big a consensus for reforms in India as there was opposition to it when the process started.

N Sathasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

### DIPLOMATIC CHALLENGE FOR INDIA

Madam — A formal request by Bangladesh to India to extradite former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who fled to India after she was ousted by mass student-led protests, poses a severe diplomatic challenge for India. Dhaka has chosen her path, and it does not seem to be interested in normalising ties with India; hence this extradition path. The extradition request and the political developments around Hasina's asylum in India have the potential to influence India-Bangladesh relations significantly, and it requires deft diplomatic handling by both nations. Hasina's presence

## ICC fines Virat Kohli



Virat Kohli found himself in an awkward situation when he was in the midst of a controversy over an altercation with Australian debutant Sam Konstas. It was a lucky escape for Virat Kohli on day 1 of the fourth test at Melbourne, which otherwise would have ended as a typical 'Boxing' Day episode. The 19-year-old teenager has not spared the Indian bowlers, including Jasprit

Bumrah, in his attacking 60 runs, which was a treat to watch. It was an intentional act captured in-camera when Kohli appeared to be dashed against Konstas in the middle while walking across, which sparked an encounter. Watching this, the Aussie legend Ricky Ponting and England's Michael Vaughan were quick to voice their opinions, calling for ICC action.

Kohli has been slapped with a fine of 20 per cent of his match fee and given one demerit point by the ICC as well. This is not the expected behaviour from a batter who played 121 tests, 295 ODIs, and 125 T20s. If Kohli was baffled by Konstas belligerence, he should have proved his worth as a batter in the middle rather than engaged himself with the intimidating tactics, which can be construed as cheap for all his calibre.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

in India and her public statements against the interim government have strained relations between the two countries, which have further been worsened by the persecution of Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh. India is examining the request on legal grounds, but India can refuse extradition, citing political nature or justice-related concerns, but ultimately it is going to be for purely political reasons. The ball is firmly in India's court, and if India sends her back, we would seal her fate as she is bound to face the death penalty in Dhaka, and if it rejects this request, then we should be ready for more hostility from our neighbour, and our ties would go from bad to worse. Whatever India chose to do will have long-term ramifications on this whole region.

Bal Govind | Noida

### EMPOWERING RURAL ECONOMY

Madam — The government is committed to revitalising the rural economy through cooperation, recently inaugurating 10,000 Multipurpose Primary Agricultural Credit

Societies (PACS). These societies not only generate employment but also ensure optimal resource availability and connect farmers' produce to international markets, aligning with the vision of "Prosperity through Cooperation."

PACS, as the cornerstone of the cooperative three-tier structure, play a pivotal role in rural upliftment by addressing needs like credit, fertilisers, storage, and water management. The government aims to establish 2 lakh PACS in five years, strengthening rural infrastructure and promoting unity, harmony, and self-reliance. To revive dormant PACS and establish new ones, a detailed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been developed, targeting the setup of PACS in 15,000 villages. These societies are evolving into hubs of multifaceted services, including digital amenities like ticket bookings and financial inclusion via RuPay Kisan Credit Cards and micro-ATMs.

R K Jain | Barwani

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Homeschooling: Affordable and holistic education option

Homeschooling is transforming its image from an unconventional option to a widely accepted educational route as many parents opt for this affordable choice



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

With the rising costs of living, an increasing number of parents are reevaluating the conventional approach to education. An increasing number of families nationwide are viewing homeschooling as a legitimate and empowering option compared to traditional education systems.



presents a challenging list of costs: tuition, uniforms, transportation, extracurriculars, and supplies. Homeschooling greatly alleviates these financial burdens. Parents now have the opportunity to invest in essential resources such as top-notch educational materials, online courses, or tailored coaching—all designed to cater to their child's unique needs. Moreover, homeschooling encourages families to tap into their creativity and resourcefulness. Libraries, free online resources, and community programmes provide abundant learning opportunities with minimal or no expense. In a time filled with numerous digital resources, parents have the ability to craft a curriculum that is both cost-effective and thorough. In addition to reducing expenses, there are numerous

other factors contributing to the rising popularity of homeschooling. Parents hold the view that homeschooling can significantly enhance a child's personal and academic development. In contrast to conventional educational institutions, homeschooling offers remarkable flexibility, allowing lessons to align with a child's interests, learning pace, and preferred methods of engagement. A student passionate about science, for instance, can dedicate additional time to experiments and practical activities, while those with a flair for the arts can unleash their creativity free from the limitations of a rigid schedule. Another key factor is the importance of comprehensive development. Homeschooling transcends traditional textbooks and offers genuine, real-world learning experiences. Cooking transforms into a blend of maths and chemistry; gardening embodies principles of biology and sustainability; a visit to the museum or park imparts lessons in history and ecology. These activities, along with practical knowledge, foster

family connections—something that seems rare in today's world. Certainly, homeschooling comes with its drawbacks. Concerns have been voiced by critics regarding socialisation and the stress it imposes on parents. Nevertheless, families who choose to homeschool have found innovative ways to address these issues, including forming co-op groups, engaging in community sports, and coordinating group field trips. This signifies a movement towards appreciating cost-effectiveness, adaptability, and personal expression in education—a tendency expected to expand as households adjust to financial circumstances. Ultimately, homeschooling transcends being merely an educational option; it embodies a declaration of empowerment. For parents aiming to reshape education in a way that resonates with their values, this journey offers not just information but a profoundly rewarding experience for both themselves and their children.

