

# Delhi Govt depts disown AAP's Mahila Vajpayee's Ken-Betwa interlinking Samman Yojana, Sanjeevani schemes

#### RAJESH KUMAR MEW DELHI

n an unprecedented move, two departments of Delhi Government have released public notices and disowned the registration process started by Chief Minister Atishi and former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for two schemes announced by the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the National Capital. The Delhi government's Health and Family Welfare department and Women and Child Development department on Wednesday issued public notices disowning the existence of schemes, Mahila Šamman Yojana and Sanjeevani Yojna and cautioned citizens against falling for "misleading schemes" launched by the AAP.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Atishi has stated that strict administrative action will be taken against two officers who released public notices to disown the registration process started by her and former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal for two schemes. The officers in question are a joint director of the Department of Woman and Child Development and the special secretary of the Health and Family Welfare Department.

Atishi, addressing a press conference at the AAP headquarters, strongly condemned the notices, claiming that the officers were under pressure from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). She insisted that the public notices were false and part of a larger conspiracy by the BJP to undermine the AAP's initiatives, which had gained significant public support. She added that the party would take legal action, including a Delhi Police inquiry, against the officers for issuing misleading statements. During the press conference, Atishi also shared an official notification from the Cabinet that approved the Rs 1,000 allowance for women under the Mahila Samman



Delhi Chief Minister Atishi and AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal during a press conference Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneel

Yojana, reaffirming the legitimacy of the scheme.

The fresh controversy will add another dimension to the ongoing tussle between the AAP and the bureaucracy, with accusations flying between parties. The move underlines the tenuous relationship between the bureaucracy and the elected Delhi Government after an amendment to the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) Act, the services department comes under the control of the Lieutenant Governor.

The latest flashpoint, which comes weeks ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls, sparked a slugfest between the AAP and BJP leaders. The BJP has accused the ruling party of duping people, since the two schemes have not been approved yet. The Department of Women and Child Development (WCD), in a public notice in newspapers, has said the Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana does not exist and has not been approved by the Delhi government. It has urged

citizens to refrain from sharing personal information with individuals or groups claiming association with this "fake scheme", as it could result in identity theft or financial fraud. "As, if and when such a scheme is notified, the Department of Women and Child Development (WCD), GNCTD, will launch a digital portal for eligible individuals to submit their applications online as per the approved guidelines. The eligibility conditions and modalities will be clearly notified by the department as and when it happens.

It is emphasised that since no such scheme exists, the question of physical forms / applications for the registration under this non-existent scheme does not arise," it said, adding that any individual collecting forms or information in the name of this scheme is "fraudulent and without any authority". The department has warned that sharing personal information in the public domain may lead to people falling prey to cybercrime.

# vision sees light on his centenary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI/KHAJURAHO (MP)

The ambitious met find interlinking of the The ambitious first of its Ken-Betwa River as desired by former Prime Minister late Atal Bihari Vajpayee two decades ago, finally kick started with the foundation stone laying by PM Narendra Modi on Wednesday which also marked the birth anniversary of the political stalwart Bharat Ratna Vajpayee.

The Vajpayee government had proposed river linking as a solution for irrigation needs as well as for dealing with floods. Modi laid the foundation stone of the Rs 44,600 crore Ken-Betwa River Link Project at Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh and said the river linking will open new doors of prosperity and happiness in the Bundelkhand region. Union Water

Resources Minister C R Patil and Chief Pradesh Madhya Minister Mohan Yadav handed over two kalash (urns) containing water from Betwa and Ken rivers, respectively, to Modi, who poured it over a model of the project to launch the river linking work.

As per the initial estimation of the project, nearly 44 lakh people in 10 districts of Madhya Pradesh and 21 lakh in Uttar Pradesh will get drinking water under the project. Nearly 7.18 lakh agricultural families in 2,000 villages will benefit from the project, which will also generate 103 MW of



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Union Minister CR Patil during the foundation stone laying ceremony of Ken-Betwa River Linking Project, in Khajuraho, Madhva Pradesh

hydropower and 27 MW of solar energy, officials involved in the project said

Addressing the event Modi said that in the 21st century, only the nations with adequate and well-managed water resources can advance. 'The major challenge of the 21st century is water security. In the 21st century only those countries who have adequate water resources with proper management will move forward," he said.

The PM also released a commemorative stamp and a coin in the memory of Modi Vajpavee. also performed `bhumi pujan' or ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of 1,153

Atal Gram Sewa Sadans costing Rs 437 crore at the Khajuraho program.

Under the Ken Betwa project, a 77-metre high and 2.13 kilometres long Daudhan dam and two tunnels (upper level 1.9 km and lower level 1.1 km) will be constructed on the Ken river in the Panna Tiger Reserve. The dam will store 2,853 million cubic metres of water, the chief minister said. The surplus Ken water will be

transferred to the Betwa river through the 221-km-long link canal from Daudhan dam, providing irrigation and drinking water facilities in both the states, he said.

The wreckage of Azerbaijan Airlines Embraer 190 lays on the ground near the airport of Aktau, Kazakhstan AP/PT

## **Over 30 dead** in Azerbaijani airliner crash

AP MOSCOW

An Azerbaijani airliner with 67 people onboard crashed Wednesday in the Kazakhstani city of Aktau, leaving at least 32 survivors, according to officials. More than 30 people are likely dead.

Kazakhstan's Emergency Ministry said in a Telegram statement that those on board included five crew. At least 29 have been hospitalised, the ministry told Russia's state news agency RIA Novosti. Russian news agency Interfax quoted medical workers as saying that four bodies have been recovered and emergency workers at the scene as saying that both pilots, according to a preliminary assessment, died in the crash. The Embraer 190 aircraft made an emergency landing three kilometres from the city, Azerbaijan Airlines said earlier.



8.4°C(+1)

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# ED investigating some Canadian colleges, Indian entities in human trafficking case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday said it is investigating the "involvement" of some Canadian colleges and a few Indian entities laundering case linked to the trafficking of Indians into the United States from the Canada border. The investigation is linked to the death of a fourmember Indian family, hailing from Dingucha village of Gujarat. The four died of extreme cold while trying to illegally cross the Canada-US border on January 19, 2022. The ED took cognisance of an Ahmedabad Police FIR against Bhavesh Ashokbhai Patel, who emerged as the main accused in the matter, and a few others, to file a complaint under the criminal sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). Patel and others have "hatched a well-planned conspiracy to send people (Indians) to the USA through Canada via illegal channels thereby committing the offence of human trafficking," it said. The agency had earlier found that as part of the racket, the accused "arranged" admission for people, desirous to go to



"entities", one based in Mumbai and the other in Nagpur, entered into an 'agreement" for admission of Indians in universities based

in foreign countries on a

commission basis. The agency

said the latest searches found that about 25,000 students are

agents/partners of other entities all over India out of

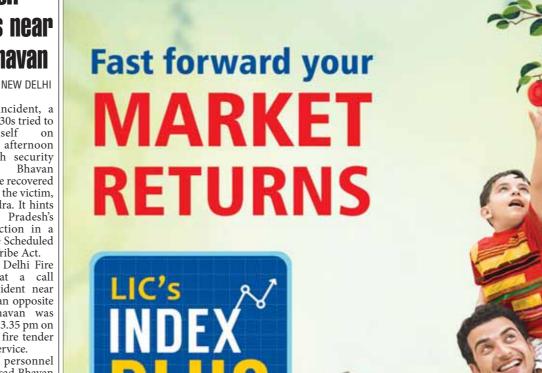
which around 800 are active. It

Indian nationals. The ED said

immolates near **Sansad Bhavan** SAUMYA SHUKLA NEW DELHI

**UP man self-**

n a shocking incident, a I man in his early 30s tried to immolate himself on Wednesday afternoon opposite the high security Sansad Bhavar



the US illegally, in colleges and universities based in Canada. A Canadian student visa was applied for such people and once they reached that country, instead of joining the college, they "illegally" crossed the US-Canada border and never joined the Canadian

is further revealed that around 112 colleges based in Canada have entered into an college, the agency said in a statement. "In view of this, the agreement with one entity and more than 150 with another fee received by colleges based entity. Their involvement in in Canada was remitted back the instant case is under to the individuals' account," investigation," the ED said. said ED, adding that Indians The agency suspects that out were "lured" into the racket and charged between Rs 55 of the total 262 such colleges in Canada, a few, which are geographically located near the Canada-US border, are and Rs 60 lakh per person, according to the ED. The agency said it undertook involved in the trafficking of

fresh searches in this case on it froze bank deposits worth Rs 19 lakh, some "incriminating" December 10 and December 19 at eight locations in Mumbai, Nagpur, Gandhinagar and Vadodara. It and seized two vehicles in was found, the ED said, two connection with its probe.

being referred by one entity premises, the police recovered a singed note from the victim, identified as Jitendra. It hints and more than 10,000 students by the other to various colleges based outside India every year. at Uttar government's inaction in a 'Further, it is gathered that case relating to the Scheduled there are around 1,700 agents/partners based in Caste/Scheduled Tribe Act. Gujarat and around 3,500

An official of the Delhi Fire Service said that a call regarding the incident near the Railway Bhawan opposite the Sansad Bhavan was received at around 3.35 pm on Wednesday, and a fire tender was pressed into service.

The security personnel deployed near Sansad Bhavan rushed the man identified as Jitendra, a resident of Baghpat in Uttar Pradesh, to the Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital. "He set himself on fire at the roundabout near Rail Bhawan. The local police and railway police along with some people immediately extinguished the fire and the person was sent to the hospital," an official statement documents and digital devices, said

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# **Ready to spar on Boxing Day: India** fret on Rohit's batting position

#### PTI MELBOURNE

Divine intervention and a wagging tail might have lifted India's sagging spirits in Brisbane but an out-of-form skipper Rohit Sharma's batting position will be in focus against a dangerous Australia bracing to deliver the knockout punch in the 'Boying Day' Test starting punch in the 'Boxing Day' Test starting here on Thursday. The Indian skipper was the last to hit the nets on Christmas eve and there is speculation doing rounds that he could replace the team's most assured opener, KL Rahul, at the top of the order. If that happens, Rahul will come in at No. 3 while Shubman Gill could either play in the middle order or make way for a Dhruv Jurel in the playing eleven. The series is currently locked 1-1. The Indian skipper stopped batting in the middle order after being elevated to the opening slot back in 2019. But he chose to come down in



an in-form Rahul and first-Test centurion Yashasvi Jaiswal.

The move was a spectacular failure and it remains to be seen how the team adjusts in case Rohit opens and Gill is either dropped or bats at number five. Asked Adelaide and Brisbane to accommodate about his batting position during the prematch press conference, he was borderline irritated.

"Let's not worry about that. I think who bats where, we should be discussing that within ourselves and I shouldn't be answering this question in every press conference," the skipper just about held his composure.

Both captains feel that 1-1 after three games is a fair reflection of the competition between the sides but things can quickly change at the MCG. The rainaffected draw at the Gabba was like a soothing balm for India after the Pink Test debacle in Adelaide.