(The writer is a motivator and a freelance writer; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

HUNGER FOR POWER

Lure for power is a universal phenomenon but in the capital, it is at next level



APS MALHOTRA

I have come to seek your support and valuable vote, as I have decided to stand for re-election, declared the bespectacled, heavy-set, middle-aged man—dressed in an off-white safari suit—rather pompously, as he stood with folded hands at the door of my house, surrounded by a bevy of churches and churches, who suitably nodded their head in unison. "Vote for which re-election?" I muttered under my breath, irritated at the uncalled-for intrusion into my privacy on a rather lazy Sunday morning. "I am the President" he replied sheepishly, maybe taken aback at my nonchalant reply. "I had decided not to stand for this year's election due to increased professional and personal commitments—actually I had desired to give someone younger a chance to bear the responsibility, and take a backseat— but had to relent under the immense pressure from fellow residents, who want my leadership for a further period of three years" he continued, his voice a cocktail of benevolence and beneficence for his 'supporters', and the seasoned politician's chicanery. "But isn't Mrs. Draupadi Murmu the President?" I retorted, further trying to pull his leg. "Malhotra jee, I am the President of our Resident Welfare Association (RWA) for the past several years," he said, flabbergasted, a tad angry and certainly deeply offended at my failure to recognize him, and worse, acknowledge his self-perceived exalted status. Although I had recognised him the moment he pressed the doorbell of my house, and I opened the front door to face him,



my innate aversion to people who like to throw their weight around and flaunt uncalled-for appellations came forth with all its bitterness.

Nonetheless, realizing that the man was getting increasingly exasperated at my manoeuvrings, I salvaged the situation by promising to cast my vote in his favour and profusely apologized to him for my failure to identify his 'Excellency', with the pretext that my better half is the face of our family for outside interactions, while I busy myself in mundane things, like reading and writing. Not too surprisingly, denizens of my beloved Dilli, sitting on the centre of power since the dawn of history, have a deeply ingrained fascination for posts and titles— which proliferate dime a dozen— and take a macho and perverse pride in flaunting them, with the same exuberance with which a child displays his or her toy, albeit not with the same innocence.

This fact is borne out in the form of roadside boards and car number plates, which often bear vague titles— such as 'Secretary, Youth Media Cell, ABC party, B-block, Village XYZ'. A carryforward from the era of the Mughals and British imperialists, this is a desperate shot to seek the much-desired VVIP status, at least in the circle one operates in. Thus, it is not unknown to find members of RWAs who run virtual fiefdoms in their associations, maybe as recompense for the voluntary service rendered in serving the community. The perks could include a free car wash and laundry facility, use of funds near the residence where the self-styled Maharajas live, et al.

One can only speculate as to what would happen if this maniac lure of titles and appellations invaded the next, and perhaps the last bastion of community living, the home. Then, it would be no surprise to see name boards outside individual residences read like this: 1/103, Beverly Park: APS Malhotra, President; Sonia Malhotra Vice President; Dr. Mehak Malhotra, Secretary (in absentia). In families with matriarchal tendencies, the designations could be reversed. Well, worth a thought!

(The author is a freelance writer; views are personal)

India must stand firm against Sheikh Hasina's extradition



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

India faces a pivotal decision as it considers Bangladesh's request to extradite Sheikh Hasina, former Prime Minister and a steadfast ally



Sheikh Hasina must not be sent back to Bangladesh in response to the note verbale received from that country's interim government calling for her extradition. Dhaka's move has followed the issue of an arrest warrant by Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) against her and a number of her former ministers, advisers, military and civil officials. The allegation? "Crimes against humanity and genocide". There are two broad reasons why India should not send her back. As prime minister of Bangladesh, she has been a steadfast friend of India whereas other heads of that country's government, except her father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, have tended to be unfriendly. Second, she will, by no means, receive a fair trial in Bangladesh and perhaps even be lynched, given the intense hostility of the current rulers of Bangladesh harbour towards her.

There will be solid legal basis for India's stand. Article 8 (1) (a) of the 'Treaty Between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of Bangladesh Relating to Extradition', says that a person may not be extradited if "he satisfies the Requested State that it would, having regard to all the circumstances, be unjust or oppressive to extradite him" because, in the words of Article 8 (1) (A) (iii), the accusations against him "have not been made in good faith in the interests of justice." Besides Article 8 (2) reads, "A person who has been convicted of an extradition offence may not be extradited therefor unless he was sentenced to imprisonment or other form of detention for a period of four months or more." Sheikh Hasina has yet to be sentenced to any period of imprisonment or detention. Also, she can very well claim that it would be "unjust or oppressive" to extradite her because the accusation against her had not been made in "good faith in the interest of justice", and are a result of pure vindictiveness. That she would be justified in saying so becomes clear on considering the diatribes unleashed against her by the advisers of the interim government and the relentless persecution, including involving in hundreds of false cases, of



SHEIKH HASINA HAS YET TO BE SENTENCED TO ANY PERIOD OF IMPRISONMENT OR DETENTION. ALSO, SHE CAN VERY WELL CLAIM THAT IT WOULD BE "UNJUST OR OPPRESSIVE" TO EXTRADITE HER BECAUSE THE ACCUSATION AGAINST HER HAD NOT BEEN MADE IN "GOOD FAITH IN THE INTEREST OF JUSTICE", AND ARE A RESULT OF PURE VINDICTIVENESS

Awami League's leaders and ministers in the party's government. According to a report in The Daily Star carried under the headline, "No option but to succeed: Yunus" on August 18, 2024, Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus had said during a "Meet and Greet" session with foreign diplomats in Dhaka, "In their efforts to stay in power, the Sheikh Hasina dictatorship destroyed every institution of the country. Judiciary was broken. Democratic rights were suppressed through a brutal decade-and-a-half long crackdown. Elections were rigged blatantly. Generations of young people grew up without exercising their voting rights. Banks were robbed with full political patronisation. And the state coffers was plundered by abusing power."

Referring to a proposed Awami League rally on November 10, 2024, Muhammad Yunus' press secretary, Shafiqul Alam, had written in a Facebook post on November 9, "The Awami League in its current form is a fascist party. There is no way this fascist party will be allowed to hold protests in Bangladesh. Anyone who would try to hold rally, gathering and processions by taking orders from the mass murderer and dictator Sheikh Hasina will face full force of the law enforcing agencies." Leaders of the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement (ADSM), formed on July 1, 2024, to carry the students' struggle forward, and Jatiya Nagarik Committee (National Citizens Committee), formed on 8 September, 2024, to consolidate the movement's message and political goals, have spoken in a similar strident and denunciatory vein.

According to a report by Ashibul Islam Rifat in the Dhaka Tribune (23 October, 2024) appearing

under the headline "Nahid: Awami League will never be allowed back into politics in our lifetime," Md Nahid Islam, an ADSM leader who is now advisor, in charge of information and broadcasting and other ministries, said at a discussion, that the Awami League's return to politics in the manner and ideology it previously adhered to would be tantamount to "a betrayal to the martyrs of the uprising. And certainly, as long as we are alive, we will not allow this to happen." Leaders of political parties like the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (Jamaat) have also denounced the Awami League.

One can argue that the ICT, and any other court where Sheikh Hasina and other accused may be tried, will ignore such vituperations and pronounce its judgement on the basis of the evidence and arguments placed before it. A horse would guffaw on hearing this. The judiciary has been brought to heel through forced resignations and dismissals. The process began as early as August 10, 2024, when chief justice Obaidul Hassan of the Supreme Court and five judges of the appellate division, resigned as hundreds of students affiliated to the ADSM gathered on the court premises demanding that they quit, and threatened to besiege their residences if they did not. On October 16, the new chief justice, Syed Refaat Ahmed, sent 12 High Court judges, appointed during the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League rule, on leave following a demonstration in the court premises by adherents of the ADSM led by Hasnat Abdullah and Sarjis Alam. According to a report in Bangladesh's The Business Standard on October 16 itself, announcing the plan, Hasnat

Abdullah, had written in a Facebook post on October 15, "In demand of the resignation of the fascist judges of the Awami League, we will besiege the High Court tomorrow (Wednesday) at 11am."

The ICT itself was reconstituted on October 15, 2024, with Justice Md Golam Mortuza Majumder from the High Court Division of Bangladesh Supreme Court as its new chairman, and Justice Md Shafiqul Alam Mahmud and retired District and Sessions Judge Md Mohitul Haque Enam Chowdhury as members of the panel.

The result is a pliant judiciary and the use of the justice system to persecute not only those associated with the Awami League but civil society activists, writers, journalists and human rights activists. A shocking example is the levelling of a false murder charge against a highly-respected senior advocate of Bangladesh's Supreme Court, ZI Khan Panna. Referring to the case, The Daily Star wrote in an editorial titled "This weaponisation of legal cases must stop" and published on October 21, 2024, "Over the two months and a half since August 5, we have published multiple reports and editorials on the indiscriminate filing of such murder cases without any evidence, mostly implicating the leaders, activists, and suspected supporters of the Awami League regime. Even journalists and rights activists were not spared. In many cases, fabricated FIRs were filed. There were also instances of the names of accused in cases predating August 5 being replaced. This is nothing but a weaponisation of the legal process for harassment and political vendettas." Will Sheikh Hasina get justice in such a situation?

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

Unlocking economic potential: Bridging the gender gap in public procurement

In India, strides in gender budgeting and supportive policies are fostering greater opportunities for women entrepreneurs

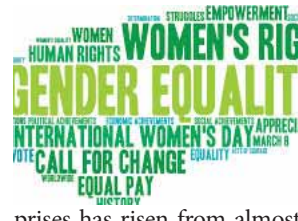
How much of the goods and services purchased by government departments and public sector enterprises come from women-owned businesses? This crucial question is rarely asked, and it underscores the need for gender-responsive procurement policies in India and across South Asia. With government procurement "accounting for an average of 12 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in OECD countries, and up to 30 per cent of GDP in many developing countries," the untapped economic potential for women entrepreneurs to contribute as suppliers of solutions to governments is immense. Yet, globally, women-owned enterprises still win only 1 per cent of this significant public procurement market. WEConnect International is actively working to bridge this gap. Our efforts are making headway, especially in countries such as India, where policy frameworks are beginning to reflect a greater emphasis on gender inclusivity. The central government has increasingly prioritised women-centric policies, evident from the substantial rise in gender budget allocations, which is another way to support women and girls in addition to buying their products and services. For example, in 2013-14, Rs 97,134 crore was earmarked for women's welfare and empowerment. By 2024-25, this figure had reached Rs 3.27 lakh crore, marking a 19 per cent increase over the actual gender budget expendi-