But now, India are back at one of their favourite Australian venues where they have remained undefeated in Tests since the 2014 series. The last two (2018-19 and 2020-21) of the three Tests (other being 2014-15) resulted in Indian wins where solid batting played its part.

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## **Doon DM orders immediate FIRs** and seizures in illegal mining cases

#### PNS DEHRADUN

The Dehradun district magistrate Savin Bansal issued orders on Wednesday mandating immediate legal action against culprits involved in illegal mining, storage and transportation of minerals under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The DM directed departments, including the Revenue, Commercial Tax, Goods and Serv-ice Tax, Forest and other allied agencies, to launch a coordinated campaign to tackle these malpractices effectively. He instructed that any instance of illegal mining, over-mining, unauthorised storage or transportation of minerals must result in immediate vehicle seizure and the registration of criminal cases under relevant sections of the BNS. The DM warned against any leniency, emphasising that there is no scope for negligence in these matters. During a recent visit to areas like Kalsi, Doiwala and Rishikesh, the DM received numerous complaints from locals regarding rampant illegal mining activities. Taking immediate cognisance, he announced a comprehensive crackdown and issued onthe-spot instructions to control the situation. The DM also introduced new measures to address loopholes, particularly in the penalty and compounding processes,



which have often been exploited by mining mafias. To strengthen enforcement, the DM has directed that First Information Reports (FIRs) be filed under Sections 303 and 317 of the BNS for offenses related to illegal mining and transportation. For cases involving forest land, additional charges under the Indian Forest Act will also be applied. Legal and prosecution officers have been tasked with assisting departments in preparing and registering these FIRs. The DM instructed all departments to appoint gazetted officers responsible for overseeing min-ing activities in their jurisdictions and to promptly file cases against offenders. These officers must report their actions within one week

to the DM's office. Failure to act against illegal mining will be treated as dereliction of duty and the involved officials will face disciplinary action under the Uttarakhand State Employee Conduct Rules, in addition to legal proceedings under Section 223 of the BNS, Bansal said. The DM stated that the State's policies, High Court directives and public concerns necessitate rigorous action to control illegal mining. He has directed sub-divisional magistrates to ensure strict adherence to these orders, with periodic reviews to assess compliance. Any slackness in implementation will result in adverse remarks in the Annual Confidential Report of the officials concerned, he said

## **Tourist influx up in Dhanaulti** on Xmas, ahead of New Year

#### PNS NEW TEHRI

The tourists are throng-ing the popular hill stations like Dhanaulti, Kanatal and Buranshkhanda in Tehri district in their hordes for Xmas and new Year celebrations. The hoteliers and others associated with the hospitality sector look elated, brimming with hope that the trend of surging tourist footfall Dhanaulti and in nearby destinations which started on Christmas Eve would continue till the New Year celebration. "With the stage set for fresh and heavy snowfall in the coming days, we expect that the tourist influx will gain further intensity and reach a crescendo on the New Year day. We are naturally happy," said a beaming owner of a Dhanaulti-based hotel.

On Wednesday-the day of Christmas, Dhanaulti seemed almost chock-ablock with tourists pouring in with families and friends.

Along with the hoteliers, the owners of the shops situated in the Chamba-Mussoorie fruit belt look exultant

kinds of symptoms of men-

tal illness: mental, social

and physical symptoms. "If

an individual is feeling bad

from the inside along with

anxiety issues, sleeplessness

"In a country like

too. "They are pouring in areas like Thangdhar, Kanain the tourist footfall brings tal and Buranshkhanda from about increasing traffic log-Punjab, Haryana and Delhi jam. Keeping this matter in aside from Dehradun to enjoy the snowy valleys. They are likely to enjoy a snow-white Year End and the



advent of the New Year. spare the tourists on-the-Heavy snowfall during this road ordeals. time is almost imminent,"

Doon, Dehradun- 248001.

Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address

(Borrower), Shanti Devi (Co-Borrower), Manish Kumar (Co-

Borrower), Shivnagar Haripur

Selagui Dehradun Dehradun akhand- 248197

2. Dhaneshwari Devi (Borrower), Satish Chandra (Co-Borrower),

Salik Ram Vishwakarma

LHCTD00001523399.

Dhanaulti tehsildar, Rajensaid a shop owner radiantly. dra Prasad Mamgai said that Many of the tourists are all necessary steps have been seen enjoying adventure taken to ensure a hassle-free sports like rock climbing in travelling experience for the Thangdhar and Jadipani tourists.

#### **Changes in CUET to expand** opportunities for students

#### PNS DEHRADUN

The modifications to the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) are expected to create greater opportunities for students across various fields. Notably, the University Grants Commission (UGC) had announced significant changes to the CUET-UG exam 2025 which include a reduction in the number of subjects to 37, a transition to exclusively computer-based testing and a standard examination duration of 60 minutes. Additionally, candidates can now select subjects not covered in their Class 12 curriculum with a maximum limit of five subjects. The students The Pioneer spoke to sounded happy with the

UGC's recent announcement. A college student Manisha Jadeja said that the new options allowing students to choose subjects based on their interests beyond those studied in Class 12 would prove highly beneficial for them in the future. Students will select their subjects based on their abilities and interests which will not only facilitate their success in the tests but also lead to numerous future opportunities. Additionally, with the transition to online platforms, computerbased examinations will serve as a valuable avenue for enhancing the preparedness of school students for the CUET examination, observed an education expert. Another student

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44 Ft, East: Land of Others/ 13.5 Ft, West: 1.4 F

Property Bearing Khata No. 352 Fasli Year 1395-1400 Khasra No. 648 Situated At Mauja

Atakfarm Tehsil Vikasnagar Dehradun Dehradun- Dehradun Uttarakhand- 248007. Bounded By- North: Plot of Raja Singh.37.7 I

Rajkumar 24 Ft, West: 12 Ft Wide Road 19 Ft.

Property Bearing Khata No. 352 Fasli Year 1395-1400 Khasra No. 648 Situated At Mauja

Dehradun - Dehradun Uttarakhand - 248007. Bounded By- North: Plot of Raja Singh.37.7 Ft, South: Plot of Others 37.7 Ft, East: Plot of

Rajkumar 24 Ft, West: 12 Ft Wide Road 19 Ft.

Plot No. 11 Mauza Arcadia Grant Pargana Pachwadoon Dehradun Dehradun- Dehradun

Uttarakhand- 248007 . Bounded By- North: Plot No.10 of Smt Kausalya, South: Plot No.12

of Smt Kausalya , East: Land of Others 32.5 Ft

Bearing Khasra No. 1293 Bearing Private Plot

South: Plot of Others 37.7 Ft, East: Plot of

Atakfarm Tehsil Vikasnagar Dehradun

Bearing Khasra No. 1293 Bearing Private

West: 20 Ft Wide Road 31 Ft.

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however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Wide Road/ 19 Ft .

Kashish Chaudhary said that as he would complete his 12thgrade studies in a few months, he would apply for the CUET to secure admission into a reputed university or college. "I am happy with the recent changes implemented by the UGC because it will afford students like me the flexibility to choose subjects that align with our capabilities while embracing technology through the introduction of computer-based testing instead of a hybrid model," he added. Many other students echoed the same view, stating that it would increase opportunities for them. Further, when asked for view, a retired government college principal G S Rajwar also appreciated the recent UGC initiative. "It will not just provide the students the opportunity to select subjects that align with their interests and skills but also enable them to pursue their studies in two forms in a better manner, encompassing major and minor subjects. This initiative is expected to expand future opportunities for students across various fields," he said. He continued: "Additionally, clearing the CUET will allow meritorious students to excel in their respective subjects which will ultimately benefit the universities and the students alike by attracting the best candidates to the institutions. New changes are anticipated to foster a mul-

tidisciplinary approach."

Date of Notice Sent/ Outsta-nding as on Date of Notice

11-12-2024

Rs.

11,89,221.88/-

Rs. 5,18,133.32/-

11-12-2024

Rs. 12,622.82/-

11-12-2024

64,455.78/-

11-12-2024 04/12/

Date

04/12/ 2024

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04/12

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We would like to inform the General Public that Original (sale/Transfer/Gift) sale deed da

23.04.2008 of IP situated at Mauza Sewla Kalan, Pargana Pachwa doon, Dehradun bearing Khata No. 01639 Khasra No. 722Ka (Old Khasra no. 212/1) Area 155.65 sqr mtr Bounded as under: East Property of Balbeer Singh Bisht,50 feet, West: Property of Brijpal,Ravindra etc. 50 feet, North Property of Vikram Singh Rana, 33 feet,6 inch. south: Road (15feet wide),33 feet,6 inch. registered

a Sub registrar Dehradun at Bahi No. 1, Zild 2210, page 47/66 document No. 1726, In favour of Sh Mulchand S/o Late Ganga Deen have been lost and untraceable. Further, Punjab National Bank, Branch Office Yamuna Colony, Dehradun, intends to mortgage the above property. If any person finds it, or claims any interest or tille in the property is requested to contact Punjab National Bank, Branch Office Yamuna Colony, Dehradun, within 7 days from the date of this publication.

### **IN BRIEF**

#### Paralytic patient reaches home on heli ambulance at CM's initiative

JYOTIRMATH: Following direction from the chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, Bhawan Singh, resident of Dumak village in Chamoli district, who had undergone treatment for paralysis at AIIMS Rishikesh for some days, was flown back home on heli ambulance. The relatives were worried about how to bring him home after the hospi-



Chamoli district magistrate to arrange a heli ambulance for him. With the administration's assistance, the villager came back home safely on Wednesday.

#### Maharaj calls on Haryana CM, discusses Mahabharat Circuit

DEHRADUN: The State Tourism, Religious Affairs and Culture minister Satpal Maharaj met the Haryana chief minister Nayab Singh Saini at Haryana Bhawan in Delhi on Wednesday and discussed in detail the mooted Mahabharata Circuit. He is stated

to have told Saini about the historical and mythological places related to the Mahabĥarata period across Uttarakhand which would be included in the Mahabharata Circuit. He further informed the CM that the Uttarakhand government was working on developing this tourism circuit. As envisaged in treated this plan, Kurukshetra should

discharged him

## Worsening mental health scenario of **India's ageing population worrisome**

#### SNEHA YADAV **DEHRADUN**

The world is ageing at an unprecedented rate. India is not far behind. As per predictions of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in its India Ageing Report 2023, the percentage of the elderly population in India is projected to double to over 20 per cent of the total population by 2050.

and lessening appetite he/she must visit a medical Decline in fertility rate practitioner," she added. accompanied by an in-crease in life expectancy However, with the expansion of neuroscience into has led to growing conseveral other branches, incerns about healthy ageing. cluding psychology, psy-The concept of healthy agechiatry, psychotherapy and neurology, it being not only encompasses physical health but also comes difficult for a pamental and emotional welltient to differentiate and being. select whom to consult.

According to the National Mental Health Sur-India, after consulting vev Report 2015-16, with more than 10 per cent of the old age population facing depression and anxietyrelated issues, 28 per cent to 80 per cent of the mental health disorder remains undiagnosed and un-Expressing concern, a clinical psychologist based in Dehradun Dr Pratibha Sharma said: "The substantial treatment gap is due to the inability of the senior citizens to periodically visit the medical practitioners and lack of awareness, especially in the rural areas. This is leading to acceptance of illness instead of focussing on cure." She also emphasised the limited availability of resources.

When asked about the cates the treatment process early symptoms in the peras the medications prescribed can sometimes agson to recognise any kind of mental illness, Dr Sharma gravate their symptoms. said that there are three

"More importantly, nursing care requires more sensitivity with older adults," said a professor, Department of Psychiatry, AIIMS, Rishikesh, Dr Anindya Das. Further, he emphasised the need for integrated geriatric services addressing both physical and mental health aspects in the future.



view, the police department has deployed personnel in adequate numbers to man the bustling intersections to

On the flipside, the surge



be connected to those places in Uttarakhand where the Pandavas stayed, he told Saini.

### Scholars for putting modern knowledge in Indian perspective

NAINITAL: While addressing the two-day national seminar on 'Indian traditional thought and knowledge: Possibilities from political ecology' held in Kumaun University, Nainital, the KU's vice- chancellor Prof Diwan Singh Rawat said that knowledge in many subjects like mathematics, astrology, chemistry, Ayurveda and yoga among others is available as a priceless heritage in Indian knowledge and thinking which needs to be presented before the world in a scientific and logical manner imbued with the Indian perspective. A large number of academicians from educational institutions and senior education department officers from across the country were present. In his presidential address, the VC of Maharaja Ganga Singh University, Rajasthan Prof Manoj Dixit said that the scholars of modern India, including Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, had tried to apply the thinking of the ancient sages to the practical problems of present-day India. The former VC of Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Motihari, Bihar Prof Sanjeev Kumar Sharma stressed on presenting the modern knowledge in the context of the Indian perspective, thus increasing the relevance of the Indian political and other thoughts and at the same time enriching such knowledge through research, seminars, debates and discussions. On this occasion, two books written by Kamna Jain and Nishu Bhati were released, titled India's G-20 Presidency: A Shared Global Future and One Nation, One Election: Relevance and Challenges.

### Students meet VC on hiked mess rates in KU hostels

NAINITAL: A delegation of students met the vice- chancellor of Kumaun University, Prof Diwan Singh Rawat and submitted a memorandum regarding the increased mess rates in the hostels. Notably, the university started the tender process for running the mess in the hostels while the renovation work in the hostels is yet to be completed. The VC told the students the tendering process had started last year and the charge for each meal had been increased by Rs 3, adding that the students would not be charged the GST from the new session.

India has just 0.75 psychiatrists per lakh population which is far below the WHO recommendation of at least three psychiatrists per lakh population. bidities- both mental and physical- compli-

Mehrishi stakes claim on **Cong ticket for Mayoral** election in Doon

#### PNS DEHRADUN

 $T_{nator \ of \ Uttarakhand}^{he \ chief \ media \ coordinate}$ said that he wants to make Dehradun city modern and Congress Rajiv Mehrishi has one with better facilities. He also staked his claim for the said that he will work for party ticket for the position traffic management, waste of Mayor of Dehradun Mudisposal, and extension of nicipal Corporation (DMC). public utilities, parks, park-The senior leader submitted ing, drinking water, sanitation and health. Mehrishi his application form to the president of Mahanagar expressed confidence that Congress Jaswinder Singh he will register victory in Gogi at Rajiv Bhawan on the election if given a party Wednesday. Interacting with ticket for the post of Mayor the media persons, Mehrishi of DMC.

the family doctor, people should visit a psychologist who will diagnose the problem and the psychiatrist then will provide medication. Both these professionals tend to work together in Indian settings. Further, a psy-chotherapist will use talk therapy to treat," said a Dehradun-based psychoanalyst Dr Aditi

Arora

When asked about the challenges faced while treating geriatric patients, a professor at the Department of Psychiatry, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Dr Jai Singh Yadav said, "In most cases, senior citizens are brought to us only when their condition has significantly worsened. Additionally, the presence of co-mor-

In some documents my name is Hameed alias Abdul Hameed S/o Late Sabar Ali whereas my correct and real name is HAMEED. Both the names belong to me, the same person. Hameed S/o Late Sabar	Satish Chandra (Co-Borrower), Rakesh Kumar (Co-Borrower), Bhagat Singh Colony 229 Dalanwala Dehradun Near Mata Mandir Dehradun Uttarakhand- 248001. LHDEH00001520663 . 3. Dhaneshwari Devi (Borrower),
Ali R/o Vill Jato wala, Post Sabhawala, Tehsil Vikasnagar District Dehradun, Uttarakhand. मेरे पुत्र के सैन्यभिलेखोंनुसार, मेरा गलत नाम भागीरथी देवी दर्ज है,	Satish Chandra (Co-Borrower), Rakesh Kumar (Co-Borrower), Bhagat Singh Colony 229 Dalanwala Dehradun Near Mata Mandir Dehradun Uttarakhand- 248001. LHDEH00001520665.
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# **158 absentee doctors** terminated by Health dept in Uttarakhand

#### PNS DEHRADUN

absenteeism of doc- their appointment while tors, the State health 59 doctors are absconding department has terminat- from their duty for a long ed the services of 158 period of time. A total of medical officers who were 39 doctors were not



absconding from their reporting to the place of duty for a long period of their appointment during time. The State govern- their training period. The ment has approved the terminated doctors proposal of the depart- include 21 from Udham ment to terminate these Singh Nagar district, 13 doctors. As per the each from Chamoli and ernment will not tolerate department data, a total of Tehri, 12 from Almora absentee and irresponsible 60 doctors had not report- and 11 each from Nainital, doctors.

Taking a stern action on ed to the hospital since Champawat Uttarkashi districts. Nine doctors from Dehradun and Bageshwar, 10 from seven Pauri,

Rudraprayag, six from Haridwar and five from Pithoragarh districts were also terminated. The absence of the doctors was affecting health services in the remote and mountainous areas of the State. After removing the absentee doctors, the Health department is planning to start a recruitment drive to fill the vacant posts of doctors in the State health services. The health minister Dhan Singh Rawat said that all these doctors were absent from their work for a long period of time due to which the health services were being affected. He said that the State gov-

and

in

## **BJP** to organize year long programmes to mark Vajpayee's birth centenary

#### PNS DEHRADUN

Bihari

that the party will orga- and had assured the peonize year long pro- ple that a separate State of will be organized in dif-grammes to mark the Uttarakhand would be ferent areas of the State. birth centenary of former created once BJP comes The party will undertake Prime Minister Atal into power. Vajpayee ful- social service activities Vajpayee. filled his promise when and lecture series in the Addressing a seminar the BJP came to power memory of the great organized at the State and he became the PM. leader. The State general

The president of president of BJP said that will celebrate the birth he remained calm when Mahendra Bhatt has said his meeting was disturbed one year. Bhatt said that seminars and exhibitions



**Government to train** 

SC youth in drone



#### bus plunges into gorge in Bhimtal PNS HALDWANI $F_{and\ 25}^{our\ people\ lost\ their\ lives}$ sustained serious injuries when an Uttarakhand Roadways bus fell into a 100-metre-deep gorge in Bhimtal, Nainital district on

from Pithoragarh. The bus patched from Khairna and veered off course and plunged Nainital posts under the direction of SDRF Commandant cials said that upon receiving Arpan Yaduvanshi. The officials said that the teams collaborated with local police, fire services, and villagers in a coordinated rescue operation. According to them, the rescue operation involved a challeng-

CM announces ex-gratia to **Bhimtal accident victims** 

PNS DEHRADUN

Wednesday. The accident occurred around 1:30 PM near

Aamdali in Bhimtal where the

roadways bus, bearing regis-

tration number UK07PA 2822

and carrying 29 passengers,

was headed toward Haldwani

into the deep gorge. The offi-

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has expressed grief on the death of passengers in the Bhimtal bus accident. He announced ex gratia payment of Rs 10 lakh to kin of dead in the accident. Dhami said that a sum of Rs three lakh each will be given to the seriously injured people in the accident while an amount ranging between Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000 will be given to the passengers with

#### information from the Nainital district control room, authorities mobilised rescue teams. Two teams from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), led by sub-inspector Manish Bhakuni, were dising effort to extricate the

minor injuries. In a statement the CM also praised local people and personnel of State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) personnel for helping the injured in the accident. He said that the presence of local people in the rescue operation highlights the love and care the people of the State have towards one another. Dhami also expressed gratitude to the rescue team which saved precious lives in the accident.

injured and deceased from the steep gorge. The rescue operation was completed by 3 PM. Four passengers were found dead, including two men aged 45 and 60 years old, a woman aged about 45 years and a 12year-old child. The bodies of the deceased were handed over to the local police for further procedures. The officials said that the injured passengers were rushed to nearby medical facilities, who later were referred to the higher centre in Haldwani due to their critical injuries. The officials said that 24 injured were admitted in Sushila Tiwari Hospital in Haldwani and one was admitted in Krishna hospital for advanced care. The cabinet minister Rekha Arya and Kumaon Commissioner Deepak Rawat also visited Sushila Tiwari Hospital to meet injured passengers and assess their condition later in the evening. Rawat said that the hospital administration has

been directed to give the best treatment and care to the injured.

# Four dead, 25 injured as Roadways | Torch rally for **38th National** Games to commence today in Haldwani

#### PNS DEHRADUN

The torch of the 38th taken to Udham Singh National Games being hosted by Uttarakhand will be carried to 99 places in all the 13 districts of the State. A massive rally is being organized at Haldwani in Nainital district on December 26 on the occasion of the commencement of the march of the torch of the games. The organizers of the NG have prepared a 35 day long route plan during which the torch will cover a distance of 3823 km.

The rally will commence will be carried to 14 places on December 26 in Haldwani and end at Dehradun, the main venue of the mega sports event on January 27. The National Games will formally start on January 28. As per the route plan, the torch will cover important places in a district and it will not remain in a district for more than three days.

the torch will be in Nainital district while it will be

of Pauri district on January 22, 23 and 24 and will reach Dehradun on January 25. The chief executive officer (CEO) of National Games secretariat Amit Sinha said that the preparations for the torch rally are complete. He said that many programmes highlighting the National Games will also be orga-

Nagar district on December 28 and 29,

Champawat on December

30 and 31, Pithoragarh on

January 1 and 2, Almora

on January 3 to 5, Bageshwar on January 6 to

8 and Chamoli on January

The torch will reach

Rudraprayag district on

January 12 and Tehri on

January 15. It will arrive in

Uttarkashi district on

January 17 and Haridwar

on January 20. The torch

9 to 11.

On December 26 and 27 nized along with the torch rally.