ELIZABETH A. VAZQUEZ

ture of 2023-24 and a 218.8 per cent increase since 2013-14. For 2024, the Gender Budget accounts for 6.5 per cent of the Union Budget, the highest since the Gender Budget Statement was introduced in 2005-06. The Statement serves as a vital tool for ministries reviewing programmes from a gender perspective to ensure that more resources are being allo-

cated to benefit women and girls. In the last year (2023-24), the actual expenditure on gender budgeting was 16 per cent higher (Rs 2.75 lakh crore) than the total budgeted amount (Rs 2.38 lakh crore). The Indian government's Public Procurement Policy for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) Order, 2018, exemplifies this progress. The policy mandates that every central ministry, department, and PSU must procure at least 25 per cent of their needs from MSEs, with 3 per cent specifically reserved for women-owned micro and small enterprises. There has been progress since the mandated 3 per cent procurement target for women-owned MSEs was introduced in 2018. Public procurement from these enter-



prises has risen from almost zero in 2017-18 to 1.8 per cent in 2023-24. The number of women-owned (owned and controlled by women having the minimum financial interest of 51 per cent of the capital and with women constituting at least 51 per cent of generated employment) MSEs benefiting from public procurement grew from 1,410 (accounting for Rs 232.56 crore) to 21,128 (Rs 3056.4 crore) in six years. While the evidence is encouraging, there are still gaps and

challenges that, if addressed, could help India achieve a more gender-inclusive public procurement ecosystem. For example, there is currently no independent body to resolve complaints in the procurement system, leaving unhappy bidders with only two options: filing complaints directly with the purchasing entity or taking them to arbitration or court as outlined in the General Financial Rules (GFR) 2017. Generally, there is a pressing need for transparency, well-defined processes, and a robust mechanism for addressing grievances in tender and procurement procedures so that women-owned businesses receive constructive feedback if their bids are unsuccessful. This would enable them to

refine their future proposals and compete more effectively. Such measures would help mitigate biases in tendering and procurement processes that disproportionately disadvantage women-owned enterprises. The government could also pass procurement legislation to standardise bidding processes using a central law that sets national standards and state laws that fit specific needs, with the central government providing comprehensive oversight. Public authorities could also sensitise officials on the need to counteract gender biases that may influence the design of procurement processes. A strong starting point would be to appoint more women to oversee public procurement in government departments.

Public procurement from women-owned enterprises in India over the past six years has grown at an average annual growth rate of 70.5 per cent, while the number of beneficiary women entrepreneurs has increased at an average annual rate of 77 per cent because the baseline was close to zero. In 2023-24, total public procurement in India reached Rs 1.70 lakh crore, highlighting a growing opportunity for women to engage with the expanding public procurement market in the world's fastest-growing economy. (The writer is CEO and Co-Founder of WEConnect International. With inputs from Erosihan Alagaretnam, Regional Director for South Asia, WEConnect International. Views are personal)









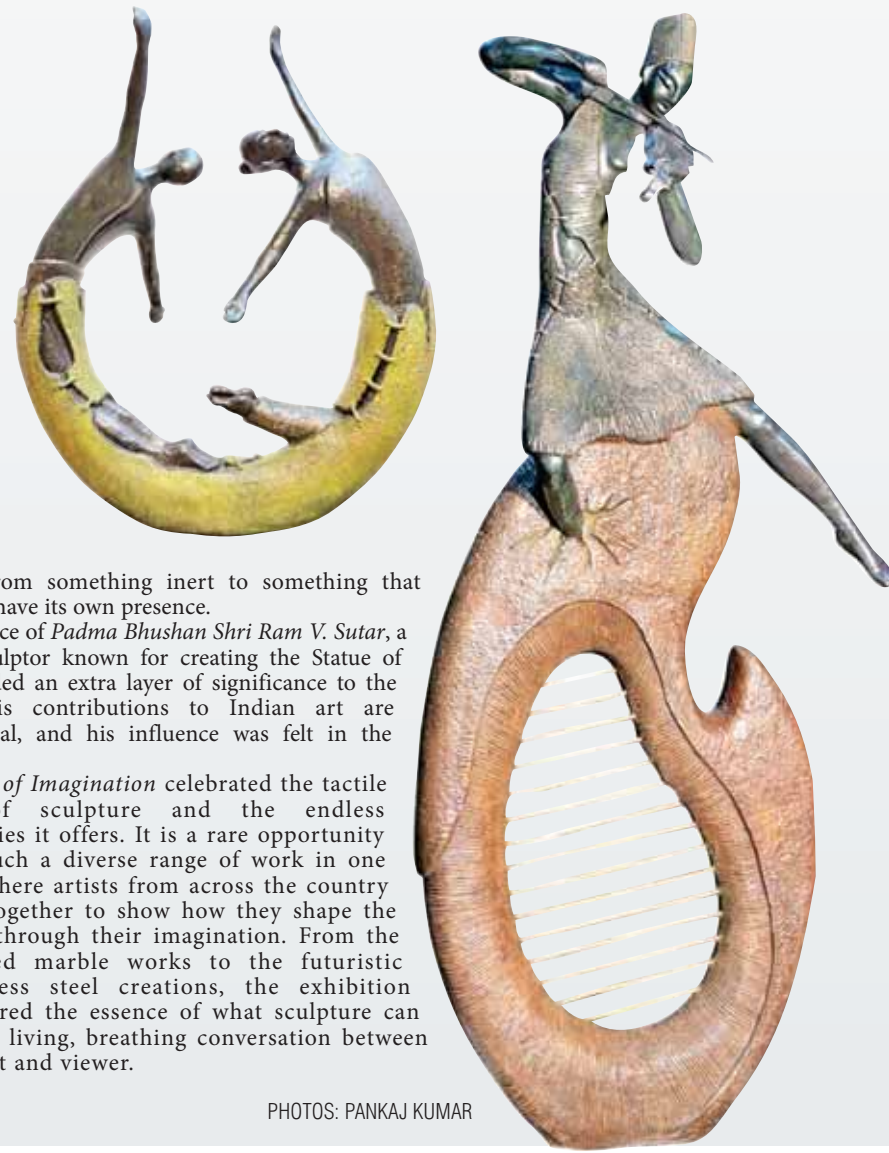


At India Habitat Centre, Delhi, *The Forces of Imagination* brings sculpture to life, blending emotion, creativity and innovation, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Sculpture is a unique form of art that speaks to us not just through its visual appeal but also through its form, texture, and the materials used. At *The Forces of Imagination*, a groundbreaking sculpture exhibition at the India Habitat Centre, this powerful medium was brought to life in all its glory. The event, curated by the renowned art critic **Nanak Ganguly** and organised by **Chawla Art Gallery** in collaboration with the **Delhi Art Society** and **Calcutta Sculptors**, featured over 100 sculptures from 14 talented artists, each pushing the boundaries of creativity. Upon entering the gallery, the diversity of the works was immediately apparent. There was a remarkable blend of traditional craftsmanship and contemporary innovation. The sculptures, created from materials such as bronze, marble, stainless steel, aluminum and wood, each told its own story. Whether they were smooth, polished surfaces or raw, textured designs, every piece invited a deeper engagement, requiring the viewer to physically move around and truly immerse themselves in the art. One of the highlights of the exhibition was **Vibhor Sogani's** stainless steel sculptures. These works, with their sleek and shiny surfaces, caught the light in a way that made them appear to change shape depending on the viewer's perspective. They felt alive and fluid, showcasing the artist's ability to push the limits of sculpture into a modern, dynamic realm. In contrast, **Neeraj Gupta's** marble sculptures had a classic feel, with intricate details

and deep narratives embedded in the stone. His works spoke of tradition while being distinctly contemporary, highlighting how timeless materials can still feel relevant in today's art world. The exhibition successfully created a space for both established sculptors and emerging talents. It was a platform where seasoned masters such as **Tapas Sarkar** and **Ratan Krishna Saha**, alongside fresh voices from the **Calcutta Sculptors** collective, could showcase their work. The diversity in styles and techniques was fascinating, each piece added a new layer to the conversation, whether through form, medium, or theme. This blending of generations and styles made for an incredibly engaging experience. The curation of the exhibition was impeccable, with each sculpture given ample space to stand on its own while also contributing to the overall dialogue of the show. The lighting in the gallery was carefully considered, casting shadows and highlighting the unique textures of each piece. As you moved through the space, you could feel the transformation of the

# Sculpting the Soul



material from something inert to something that seemed to have its own presence. The presence of **Padma Bhushan Shri Ram V. Sutar**, a master sculptor known for creating the **Statue of Unity**, added an extra layer of significance to the event. His contributions to Indian art are monumental, and his influence was felt in the exhibition. *The Forces of Imagination* celebrated the tactile power of sculpture and the endless possibilities it offers. It is a rare opportunity to see such a diverse range of work in one place, where artists from across the country come together to show how they shape the world through their imagination. From the detailed marble works to the futuristic stainless steel creations, the exhibition captured the essence of what sculpture can be: a living, breathing conversation between artist and viewer.

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR



## WHERE DRAMA MEETS REALITY

THE **BHARATMUNI RANG UTSAV** CELEBRATED THE POWER OF THEATRE TO REFLECT LIFE'S COMPLEX EMOTIONS, WRITES **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Theatre has always had a unique power to bring stories to life, creating a shared space where emotions and experiences are felt deeply by both performers and audiences. The **Bharatmuni Rang Utsav**, a celebration of Indian theatre, truly captured this essence, offering a powerful display of storytelling. Each performance brought something distinct to the stage, reminding us of the magic of theatre and its ability to touch hearts. The festival opened with three exceptional plays that set the tone for the days ahead. **Asmanjas Babu**, written by **Satyajit Ray** and directed by **Utpal Jha**, explored moral dilemmas with nuance and depth. This was followed by **Aakhiri Hila**, written by **Munshi Premchand** and directed by **Durga Sharma**, which brought to life the poignant storytelling of one of India's literary legends. Concluding the evening was **Dhundh**, written and directed by **Amul Sagar**, a