## **Congress accuses Arya of violating** MCC, asks EC to take action

#### PNS DEHRADUN

The chief spokesperson of Uttarakhand Congress Garima Mehra Dasauni accused that Sports and Youth Welfare minister and BJP leader Rekha Arya violated the model code of conduct (MCC) by inaugurating pro-jects at the International Sports Complex Stadium in Gaulapar, Haldwani on Wednesday. According to her, Arya inau-gurated a football ground constructed on the pre-existing cricket field at a cost of Rs 288.06 lakh and another project involving the construction of the International Haldwani Sports Complex Stadium worth Rs 1,510.93 lakh. Currently, MCC is in force in all urban local bodies of Uttarakhand as





has a special place in the of Remembering the public scheme. meeting of the former PM in Dehradun, the State

headquarters of the party, Bhatt said that Vajpayee Bhatt said that Vajapayee gave a special industrial package to Uttarakhand heart of every individual and linked the cities with Uttarakhand. the golden quadrilateral

He said that the BJP

icant step towards empowering the youth of the state, she said.

been issued, marking a signif-

Arya shared that the government has allocated Rs 63.17 lakh for this initiative. While funds previously earmarked for certificate in software technology and training on drone application trades remained

er our youth with the skills needed to build a brighter future, contributing to the vision of developed villages and a progressive state," she said. The minister extended her gratitude to Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami for supporting this initiative and conveyed her congratulations and best wishes to all SC youth in unutilised, they have now been repurposed to train SC youth the State.

civic bodies elections are scheduled to be held on January 23, 2025. Dasauni questioned whether separate rules and regulations apply to the ruling and opposition parties in Uttarakhand. She pointed out that MCC has been in effect since the announcement of the municipal election schedule on Monday, which has restricted political programmes of opposition parties. However,

the ruling party appears unde-terred, allegedly continuing such activities unabated, Dasauni claimed. She stated that this situation raises serious concerns about the double standards in law enforcement within the State. She criticised the Dhami-led government, stating that the ruling party is blatantly disregarding election protocols. "All eyes are now on the State Election Commission that needs to address the issue

of VIP culture by taking strict action against Miniter Arya," she said. Dasauni stated that failure to act against Arya will set a dangerous precedent, encouraging political parties to disregard the EC's guidelines in the future. "Favouring one's own and discriminating against others is not a healthy practice for the State," Dasauni said, appealing for a swift and impartial response from the

## Parents share mixed reaction on abolition of no-detention policy

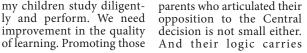
#### PNS DEHRADUN

 $T^{
m he\ parents\ The\ Pioneer}_{
m approached\ have\ shared}$ mixed opinions regarding the Central government's recent decision to abolish the no-detention policy for Classes V and VIII.

On Monday, a significant change in the primary education system was announced with the Centre having nixed this policy for the aforementioned classes. Defending this decision, the Centre had said that this would enhance learning outcomes for the students.

While some of the parents spoken to have lent their wholehearted support the rest have voiced their oppo-

Kamlesh Rawat appreciated the recent decision to discontinue the non-detention policy for students in classes V and VIII. "I am happy because I believe that this will motivate the students to take their studies more seriously as they will no longer have the assurance of promotion regardless of their academic effort. I am a father of two. I love to see my children study diligent-



who fail amounts to failing weight, too. them in future life," he added.

next class with adequate

preparation and learning will

foster a positive increase in

their academic seriousness.

This will stand them in good

stead in their future life," he

However, the number of

added.

Monisha Chauhan said that it would put undue pres-Another parent, Harish sure on the children to per-Kumar echoed the same form academically. "This is view, stating that the termilikely to have an adverse nation of the non-detention impact on the mental health of many, stunting their growth into adulthood. This policy would definitely enhance the learning process for children. "Promotional pressure is dispensable. I am urging the Union Education lollipops in the formative time of the children have Ministry to reconsider and been done away with for withdraw the new rule on their betterment. I, as a parbehalf of many worried parent, welcome it. The anxents in Doon," she added. iety of being promoted to the

When asked for opinion, a primary school teacher Avinash Khanna said that the authority's decision was somewhat justified. "I believe that this will help develop the foundational skills of the students in primary grades. Further, this policy may instil a sense of responsibility among them which will show up later in their life," he stated.

# **HP Governor and Dhami unveil** Vajpayee's statue on his birth centenary

secretary organization

Ajey Kumar, cabinet min-

isters Dhan Singh Rawat,

MLAs Savita Kapoor, Anil

Nautiyal, Durgeshwar Lal,

Dilip Rawat and others

attended the programme.

#### PNS DEHRADUN

The governor of Himachal Pradesh Shiv Pratap Shukla and Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami unveiled the statue of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Lekhak village of Thano, Dehradun district on the occasion of his birth centenary on Wednesday. They also inaugurated the Nalanda Library and Research Centre along with former CM Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' and noted journalist Rajat Sharma.

In the event, Shukla praised the unveiling of Vajpayee's statue and the organisation of a lecture series in his memory, calling it a commendable initiative. He emphasised that such events will serve to educate future generations about Vajpayee's invaluable contributions across various fields for the nation. Shukla stated that Vajpayee was a man of exceptional personality and the works initiated by him for the nation are being carried for-

mentioned that Vajpayee was the first PM to deliver a speech in Hindi at the United Nations lecture series in Lekhak Village thoughts, and foresight always

Dhami also spoke of Vajpayee's significant role as a in Hindi at the United Nations poet, orator and visionary and expressed hope that the leader, whose actions,

Vajpayee's dedication to ensuring equality and social harmony in the country and pointed out that it was under Vajpayee's leadership that the



ward by Prime Minister will offer insights into the Narendra Modi. He further many facets of his life.

steered the country in new state of Uttarakhand was directions. He acknowledged formed, turning the dreams of

Lekhak Village as a platform for promoting patriotism, literature and education was a serious effort to carry forward Vajpayee's legacy. The village, with its serene atmosphere and natural beauty, has become an inspiration for literature and art enthusiasts. Dhami also thanked 'Nishank' for his contributions to the development of the village and described it as a space where the echoes of the past, the energy of the pre-

many into reality. He stated

that the establishment of

future converge. Nishank also acknowledged that the idea for Lekhak Village was inspired by Vajpayee's deep connection with literature and writers. He shared that Vajpayee always envisioned works for the welfare of those in the literary field. During the event, noted journalist Rajat Sharma also shared numerous personal anecdotes from Vajpayee's life, enriching the audience with his memories of

the late leader.

# sition. sent and the possibilities of the



# nation 04

# PM Modi, President Murmu join prayer ceremony to pay tributes to Vajpayee on birth centenary

#### PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI /IMPHAL /BHUBANESWAR/LUCKNOW

President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi were among the dignitaries who joined a prayer ceremony at the memorial of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Wednesday to pay tributes to him on his birth centenary. Union ministers, including Amit Shah and J P Nadda, besides BJP allies such as Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Union ministers Lalan Singh of the JD(U) and Jitam Ram Manjhi of HAM(S) paid homage to the BJP stalwart at 'Sadaiv Atal'.

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla besides the members of Vajpayee's adopted family were also present. Prime Minister Modi said in a social media post the impact

of how Vajpayee preserved constitutional values and gave new direction and momentum to the country will remain forever.

Union Home Minister Shah in his tributes said his dedication towards good gover-nance and public welfare will continue to guide future generations.

After paying tributes to Vajpayee at his memorial, 'Sadaiv Atal', here, Shah said Vajpayee ushered in a new era of development and good governance in the country with his dedication towards ideology and value-based pol-'Atal ji's dedication itics. towards good governance and public welfare will continue to guide future generations," the minister said in a social media post in Hindi. He said Vajpayee made cul-

tural nationalism a work culture and always kept the country's security and public welfare paramount. "Atal ji

countrymen on the path of national service till eternity like the Pole Star," Shah said. In his tributes, Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh said the former Prime Minister's principles and teachings have inspired the building of a robust economy for this nation.

will continue to guide

Singh said in a social media post "Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee ji has been a pivotal figure in shaping India's diplomacy and national security, while continuing to serve as a source of guidance and wisdom to all of us..

"His principles and teachings have inspired the building of a robust economy for this nation, serving as an enduring source of motivation for the generations to come" Singh added..

Singh in another post also extended his greetings on the occasion of Good Governance Day



He said "This day, observed in honour of the birth anniver-sary of former PM and Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ji, reminds us of the importance of transparent, accountable, and people-centric gov-ernance. Let us reaffirm our dedication to building a state where governance empowers every citizen and paves the way for a brighter future."

Ranjan Dimri Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and his predecessor and BJD leader Naveen Patnaik on Wednesday paid tributes to former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The Odisha government's Information and Public Relations (I&PR)Department, in a message, termed Vajpayee as 'Vikas Purush' and said the state scaled new heights under his leadership.

The government recounted some major developmental projects, including the estab-lishment of AIIMS Bhubaneswar, an oil refinery at Paradip and creation of the East Coast Railway (ECoR) division with its headquarters in Bhubaneswar, undertaken

in Bhubaneswar, undertaken during the tenure of the for-mer Prime Minister. The construction of 400 km of highways in Odisha under the Golden Quadrilateral pro-ject, and road network of more than 18,000 km (PMSY) to connect the unconnected stand testament to the eponym 'Vikas Purush', it said.

On the occasion of Good Governance Day, the people of Odisha pay heartfelt tribute to Vajpayee, the architect of administrative excellence, it added.

In a social media, Chief Minister Majhi paid tributes to the former prime minister and extended heartiest confield of roads, telecom and rural development. gratulations and best wishes to everyone on the occasion of Good Governance Day. Several senior political lead-ers from Odisha, including every person's needs are ful-filled, he feels safe and has the Union Education Minister

Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Minister for Tribal Affairs Jual Oram, and state BJP president Manmohan Samal president Wainhohan Sanan paid respects to Vajpayee on his birth centenary. "Humble tributes to former Prime Minister of India,

#AtalBihariVajpayee on his birth anniversary. #Atal ji was a distinguished statesman, outstanding parliamentarian, a renowned poet and orator. His contribution to the nation building will continue to inspire," former chief minister Naveen Patnaik wrote in a social media post.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Vajpayee's good governance and foresight gave India a new direction in the

Elaborating on the definition of good governance, Rajnath Singh said it is one where

opportunity to express his views. 'This was Atal ji's vision, which is being carried forward by Prime Minister Narendra Modi today," Singh said addressing the birth cen-tenary celebrations of Vajpayee with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi

Adityanath in Lucknow. The leaders paid floral tributes to the statue of the former prime minister in Lok Bhavan. Vajpayee's birth anniversary is observed as 'Good Governance' Day.

The defence minister also praised Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on the issue of law and order and the implementation of welfare schemes.

# Row over Waqf land: Karnataka State officials to appear before Parliamentary Panel

#### PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Aland in Karnataka, officials from the state governclais from the state govern-ment are scheduled to appear before the parliamentary panel examining the Waqf Amendment Bill on Thursday. The Joint Committee on the Waqf Committee on the Waqf Amendment Bill, chaired by BJP member Jagadambika Pal, is scheduled to hear views from representatives of the governments of Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Delhi in sittings spread over two days beginning Thursday. Delhi's Food and Supply Minister Imran Hussain is also scheduled to address the committee on Friday, followed by the recording of evidence by the representatives

of the Delhi government. The deposition of officials from the Congress-led Karnataka government comes in the wake of a row over claims by BJP leaders that over 1,500 acres of land belonging to farmers in the state were being taken over by



munity in India.

accountable

The parliamentary panel was

constituted on August 8, soon

after the Waqf (Amendment)

the Waqf board. Pal had visited Karnataka and interacted with the farmers who had received notices from the state government regarding encroachment over properties belonging to the Waqf Board.

The committee had also written to state governments seeking details of Waqf properties occupied by them in an unauthorised manner as per the Sachar panel report. The UPA government consti-

tuted the Sachar Committee in 2005 to study the social, economic and educational

CRPF has done a commendable job in tackling Naxalism, says Shah

#### PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Wednesday said the Central Reserve Police Force(CRPF)has done a com-mendable job in tackling Naxalism and restoring peace and stability in the Northeastern states and Jammu and Kashmir.

Shah also said the CRPF is playing an important role in ensuring internal security and peace in the country, according to an official statement. The home minister said this while visiting the CRPF headquarters where he met senior officers of the force, including its Director General Anish Dayal Singh, it said.

Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha. Opposition parties During the visit, Shah had a have stridently criticised the comprehensive review of the amendments proposed by the bill in the existing Waqf Act, alleging that they violate the religious rights of Muslims. The ruling BJP has asserted that the amendments will operations and administrative efficiency of the world's largest paramilitary force. The CRPF has done a commendable job in tackling Naxalism and restoring peace that the amendments will bring transparency in the and stability in the Northeastern states and Jammu and Kashmir, he said. The CRPF chief apprised the functioning of the Waqf boards and make them



home minister about the various welfare schemes being implemented for the families of martyred jawans of the force, including compassionate appointments in the CRPF. Shah emphasised the importance of promoting Hindi in the daily functioning of the force to strengthen linguistic unity.

Along with emphasising the use of more and more 'Shri Ann' (Millets) for better health of the soldiers, the home minister also called upon the soldiers to extract the benefits of Ayurveda and

participate in 'Prakriti Parikshan Abhiyan' to get health insights as per individual's Prakriti, fostering wellbeing and better health. The visit of the home minister underlines the government's recognition of the CRPF's commitment to national security and its multifaceted contribution to nation-building, the state-

ment said. Several senior officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs, including Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, were present at the meeting.

# **PM Modi greets** people on Christmas



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeted people on Christmas on Wednesday. He said in a social media post, "Wishing you all a Merry Christmas. May the teachings of Lord Jesus Christ show everyone the path of peace and prosper-

The prime minister also shared highlights from his participation at the Christmas celebrations hosted by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India on Monday. In his speech at the event, Modi stressed the importance of strengthening the spirit of love, harmony and brotherhood in line with the teachings of Jesus Christ. BJP president and Union minister J P Nadda visited the Catholic

media post, "As we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, let us also celebrate the spirit of giving, the pursuit of peace, the power of hope, and how we as a nation can embrace and amplify the values of love, compassion and harmo-Nadda added that he ny." prayed for happiness and wellbeing of all fellow countrymen. He said, "May our nation continue to progress on the path of development, guided by the mantra of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka

Bishop's Conference of India

headquarters and the Sacred

Heart Cathedral Church here on

Christmas. He said in a social

Prayas, and reach our destination of Viksit Bharat 2047 with the contribution of all Indians. Wishing you all a Merry Christmas!"

Governance reforms must begin at grassroot level to bring about lasting change, says Jitendra ticipatory planning, said Singh, Min course NEW DELH platform underscores the govthe Minister of State for The minister also launched a Personnel. series of transformative initiaernment's commitment to fos-Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Wednesday said He emphasised "that govertives on the occasion of the tering a diverse and comprenance reforms must begin at Good Governance Day. The hensive learning ecosystem, it that the governance reforms the grassroots to bring about first initiative unveiled by Singh said. The minister also was the launch of a new dashmust begin at the grassroot long-lasting and meaningful launched CPGRAMS level to bring about long-lastchange as well as to fill up the board on the iGOT (integrat-(Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring ed government online training) ing and meaningful change. capacity gaps" In a significant step towards Piloted in Odisha, Assam, Karmayogi platform, along System) Annual Report 2024. strengthening grassroots gov-Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh, with the milestone introduc-As the world's largest citizen interface platform, CPGRAMS ernance, he launched the the initiative leverages e-learntion of the 1600th e-learning 'Viksit Panchayat Karmayogi' ing platforms, AI-powered has redefined grievance redrescourse chatbots, and mobile apps to initiative on Good Governance The enhanced dashboard is sal by integrating advanced bridge knowledge gaps and enhance service delivery, Singh technologies, multilingual sup-Day, celebrated very year to designed to empower ministries, departments, and state mark birth anniversary of forport, and comprehensive trackmer Prime Minister Atal Bihari said.<He said that this program administrators with advanced mechanisms. The aligns with the government's tools to monitor user registra-CPGRAMS allows citizens to Vajpayee The initiative, which is part of raise grievances against govbroader mission to decentralise tions, course completions, and the broader 'Prashasan Gaon governance and foster particioverall progress in capacityernment departments online. building efforts. With cuspatory decision-making at the grassroots level. The initiative The report showcases key Ki Aur' campaign, aims to achievements, including the tomisable views and robust enhance the capacity and competence of Panchayati Raj data filtration capabilities, the is expected to create scalable resolution of over 25 lakh Institutions (PRIs) by equipmodels of citizen-centric govdashboard provides detailed grievances annually and the ping elected representatives ernance, enabling PRIs to drive insights to improve decisionimplementation of the Redressal and officials with the tools equitable and sustainable develmaking and optimize training Grievance Assessment and Index (GRAI), initiatives, the statement said. and knowledge required for opment across rural India, according to a Personnel effective governance and par-Additionally, the introduction the statement said.

Potato plants naturally produce SGAs, which are harmful if humans consume them

ity while preserving the plants' your kitchen and not w natural defenses. Removing SGAs from potatoes will also make them easier to store and transport in open air.

NEW DELHI

Did you know that potato plants naturally produce chemicals called steroidal glycoalkaloids (SGAs), which are found in high quantities in the green parts of the potato peels and in the sprouting areas? While these compounds help the plants protect themselves from insects, these are harmful in case consumed by humans. Now, scientists have discovered a way to remove these toxic compounds from potatoes, making them safer to eat and easier to store. This break-through could reduce food waste and enhance crop farming in space and other extreme environments.

"These compounds are critical for plants to ward off insects, but they make certain parts of these crops inedible," said Adam Jozwiak, a UCR molec-

ular biochemist who led the study. "Now that we've uncovered the biosynthetic pathway, we can potentially create plants that produce these compounds only in the leaves while keeping the edible parts safe.'

Sunlight can induce the production of SGAs in potato tubers-the part of the potato plant that is eaten—even after they've been harvested. By identifying a key genetic mech-anism in SGA production, UC Riverside researchers may be able to reduce potatoes' toxic-

The research, published in Science, focuses on a protein called "GAME15," which plays a key role in directing the plant's production of SGAs. This protein acts both as an enzyme and a scaffold, organizing other enzymes into a "conversion factory" that efficiently produces SGAs while preventing toxic compounds from leaking into other parts of plant cells, where they would cause damage.

By engineering plants to control when and where SGAs are produced-such as in the leaves but not in the potatoes themselves-the researchers envision crops that can be stored without the risk of toxicity from sunlight exposure. "You could store the potatoes in

Maharashtra assembly polls,"

he told reporters when asked

about the meeting. Nishad said the meeting

also discussed coalition

strategy to ensure that "all the work" done by Prime

Minister Modi reaches the

ground and "promises made

to people during elections" are fulfilled. The issue of

giving reservation to the fishing community was also

raised at the meeting, he

"I gave 30-37 page evidence

on the issue of giving reservation to the fishing com-

munity since it was a poll

promise. They will call (us)

after a week and discuss it,'

Nishad said. Asked if issue of

Shah's remarks on Ambedkar

said.

about exposure to the sun, which makes them produce more SGAs. Then, you could eat them whenever you want, reducing food waste," Jozwiak said Additionally, the findings could

enable the use of other plant parts, such as leaves, for food n limited-space environments like space missions or vertical farming systems. "For space farming, where every part of a plant may need to be edible, these findings are especially

promising," Jozwiak added. "Our work demonstrates that plants have evolved ingenious ways to balance growth, reproduction, and defense," Jozwiak said. This research involved scientists from the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel, as well as Kobe University, the **RIKEN** Center for Sustainable Resource Science, and Osaka University in Japan.

# NDA leaders meet at BJP president Nadda's residence

#### PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

 $A^{\rm mid\ heightened\ attacks}_{\rm from\ the\ Congress\ and}$ the INDIA bloc over Union Home Minister Amit Shah's remarks on B.R. Ambedkar, National Democratic Alliance (NDA) leaders met here at BJP president J P Nadda's residence on Wednesday on the birth centenary of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

According to sources, Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president J P Nadda discussed the constitutional issues raised by the Congress party in detail during the meeting with NDA leaders. Sources said the BJP's central message to its allies was clear: the NDA must present a unified front to neutralise the Opposition's attacks effectively. Notably absent from the meeting were Bihar Chief

Minister Nitish Kumar and Maharashtra Deputy Chief

Minister Eknath Shinde. The JD(U) was represented by Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan, also known as Lalan Singh, while the Shiv Sena sent Union MoS Prataprao Ganpatrao Jadhav.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Telugu Desam Party (TDP) president and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, Union Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu, and Union ministers from various NDA constituents such as Apna Dal (S) president Anupriya Patel, and JD(S)

leader H D Kumaraswamy, were present. Bihar's Hindustani Awam

Morcha (S) leader Jitan Ram Manjhi, also a minister in the Modi government, Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM) president Upendra Kushwaha, a Rajya Sabha MP, and Thushar



"Attended the NDA leaders' Vellappally, president of Bharath Dharma Jana Sena, meeting in New Delhi today. were also present at the meet-Under the visionary leadership of PM Narendra Modi,

India is achieving unprecedented milestones and has positioned itself as a global superpower," Nadda said in a post on X after the meeting. "The NDA government remains steadfast in its pursuit of the vision of 'Viksit Bharat@2047', ensuring a brighter and more prosperous future for all," he added.

During the discussions, Shah reportedly reflected on recent political developments, particularly lessons drawn from the Winter Session of Parliament. He accused the Congress of historically disregarding Ambedkar's legacy while now attempting to appropriate it for political

the BJP and its allies to respond robustly and in unison to such manoeuvres.

Uttar Pradesh's NISHAD Party chief Sanjay Nishad said it was an "informal" meeting of the NDA leaders on the occasion of the birth centenary of Vajpayee. "Our future strategy is to move for-

ward together. We have to came up at the meeting, the NISHAD Party chief said, show unity in all the upcoming elections...Everyone con-...We have come for people's gratulated (the BJP leaders) welfare. How to get success in in the meeting for the victothat, energy needs to be spent in Haryana and on that.

'There is no need to respond to their narrative and negative thoughts," he added in an apparent reference to the Congress and other opposition parties who are up in arms against Shah over his remarks

Though there was no official word on the agenda of the meeting, sources said good governance and political issues were discussed.