gripping narrative that left the audience spellbound. Day two continued the festival's momentum with even more captivating performances. The acting was extraordinary, with each performer immersing themselves in their roles. **Intzar**, written by **Saadat Hasan Manto** and directed by **Amar Sah**, brought emotional depth through minimalistic dialogue and a raw, honest performance that made the audience feel the weight of existential despair. The voices, full of passion and subtlety, reached every corner of the room, ensuring that no emotion went unnoticed. **Purush, The God of Few Inches**, written and directed by **Shuddho Banerjee**, saw a remarkable solo performance that explored masculinity's evolving nature, engaging the audience with its sharp, reflective narrative. **Qissa Aadmi Ka**, written and directed by **Abdus Salam Ansari**, brought humour and thought-provoking commentary on societal norms, with the actors delivering their lines with

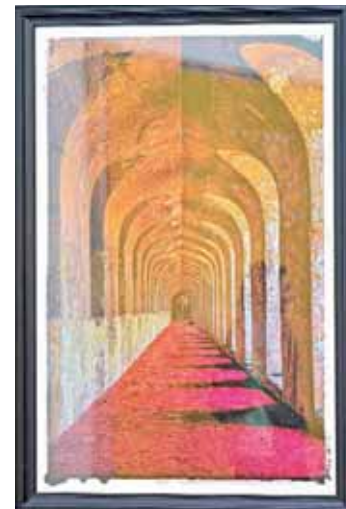
impeccable timing and depth, making the satire both enjoyable and insightful. The final day was just as memorable. **Trishna** beautifully weaved themes of reincarnation and devotion, while **Marnoprant** and **Digdarshak** explored grief and the mentor-disciple relationship with deep emotional resonance. **Trishna** stood out for its poetic exploration of devotion and longing, while **Marnoprant** powerfully addressed complex emotions surrounding loss and relationships. **Digdarshak** concluded the event with a thought-provoking meditation on the sacrifices art demands. In the end, the **Bharatmuni Rang Utsav** reminded us of the power of theatre to reflect life's complexities, emotions and stories. It was a reminder that, beyond the performances, it's the shared experience of theatre that connects us all, sparking conversations and inspiring change.

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

## The Power of Her Canvas

By **TEAM VIVA**

Women's art has long been a space of untold stories, silent rebellions and vibrant expressions of identity. **Vama: Showcasing Women Artists** from Delhi at the **Shridharani Gallery**, **Triveni Kala Sangam**, brings these narratives to the forefront, presenting a captivating display of works by 20 distinguished women artists from the city. Through this exhibition, **Sahitya Kala Parishad** not only honours their talent but also creates a platform for the celebration of women's creativity and their powerful voices in the art world. The artworks on display offer a striking diversity of mediums and perspectives. **Nilanjana Nandy's This Side-That Side** stands as a poignant exploration of division and alienation, using grid-like spaces to depict the fragmentation of identity. **Aditi Aggarwal's Dream 6 and 7** offers a surreal reflection on memory and change, encapsulating a personal journey through unsettling yet evocative imagery. Both works underscore how women's art often bridges personal



experience with universal themes, offering viewers a chance to engage deeply with complex emotions. Meanwhile, **Angelica Basak's Breathe series** uses ceramic sculptures to embody the delicate balance between chaos and tranquility, while **Rashmi Khurana's** mixed-media works delve into the power of tactile surfaces to evoke profound human emotions. **Shampa Sircar's Mayura Series** incorporates the peacock and lotus to symbolise the interconnectedness of life and spiritual growth. From the global themes explored in **Durga Kainthola's Travelogue Diaries** to **Richa Navani's** geometric abstractions addressing gender and ecology, **Vama** stands as a vibrant celebration of the depth, diversity and power of women's artistic expression. This exhibition is not only an artistic experience but a reminder of the essential role women play in shaping the cultural landscape. It encourages reflection on the ever-evolving role of women in art and society, offering a dynamic space for dialogue and empowerment.

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR



## Empowering Women through Skill Development

By **ABHI SINGHAL**

The Hyatt Centric in New Delhi saw the 26th anniversary of the **International Women Polytechnic (IWP) Academy** with the grand celebration of "**Meraki 2024**," an annual festival dedicated to empowering women through financial independence. The event featured various cultural performances including fashion shows, dances, and dramas, showcasing the creativity and talent of women by different branches of IWP. The annual event was graced by **Kamaljeet Sehrawat**, Member of

Parliament, Lok Sabha, as the chief guest. **Sehrawat**, in her speech, said, "If we want to take our country forward, there is only one mantra: skill development." The event showcased the dedication to women's education. Students from IWP's Delhi branches showcased an impressive array of ethnic, Indo-western, and Western attire. What made the show particularly unique was that these students not only designed the clothes but were also deeply involved in every aspect of the creation process starting from fabric selection to stitching and



embroidery. This hands-on experience was a testament to the academy's commitment to providing practical skills that empower women in real-world settings. The festival culminated in an award ceremony, where students were recognised for their achievements in various categories, further boosting their morale. **Meraki 2024** delivered a powerful message: empowering women through skill development is crucial for shaping a self-reliant and developed India, aligning with the country's vision for a prosperous future by 2047.