The NDA meeting comes amid the alliance's focus on simultaneous elections, with all constituents lending support to the proposal.

A Joint Committee of Parliament, constituted to scrutinise two bills for simultaneous polls, is expected to meet on January 8.

gain. He underscored the need for



# Suspense grips as unidentified vehicle rams ambulance carrying suspected terrorists' bodies

**BISWAJEFT** BANERJEE RAMPUR

 $S^{uspense \, looms \, large \, over \, a}_{mysterious \, accident \, late}$ Tuesday night on the Rampur bypass, where an unidentified vehicle rammed into an ambulance transporting the bodies of three suspected ter-rorists of the 'Khalistan Zindabad Force.' The terrorists had been killed in a dramatic encounter in Pilibhit just days earlier.

The collision occurred as the ambulance was en route to Punjab with the bodies of the suspected militants, who were allegedly involved in a grenade attack on a police post in Gurdaspur. While no injuries were reported, the sustained ambulance significant damage, forcing the authorities to transfer the bodies to another vehicle.

Rampur Superintendent of Police Vidyasagar Mishra described the incident as "highly unusual" and said the circumstances are being closely investigated. "As soon as we received information



including about the accident, our teams rushed to the site. The damaged ambulance was interference by seeking to disrupt the transportation removed, and the bodies were safely shifted to another Given nature of the deceased, the vehicle," Mishra stated. The police remain perplexed possibility of a planned attempt to tamper with about the motive behind the

evidence or create chaos collision, with no clear leads on the identity of the vehicle or its driver. Officers on the condition of anonymity. The Punjab Police, which case have not ruled out the possibility of sabotage. "We cannot ignore any angle, had collaborated with Uttar

Puranpur, coordinating on the investigation into this incident. Sources suggest the possibility of local sympathizers of the 'Khalistan Zindabad Force' being involved, though no concrete evidence has yet emerged. The three militants killed in the encounter had been wanted for orchestrating the grenade attack in Gurdaspur,

Police

is

in

Pradesh

terrorists

deliberate

elements

process.

high-profile

the

cannot be dismissed," said a

senior police officer on

exporters through various

schemes, including Marketing

Gateway Port Scheme and Air

schemes. Uttar Pradesh has

also started organising International Trade Show

(UPITS) since 2023 through

Assistance,

rationalization

Development

Freight

which left the security establishment on high alert. Their deaths had been seen as a major breakthrough, but this accident has cast a shadow of doubt over what should have been a straightforward process. Witnesses have reportedly

provided conflicting accounts of the collision, further deepening the mystery

"It happened so suddenly. The vehicle came out of nowhere and hit the ambulance before speeding

It didn't seem like an neutralizing the suspected Pilibhit's said accident," evewitness who was near the now scene. Both Rampur Police and Punjab Police have launched separate inquiries, but the lack of CCTV footage on the bypass and the absence of a vehicle registration number are hampering progress.

This incident raises more questions than answers,' admitted a senie investigator. "Was it senior coincidence, or was it a calculated move to unsettle the ongoing case? The answers will determine whether we are dealing with a road accident or something far more sinister.

As the investigation unfolds, the police are tightening around security the transportation of high-profile detainees and evidence. Meanwhile, the incident has left locals and officials on edge, with fears that the shadow of Khalistani extremism could once again be looming in the region.

Snowfall closes 226 roads in Himachal Pradesh, disrupts power supply amid freezing temperatures

#### PTI SHIMLA

one

Atotal of 226 roads, including three national highways, were closed in Himachal Pradesh following snowfall in several districts, officials said on Wednesday.

People shivered under piercing cold wave conditions as minimum temperatures dropped by a few notches in Jot, which received 10 cm of snow in the past 24 hours, followed by Khadrala (5 cm), Pooh (2 cm), Sangla (1.2 cm) and Keylong (1 cm). Tabo in the Lahaul and Spiti district was the coldest place in Himachal Pradesh, recording a night temperature of minus 10.6 degrees Celsius. A total of 226 roads, including three national highways including Attari and Leh, Sanj to Aut in Kullu district, Khab Sangam in Kinnaur district, and Gramphoo in Lahaul and Spiti district were closed for traffic, officials said.

According to the state emergency operation center, a maximum of 123 roads were closed in Shimla district, 36 in Lahaul and Spiti and 25 in Additionally, 173 Kullu.

Giriraj Singh bats for Bharat Ratna for Bihar CM

transformers were disrupted, affecting power supply across the state. The hopes of locals and tourists to experience a white Christmas in the Queen of Hills, Shimla, were dashed as the city was greeted by bright sunshine on Wednesday morning. Bhuntar received 9.7 mm of rain, Rampur 9.4 mm, Shimla 8.4 mm, Bajaura 8 mm, Seobagh 7.2 mm, Manali 7 mm, Gohar 6 mm, Mandi 5.4 mm, and Jubbarhatti 3.8 mm,

the Met office reported. The Met office has predicted rain and snow at isolated places in some parts of the state, particularly in Shimla, from Friday evening to Sunday

be the NDA's face for assembly

polls in Bihar. This has led to

speculations in a section of the

media that the BJP might push

for a strategy in Bihar, where

assembly polls are due in less

than a year, similar to the one

In the Maharashtra assembly

polls held last month, Chief

Minister Eknath Shinde was

not projected as the NDA's

After the NDA's landslide

victory, the BJP, which emerged as the largest

constituent, muscled its way

through and Devendra

adopted in Maharashtra.

face.

minister.

afternoon, with precipitation expected to peak on Saturday. An intense cold wave persisted in Mandi, Manali, Chamba, Una. Hamirpur, and Sundernagar, while dense and moderate fog was observed in Sundernagar and Mandi, respectively, the Met office

nation 05

said. The weather office has issued an 'orange' warning for severe cold in Bilaspur, Una, Hamirpur, and Mandi on Wednesday and a 'yellow' warning for dense fog over parts of the Bhakra Dam reservoir area and the Balh Valley in Mandi on Thursday and Sunday.

# UP to soon unveil new five-year export policy: UP industrial development minister Nand Gopal Gupta



#### PIONEER NEWS SERVICE LUCKNOW/NEW DELHI

The Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government will soon unveil a new export policy for 2025-30 as the State aims to significantly increase its share in India's outward shipments and create more employment opportunities. Under the 2020-2025 export policy, the state government provides

comprehensive hand-holding support to the exporters. In an interview to The Pioneer, Uttar Pradesh minister for industrial development, export

operationalisation of the NRI, promotion. and Jewar Airport will further help exports from the state. It will investment promotion Nand Gopal Gupta 'Nandi' informed that the state save time and government is working on a expenditure new five-year export policy and extensive consultations with different stakeholders are charges To promote export-oriented industries, the Government of

Uttar Pradesh has ensured being held. 'We are working on unveiling development of adequate infrastructural facilities in the an ambitious Export Policy for 2025-30 to boost the state's state. It is to be noted here that the state has the largest rail contribution to India's network in the country, 38 per exports," the Minister said. In FY 2023-24 state's share in cent of the expressways, 4 India's total export was 4.71 international airports, per cent. In the first two quarters (April-September) of domestic airports and 7 under-construction airports the current financial year, along with Jewar Airport which is due to be operational Uttar Pradesh's share in country's total export was very soon. estimated at 4.89 per cent. The Minister informed that "Our focus on enhancing export capabilities will propel the government is providing financial assistance to the

UP towards becoming a USD 1 trillion economy, driving fostering revenue and development. The Yogi government remains committed to transforming Uttar Pradesh into India's most prosperous state," Gupta said. He said

which it is providing global marketing exposure and business to the exporters by save conducting B2B sessions. on freight

Besides the government is also providing international marketing exposure to exporters from the state by participating in various international trade shows organised by the central government like IITF and Bharat Tex.

Minister Gupta emphasised the state government has adopted export as well as investment friendly policies along with a focus on the development of better logistics facilities in the state. All these initiatives will help in increasing exports from the state and help Uttar Pradesh become a USD One trillion economy.

India's total exports (merchandise and services combined) during April-November 2024 was estimated at USD 536.25 billion, a growth of 7.61 per cent from USD 498.33 billion in the year ago period.

#### PTI BEGUSARAI/PATNA

Tnion minister Giriraj Singh Union Wednesday said the highest civilian honour, Bharat Ratna, should be conferred upon Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and former CM of Odisha, Naveen Patnaik. The outspoken BJP leader expressed the sentiment in Begusarai, his Lok Sabha constituency, lavishing praise on Kumar, a current ally, and

Patnaik, a former alliance partner whom the saffron party ousted from power earlier this year. "Bihar was known for decrepit roads, schools and buildings

until the ascent to power of Nitish Kumar, who took the state to new heights. Likewise, Naveen Patnaik served Odisha for so many years. Leaders like them deserve the

highest honour, like Bharat Ratna," he said. Widely perceived as a detractor of Kumar in Bihar's political circles, Singh also asserted that "mischief" of RJD supremo Lalu Prasad notwithstanding, the NDA was looking forward



to contesting the upcoming assembly polls under the

JD(U) supremo's leadership. Notably, the averment comes in the backdrop of attempts by the RJD, which has aligned with the JD(U) twice, to fish in the NDA's troubled waters. On Tuesday, Prasad's son and heir apparent Tejashwi Yadav had alleged, "The BJP has assumed control of the chief minister's office.

Four close aides of Kumar, of whom two are in Delhi, are in touch with the BJP leadership. Amit Shah is clearly at work. The young leader had made the remark in the backdrop of Fadnavis became the new chief Shah's reluctance to affirm, at an event hosted by a private

for local helpers of Khalistani terrorists in Terai region PTI BAREILLY/UP

Security agencies hunt

 $F_{three\ Khalistan\ Zindabad}^{ollowing\ the\ encounter\ of} F_{three\ Khalistan\ Zindabad}^{ollowing\ the\ three\ Khalistan\ Zindabad} F_{three\ Khalistan\ Zindabad}^{ollowing\ three\ thr$ Pilibhit, security agencies are intensifying their search for their local helpers in the Terai region.

Three suspected Khalistani terrorists allegedly involved in the grenade attack in Gurdaspur were killed in an encounter with police in Pilibhit early Monday, with Punjab's Director General of Police Gauray Yaday terming it as a major breakthrough against a Pakistan-sponsored

terror module. Bareilly Range IG Rakesh Singh said the police and intelligence agencies are on high alert following the threats. "Investigations are underway, and security have measures been intensified in the border

"Action will be taken against found

members of the KZF and a

joint team of Uttar Pradesh

Police and Puniab Police took

place in Puranpur area of

Pilibhit after three module

members opened fire at the

Following the encounter, a

between

The gunfight

police party.

areas.

#### helped the terror elements,' Mandala pooja at Sabarimala Temple Tsunami survivor Sowmya finds new joy 20 years later, he said. The success in Pilibhit comes after three blasts which took to take place on December 26 becomes mother after overcoming unimaginable loss place in different districts of Puniab this month.

#### PTI KOTTAYAM

The mandala pooja, a key I ritual marking the conclusion of the first phase of the annual pilgrimage to the Sabarimala Lord Ayyappa Temple, will take place on December 26. The ritual will be carried out between noon and 12.30 pm on the day by temple tantri (head priest) Kandararu Rajeevaru, Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) President P S Prasanth said in a press conference here on Tuesday.

The ceremonial "thanka anki" procession procession, commenced from the Aranmula Parthasarathi pilgrimage, he said. Temple in Pathanamthitta on

Sunday, would reach Pamba by Wednesday afternoon, he said. The procession will first be welcomed by Devaswom Minister V N Vasavan at Pamba, and then received by the TDB President and members at the (temple Sannidhanam complex) in the evening. Later, the "thanka anki," the sacred attire, would be draped on the idol of the presiding deity before the 'aarathi.' After the mandala pooja and the "neyyabhishekam," the portals of the Lord Ayyappa temple would be closed by 11 pm on December 26,

The Sabarimala would be reopened on December 30 evening for Makaravilakku festivities, Prashant said, adding, the ritual would be held on January 14. As part of crowd management, the virtual queue bookings have been limited to 50,000 and 60,000 for events on December 25 and 26. The cap is also in line with a high court directive, according to which, the spot bookings must be limited to

to 5,000 on both days, the TDB president said. The number of virtual queue bookings on January 13 and 14 as part of the Makaravilakku festivities has marking the culmination of the first leg of the annual been fixed at 50,000 and 40,000, he said.

granted by the court.

to the

additional time to finalize the

due

issues

report.

#### PTI CHENNAI

The ineffaceable scars of the tragic loss of their close blood relations still haunt the survivors 20 years after the Tsunami struck on the fateful morning of December 26, 2004.

one of the Sowmya, survivors, who was rescued in Nagapattinam district that bore the brunt of the giant tidal wave killing 6,065 people, has become a mother of a girl child now. Like several other children orphaned by the Tsunami, she accepted the harsh reality and showed resilience to overcome the crisis and live. She was four years old when

massively destroying property and lives. Sowmya became the later goddaughter of IAS official Dr J Radhakrishnan and completed her BA in Economics. Radhakrishnan solemnised

her marriage with K Subash, a technician, in 2022. In October this year, she became a mother of a girl child.

"It is heartwarming to see our goddaughter grow up become a mother. Our and family felt blessed," Radhakrishnan, currently Additional Chief Secretary, Cooperative Department said.

the Tsunami hit the coast, He was joined by his wife Krithika and son Dr R Arvind and Nagapattinam district collector P Akash, in showering blessings and gifts on Sowmya at her foster home in the district.

Meena, rescued as a toddler, and Sowmya were among the 40 child survivors who grew up in the Annai Sathya Children's Government Home.

They came together and celebrated their reunion on December 22, ahead of the 20th anniversary of the Tsunami. Among them, Tamilarasi Vijayabalan, now 35, who is BSc in IT, and also holds MCA degree, is working as a teacher at the

Annai Sathya Government Children's Home established post-tsunami to take care of 100 children.

The home located in Samanthanpettai near Nagapattinam now takes care of victims of abuse and child marriage. Radhakrishnan was then posted as collector to oversee the relief and rehabilitation activities in Nagapattinam district.

Apart from Radhakrishnan and his family, Collector Akash, district Child Protection Officer Ezhilarasi and Juvenile Justice Board member M Malarvizhi too lauded the survivors who displayed resilience.

police case was filed here on Tuesday after a video turned up on X showing a person making threats to spread terror during the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, an officer said.

"On December 24, a video was shared on various handles on social media platform (X) in which a using person was objectionable words against Hindu religion.

# Survey report on Sambhal's Jama Masjid-Harihar Mandir dispute likely to be submitted in January

#### BISWAJEET BANERJEE SAMBHAL

The Court Commissioner, Ramesh Singh Raghav, is expected to submit the survey report concerning the claim that Sambhal's Jama Masjid was originally the Harihar Mandir. The report will likely be filed in a sealed envelope in the first week of January 2025, according to sources.

The survey report, which is said to be nearly complete, is expected to be submitted on either January 2 or 3. The matter came to light after a lawsuit was filed on November 19, 2024, in the court of Civil Judge (Senior Division), Sambhal, by Kaila Devi Temple's Mahant Rishiraj Giri, advocate Harishankar Jain, and six district



other petitioners. The suit claimed that the Shahi Jama Masjid was originally the Harihar Mandir. On the same day, advocate

Ramesh Singh Raghav was appointed as the Court Commissioner and directed to conduct a survey of the site under heavy security and in the presence of senior officials.

November 24, when the counsel, Shakeel Warsi, who Court Commissioner opposed the repeated opposed the attempted to conduct a extensions.

Court Commissioner Raghav second survey under the protection of the District stated that with the court and scheduled to reopen on Superintendent of Police, January 1, the survey report violent clashes erupted, is nearly ready and will be resulting in the deaths of five submitted in a sealed envelope by January 2 or 3, individuals and injuries to several police personnel. 2025. Following the incident, the

"The report is almost report, initially due on complete. Once the court November 29, was delayed, resumes after its week-long and a 10-day extension was recess, we plan to submit it promptly," said Raghav.

The submission was further postponed to December 9 The case, which has already seen significant tension and Court loss of life, is being closely Commissioner citing health monitored for its potential to further escalate communal and requesting sensitivities in the region. Authorities are maintaining This led to objections from heightened security as the On the Jama Masjid's legal legal process unfolds.

## Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini stresses importance of sensitivity and empathy in governance on Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birth anniversary

#### PARVESH SHARMA GURUGRAM

On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna awardee and former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Haryana Chief Minister, Nayab Singh Saini, addressed the State-level Governance Day programme in Gurugram on Wednesday. During the event, Saini emphasized the importance of sensitivity and empathy in government administration, urging officers to view their roles as an opportunity to uplift society and ease the hardships of the common people. The Chief Minister urged the

officers to view each case with compassion, stating that when someone approaches empowered nation. their office with a problem, He said that Atal Bihari

they should not simply see it as a piece of paper. Instead, they should recognize it as a symbol of the individual's pain and hardship. He said that if we can understand the story behind that paper, we will have truly succeeded in our efforts towards good governance.

The Chief Minister also paid tribute to Bharat Ratna awardees Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya and Atal Bihari Vajpayee on their birth anniversaries, reflecting on their monumental contributions to the nation. He said that today's day is not only a memorable occasion for all of us, but it also inspires us to strengthen our commitment towards building a better and more

Vajpayee's leadership was truly transformative for India. His vision and policies were pivotal in shaping the country's progress on both domestic and international fronts. His leadership laid the foundation for the India we see today, and it is this vision of a 'Vikist Bharat' that Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi is dedicated to realizing. The Chief Minister said that when our government assumed the responsibility of

public service in 2014, we launched a campaign of governance reform, from good transitioning governance (Sushasan) to service (Sewa). He said that the success of such a campaign depends on Niyat Nishtha (intent), (commitment), and Niti For good (policy).

governance, he said, there must be a genuine intention to serve, and the policies must be designed in a way that leaves no room for corruption. On the strength of Niyat, Nishtha, and Niti, our government is successfully realizing the true essence of good governance, said Nayab Singh Saini.

Government has successfully completed the journey toward goođ governance embracing various governance initiatives The Chief Minister said that in a bid to curb irregularities in land registration, the government has introduced the online issuance of No Objection Certificates (NOCs) from various departments, boards, and corporations, which are required during registration.

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

# **Extradition dilemma**

Bangladesh's request to extradite Sheikh Hasina raises critical questions about India's role as a key player in South Asian politics

D angladesh has formally requested India to extradite former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who fled to India following her ouster on August 5, 2024. The request, D conveyed through a diplomatic "note verbale," places India in a delicate position, requiring a careful balancing of international law, bilateral relations, and regional stability. This article explores the background of the situation, the implications of such an extradition, and the options available to India. Sheikh Hasina, a towering figure in Bangladeshi politics and leader of the Awami League, was ousted from power after a student-led movement erupted into nationwide protests. Despite the government meeting the protesters' demands, unrest persisted, which Hasina claims was orchestrated by Muhammad Yunus, Chief Adviser to Bangladesh's interim government. The protests culminated in her removal from power, prompting her to flee to India. The diplomatic note issued by Bangladesh's interim government reflects its inten-



tion to bring Sheikh Hasina back to face accountability or to address the political turmoil she left behind. India and Bangladesh share a complex relationship shaped by historical ties, mutual interests, and occasional tensions. Extraditing Sheikh Hasina could be seen as India's support for the interim government, potentially straining ties with the Awami League, one of Bangladesh's major political forces. The political crisis in Bangladesh has already created ripples in South Asia. Any decision by India regarding the extradition could influence the region's political dynamics, including relations with other South Asian nations. Sheikh Hasina's safety and the fairness of any trial

are also suspect as she might face attrition upon her return. India would need to weigh these concerns against its international obligations under extradition treaties and agreements. How India handles this case may affect India's stance as a regional power and its commitment to democratic principles. India could provide asylum to Sheikh Hasina, citing humanitarian grounds or concerns about the fairness of legal proceedings in Bangladesh. This would align with India's historical role as a refuge for political exiles but might antagonise the interim Bangladeshi government. India could agree to extradite Hasina with conditions ensuring her safety, fair trial, and adherence to international legal norms. Such a move might help India maintain its relations with both the interim government and Hasina's supporters. India can also delay the extradition while engaging diplomatically with Bangladesh to seek a mutually acceptable solution. This would allow India to assess the evolving political situation and minimize potential fallout. While India's decision will undoubtedly influence India-Bangladesh relations, its impact will also resonate across the region. India must weigh its options carefully, prioritising both the immediate political implications and its long-term vision for South Asian stability.



# **ONOP:** A bold reform or a political gamble?



KALYANI SHANKAR

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi pushes forward with his vision of 'One Nation, One Poll' the nation waits to see whether this proposal will unite or divide

he introduction of a controversial bill, 'One Nation One Poll,' has created more controversy than acceptance. The BJP has been talking about it but introduced it, which has been sent to the joint select committee of the Parliament. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in a hurry to fulfil the BJP's unfinished agenda. He had already opened the Ayodhya temple and got the revocation of Article 370 of the Constitution, which gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir. This long-awaited bill aims to streamline the electoral process for 28 states and eight union territories, with an electorate of nearly a billion voters. The bill has triggered widespread debate, significant interest, and Opposition from various parties.

Though momentum is building for simultaneous elections, some questions need answers. They include whether Modi has the required two-thirds majority to pass the bill in Parliament. Is there a political consensus? Will the Opposition come on board? Is the timing of the bill right? Most Opposition parties reject the idea of simultaneous polls. They include the Congress, the Left parties, the Trinamool Congress, and regional and smaller parties. They reject it mainly to settle political scores and apprehension that they may benefit the BIP. Former President Ram Nath Kovind chaired a ninemember committee recommending simultaneous polls last year, labelling it a 'game changer.' Thirty-two parties supported the concept, and 15 rejected it. The panel also advised that the Centre form a panel to oversee the implementation of this proposal. Also, there should be a joint electoral roll for all elections so that voters will use the same list for national, state, and local polls.