# India collapse after Jaiswal's terrible run-out on day two of the fourth Test

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

A familiar collapse unfolded after Yashasvi Jaiswal's inexplicable run-out as India stared down the barrel at 164/5 against a menacing Australia on day two of the fourth Test here on Friday. Jaiswal, who was quite fluent during his 118-ball stay that yielded 82 runs, was way short of his crease after a mix-up with Virat Kohli (36) while attempting a quick single, handing Australia the breakthrough that could prove decisive. India are still 310 runs behind Australia's first innings score of 474 and would need another 111 runs to avoid a follow-on that should never have been a consideration on a placid batting track. It was 153 for 2 at one stage and in four overs, another three wickets fell with Gautam Gambhir's plan of sending a night watchman in Akash Deep turning out to be one of the many poor calls that the head coach has taken in this game. In a space of barely five minutes,

cricket showed its fickle nature as Jaiswal pushed towards mid-on and called for a quick single with an assured Kohli (36) at the other end. Kohli took a step and half before retreating. Pat Cummins swooped the ball and threw at the striker's end with a frustrated Jaiswal seen telling his idol "my call". This moment will be one for posterity as Kohli looked down and perhaps felt that he could have at least said a loud "No" to allow Jaiswal to sprint back. The run-out broke his concentration and for the first time after 85 balls, he poked a delivery bowled in the corridor of uncertainty and it was the end. Scott Boland repeated the dismissal that has been a norm for quite a while now. Akash Deep didn't have the technique to survive and the day ended in Australia's favour just like it started. The Jaiswal-Kohli pair had added 102 runs and looked comfortable just like they did in the Perth second innings. The ball hardly did anything after Rohit Sharma (3) played a poor shot and KL



Rahul got a ripper from Pat Cummins. Jaiswal was in regal form, as he cut, pulled, drove and lofted the Australian bowlers stamping his authority as the next megastar of Indian batting. Kohli, at the other end, endured boos for Thursday's run-in with debutant Sam Konstas and battled his demons. This was after Steve Smith's 34th

Test hundred ensured a very good total for hosts. Starting the day at 311 for 6, Smith added 112 and 44 runs with Cummins (49) and Mitchell Starc (15) respectively, leaving the visitors searching for back-up plans. Jasprit Bumrah (4/99 in 28.4 overs) was once again brilliant despite the first spell thrashing from Konstas but Mohammed Siraj's ordinary showing (0/122 in 23 overs) was the primary reason for batters not being under any pressure. Smith, who was unbeaten overnight on 68 off 111 balls, took another 56 deliveries in the second morning to complete a Test ton which placed him on even keel with the legendary Sunil Gavaskar (34). The century came with a push drive through the vacant cover region and celebrations were pretty muted with a just vigorous head nod for his teammates in the dug-out. Smith, who had a torrid run till the second Test of this series, played both days in contrasting styles. On Thursday, he was ready

to be patient and waited for deliveries at the expense of looking ugly. On Friday, the same batter was walking down the track to force the bowlers to alter their length. He was ready to pull and hook, getting two sixes off Bumrah and Siraj respectively. Despite a significant drop in temperature and some nip in the air, Indians failed to make use of the semi-new Kookaburra, with lines going all awry and length being short enough to be punished. Cummins was allowed to settle down and hit seven boundaries. The Indian ploy of playing two spinners backfired with Ravindra Jadeja (3/78 in 22 overs) and Washington Sundar (1/49 in 15 overs) never looking penetrative. For a change, Siraj didn't try and sledge an in-form batter, something that he did in Adelaide with some disastrous results. But that didn't soften the Australian supporters, who constantly booed him and Kohli as when the ball went to them.



# India whitewash West Indies 3-0

PTI ■ VADODARA

Senior off-spinner Deepti Sharma did the star turn with career-best figures of 6/31 before doing her bit with the bat as India completed a 3-0 whitewash of the West Indies with a five-wicket victory in the final Women's ODI here on Friday. Having bowled out West Indies for 162 after Deepti's superlative performance and pacer Renuka Singh's (4/29) excellent show with the new ball, India recovered after a top-order wobble to reach the target of 163 in 28.2 overs. India were in a spot of bother at 73/4 but Deepti (39 not out in 48 balls) used all her experience to see the team through with plenty of overs remaining. S w a s h b u c k l i n g wicketkeeper-batter Richa Ghosh was unbeaten on an 11-ball 23 when the winning runs were scored. Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, who eased nerves with two boundaries after last match centurion Harleen Deol's (1) dismissal left India at 23/2, blazed away to a 22-ball 32 before getting bowled by Afy Fletcher. During her breezy knock, Kaur smashed seven boundaries and looked good for a big one before getting dismissed. In-form opener Smriti Mandhana (4) departed early as Ashmini Munisar

completed a strange one-handed catch after appearing to have misjudged what should actually have been a straightforward catch off the bowling of Aaliyah Alleyne. Enjoying a good run of form in recent times, vice-captain of Mandhana did not get to the pitch of the ball on the day and paid the price. One-down batter Deol followed suit, nicking for a Deandra Dottin delivery way outside off-stump and got a faint edge that was taken by wicketkeeper Shemaine Campbelle. Middle-order batter Jemimah Rodrigues chipped in with 29 off 45 balls. Earlier, Renuka Thakur tormented West Indies with a fiery opening spell before Deepti got into the act to bowl out the visitors cheaply. Thakur and Deepti were relentless with the ball, taking all 10 wickets between them. Thakur's accurate line and length dismantled the top order, while Deepti deceived the West Indies batters with flight and guile, recording her third ODI five-wicket haul and second six-wicket performance. West Indies fought back with a 97-run partnership between Chinelle Henry (61) and Shemaine Campbelle (46), helping them to cross 160. Without this stand, the visitors might have been bowled out for less than 100. Both batted really well and were aggressive against the spinners.



# There's difference between being out of runs and out of form: Smith

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australian batting mainstay Steve Smith always knew that he was "out of runs" but never "out of form" as he got back-to-back Test hundreds against India within a week of each other after 18 months of lull. Having scored his 33rd ton in Brisbane, Smith equalled Sunil Gavaskar's then world record of 34 hundreds on the second day of the fourth Test at the MCG on Friday. Asked how did he chug along all these days when big runs were not coming that easily, Smith dived deep into his inner core. "Sometimes you can be hitting the ball really nicely, which I think I said to all you guys when I wasn't scoring the runs. I actually felt like I was batting pretty well. And there's a difference, I think, between being out of form and out of runs. So, yeah, I thought I was hitting the ball nicely," Smith said at the day-end press conference here. "I mean, you've got to have faith. You've got to have a bit of trust in what you're trying to do. I've played the game for long enough now to know that you can have your ups and downs. Having some faith and confidence," said the man, who is expected to get to 10,000 Test runs before the five-match series concludes.

# Tendulkar, Sindhu among sporting stars to pay tributes to Manmohan Singh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Stalwarts of Indian sports paid rich tributes to former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, who died on Thursday, describing him as a visionary, who had quiet strength and humility. Singh died here after losing consciousness at his home due to age-related ailments. He was 92.



in times of crisis, his ability to navigate complex political landscapes, and his unwavering belief in India's potential," he wrote. It was during Singh's second term that India hosted the 2010 Commonwealth Games in the national capital. It was the first international multi-sport extravaganza to be held in the country after the 1982 Asian Games, also hosted by Delhi. He had also inaugurated the National Football League's 11th edition in Kolkata back in 2005 when late Congress leader Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi was heading the All India Football Federation. Former wrestler Vinesh Phogat, who is now a Congress MLA in Haryana, called Singh a man of "extraordinary wisdom, simplicity and vision."

"Rest in peace, Dr. Manmohan Singhji. His quiet strength, wisdom, and humility were truly inspiring. I had a brief interaction with him in 2013 — he was kind, gracious, and left a lasting impression. My heartfelt condolences to his family," wrote India's ace shuttler Sindhu on 'X'. Cricket great Sachin Tendulkar termed Singh's demise as a huge loss for the country. "Dr Manmohan Singh ji's demise is a profound loss for India. His contributions to our nation shall always be remembered. My prayers are with his family and loved ones as we mourn his passing away," Legendary golfer Jeev Milkha Singh recalled Singh's simplicity and humility, saying he was committed to national duty all his life. "Dr Manmohan Singh was probably one of the most humble men I had met in my life - a simple and extremely intelligent man. His sense of duty and responsibility shone through. The world has lost a visionary," wrote Jeev. On Friday, both the men's and women's cricket teams wore black armbands during their

respective national assignments to pay homage to the former PM. Earlier, World Cup-winning former cricketer Yuvraj Singh called Singh a "true statesman". A visionary leader and a true statesman who worked tirelessly for India's progress. His wisdom and humility will always be remembered. My heartfelt condolences to his loved ones," Yuvraj Singh posted on X. Similar sentiments were expressed by his former teammate and Aam Aadmi Party's Rajya Sabha member Harbhajan Singh, who described Singh as a thorough gentleman and visionary leader. "What truly set him apart was his calm and steady leadership

# Arjun Erigaisi tied fifth after first day of World Rapid Chess Championship in New York

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Chennaiyin FC will be aiming to rebound to winning form and finish the year on a positive note when they face Bengaluru FC in the Indian Super league here on Saturday. In the day's other game, Hyderabad FC will host East Bengal FC with an aim to turn things around and halt the visitors' momentum. Chennaiyin and Bengaluru have played each other 15 times in the ISL, with the former winning four matches. This corresponding fixture last year produced a 2-0 win for the Marina Machans and head coach Owen Coyle will be eyeing the same this time. However, the tactician will be

without captain Ryan Edwards, who is suspended for the match, and is expected to field an all-Indian backbone. Bengaluru come into the match as the second-placed side in the league, and Coyle is wary of the threat they carry, especially with the team missing key personnel. On the availability front, Coyle confirmed that he will take late calls on Wilmar Jordan Gil and Ankit Mukherjee, both of whom are back in training after receiving knocks. The head coach also revealed that Elsinho, who left the pitch under medical care in the previous home match, is recovering in his native Brazil and will be rejoining the squad in the new year.

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