Over the years, elections have become a standard feature, but the 'One Nation, One Poll' bill Telugu Desam. Most opposhas the potential to reshape our election process. Proponents of the bill argue that it could Congress, the Left parties,



significantly reduce campaign costs, alleviate the strain on administrative resources, and streamline governance. This could ultimately benefit the public by reducing the frequency of elections, a prospect that should inspire optimism. Elections in India are held at different levels. The first is panchayat, followed by the district level, the state assembly level, and finally, the national level. They happen at different times, and the government wants to streamline the system. Interestingly, the idea of simultaneous polls is not new.

Historically, it was a synchronised poll from 1952 to 1967. The premature dismissal of various governments and the consequential dissolution of Assemblies led to staggard polls. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi dismissed many Opposition-ruled state governments. The most important thing is that the BJP needs the support of the allies and friendly parties. In the recent 2024 polls, the BJP was 40 short of a majority in the house and could form the government only



HISTORICALLY, IT WAS A **SYNCHRONISED** POLL FROM 1952 TO 1967. THE PREMATURE

DISMISSAL OF VARIOUS **GOVERNMENTS AND** THE CONSEQUENTIAL DISSOLUTION OF ASSEMBLIES LED TO STAGGARD POLLS the Trinamool Congress, and regional and smaller parties. Even in the BJP, 20 MPs were absent while the bill was introduced. The Kovind panel also suggested having

the votes in two parts. The first will be for Lok Sabha and Assembly votes, and the second for local groups. The bill faces significant constitutional, legal, and political challenges. The Kovind panel suggests amending Articles 83 and 172 to allow simultaneous elections.

However, the BJP lacks the two-thirds majority for this amendment, and the Constitution needs clarification on concurrent polls. The potential impact on the federal structure of the country and the logistical challenges of conducting simultaneous elections for a billion voters are crucial factors to consider. Prime Minister Modi's main challenge is to gather enough support in Parliament. At the same time, the government must build political consensus and persuade the Opposition to

agree. The Opposition has rejected simultaneous polis, fearing it might benefit the BJP. The 15 opposing parties hold 205 MPs, while Modi needs 362 votes to proceed.

A legal framework for simultaneous elections is essential to address mid-term government collapses and central political manoeuvring. The one nation, one poll

approach reduces waste and election frequency, so the Opposition should consider it carefully and present any alternative proposals for public discussion. The One Nation One poll has been one of the poll promises of the BJP. Some core issues have already been addressed, such as the revocation of Article 370 and the building of the Ram temple in

Ayodhya. In his third term, Modi wants to finish the unfinished agenda. Modi presents this legislation with a clear strategy: Whether he succeeds or not, he benefits. If the bill gets passed, it will be an advantage for the BJP government. If it fails, he can claim that he tried to enact reform but faced Opposition obstruction. Despite potential delays, it's important to debate the bill, as election spending ultimately comes from taxpayers' money.Now that the bill has been sent to

with the help of JD (U) and ing parties reject simultaneous polls, including

a joint select committee, we must wait for its report. (The writer is a popular columnist; views *are personal)* 

The Jakhu Temple and its premises covered with snow after fresh snowfall, in Shimla

# Lessons from yesterday: Reflections that shape a lifetime



SANJAY CHANDRA

The past is a treasure trove of memories and lessons, each shaping who we are and guiding us into the future

The past shapes our pre-sent. The present is past the next moment, to make way for the future. We are left with fond memories. These memories also teach us invaluable lessons. I was prone to my share of mischief as a child for which I would get scolded by my parents. At such times, I was assured of a haven hiding behind my grandmother. She was impartial to both sides as she counselled my parents to be more indulgent and taught us to be well-behaved.

I remember another afternoon. I returned from school excited about my outstanding results in the examinations. Unmindful of my mother's much-needed siesta, I woke her up. Still groggy, she hugged and blessed me, before continuing with her interrupted sleep. That one spontaneous gesture was my reward which would continue to inspire me throughout my life. My father usually rested and slept on Sunday afternoons. We tried not to disturb his

sleep. One day, we might have been noisier than usual and ended up soundly thrashed by our father. I wit-



beach town of Puri. Our

guest house was a couple of

hundred meters from the

beach. Our daughters were

any page, and the top line

would help you find ways to

much younger.

nessed a different facet of my father's personality later in the evening, as he gently expressed his regret for the outburst. I would remember in times to come that there was no shame in accepting if

I was, and continue to be, a protective father, worrying I was wrong. I remember the day I met the young girl who became my wife and life partabout their safety. That one day, I sat on the veranda, ner in the next few months. fondly looking at the two chil-After the initial heady days, dren playing with sand on the we buckled up to the serious beach. Their innocent efforts, many of which were unsucbusiness of making a life together. cessful, to mould a work of art

We have been married for 40 out of the slippery sand, years. These have not been taught me not to give up. My easy decades faced with the mother kept a copy of Ramcharitmanas in her harsh realities of life. We never give up, whatever the prayer corner. I read somesetbacks. We continue to where that you could find a strive towards the common solution to any problem in the goal of leading a happy and All you had to do was open

contented life together. It is easier to face challenges and find solutions as a team. Another nostalgic memory is tackle your most pressing

issue. I also tried it sometimes. I remember that a simple reading of the lines was not enough. What mattered was the action plan that I arrived at based on my interpretation, and the determination with which I pursued.

Fair play, guiding the team members, impartiality, giving undivided time to team members however busy one might be, empathy, working for the team, pride in the performance of the team members, and out-of-box thinking, were only a few of the invaluable lessons that my experiences taught me.

They have stood me in good stead through the rough and tumble of life. The words of psychiatrist, Abraham Twerski would resonate with many, "Ruminating about the past will get you nowhere. So go ahead and learn from the past whatever you can, and then put it behind you. Remember, there is nothing you can do to change it, but you can use its lessons to improve your future."

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### **TRUMP'S ACQUISITION PLANS**

Madam -- Trump is on a shopping spree to buy Canada, the Panama Canal and Greenland, desiring to make Canada its 51st state with Trudeau as its governor. He wants the gifted Panama Canal back to his country. The Panama president has, however, expressed his disagreement with both his conditions, thereby creating another contentious issue ready to be dealt with in the near future. He is also eyeing Greenland to gain its strategic advantage for monitoring the missiles launched from Russia and China on the US and alternatively using it as a launching pad for the US missiles on them. Greenland being rich in minerals like uranium is another factor for its advantage to the US. More so, the greatest island on this planet is not green but mostly ice-filled, comprising glaciers that create many new waterways on its melting due to global warming each year, giving a wider area for its exploration.

He is also creating a powerful force by enriching it with the recruitment of capitalists like Elon Musk and AI experts in his cabinet to act as resources for implementing his future plans. Indian brain drain forms a substantial part of his team, like Sriram Ramakrishnan, the AI expert, and such other talents that India has lost to another country at its cost for its inability to identify and hold them at the appropriate time. If this happens, the demography will start taking a new shape, and interrelation equations of friends and foes will change. India needs to withhold its talent by stopping its brain drain at any cost by providing them better than what they get abroad to discourage their move to foreign lands. However, the unpredictable nature of Donald Trump will keep the world guessing with fingers crossed till it actually happens in reality after he takes over as president, as for all you know, he may suddenly say one day "I

was just joking.

## Shyam Benegal passes away at 90



he sad demise of legendary filmmaker and stalwart of Indian cinema Shyam Benegal at the age of 90 is an irreparable loss for both the cinema and the society. His historic contribution to parallel cinema will be written in golden words in the history of Indian cinema. He was the vanguard of the movement

#### PRITHVI SHAW'S FUTURE IN DOUBT

Madam— Ravi Shastri once saw Sachin Tendulkar, Brian Lara and Virender Sehwag in Prithvi Shaw. He was a player 'born to play cricket," Shastri had said of Shaw. A ton on test debut against the West Indies in 2018 and a blistering 52-ball 70 in the next announced Shaw's arrival on the big stage. But Shaw played his last test for the country in 2020. He was part of the Indian ODI team for a little more than a year. Now at 25, he has not only been left out of the Indian team, but he does not find a place in the Mumbai side as well.

His exclusion from the state team for the Vijay Hazare Trophy has effectively rendered all chances of Shaw making a comeback to the Indian team extremely slim because Indian cricket is bristling with talent and perseverance, hard to replace. Indiscipline, antics, and arrogance reportedly caused his downfall. Shaw was embroiled in frequent off-field controversies. While those could have been shrugged off, through his poor fitness and casual pproach, he was apparently becoming a R S Narula | Patiala liability for teams. As rightly put by an

of realistic and issue-based filmmaking, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. His directorial debut movie, 'Ankur,' in 1974 itself was a landmark in Indian cinema. Along with his timeless movies, he launched the careers of many highly accomplished actors, including Smita Patil, Naseeruddin Shah and Shabana Azmi

Besides his contribution to cinema, Shyam Benegal was a man of great values who never hesitated to speak his mind. Despite his ideological differences with the right wing and the Modi government, he opposed returning national awards as a mark of protest against the alleged increase in intolerance in India. He, himself a two-time chairman of FTII, did not support the strike of students of the institute against the appointment of TV actor Gajendra Chauhan as its chairman.

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

office bearer of the Mumbai Cricket Association, "Shaw is his own enemy." Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

#### **CONCERN OVER SHAMI'S FITNESS**

Madam — The team India has been endeavouring for over a period to gain the ground, where it's seen the bowlers and batters are totally at sea. Then, everyone wishing for Shami's comeback, which can drastically strengthen the tie of the team, especially the bowling attack, as he showcased his back-to-back top-notch performance in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, leading bowling length effectively.

But once again, BCCI's update about his fitness, that he has been deemed not fit for selection in the remaining two tests due to concern over left knee swelling, has ruined countless hopes. Our wishes for his speedy recovery and the team's unparalleled persistence to heal up the millions' fresh wounded hearts.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

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# **FIRSTCOLUMIN** THE TRANSFORMATIVE **POWER OF MANTRAS**

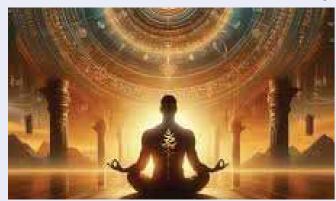
The Divya Chikitsa Mantras stand out as a remarkable system for channelising divine energy



#### ASHWANI GURU JI

ou might have heard of Sanjeevani Vidya given by Guru Shukracharya, which could bring back the dead to life, or of a certain herb called Sanjeevani buti, which brought back Lakshman to life. You may have also heard of the Madhu Vidya or Brahmavidya as possessed by Sage Dadhichi which could enable one to attain immortality, or the Chyawanprasha prepared by the Ashvini Kumars to restore the youth of Sage Chyawan.

These are not tales or works of fiction, the Vedic rishis were masters of Creation, the human body being a microscopic part of that. The proof that these were not fiction lies in the fact that most of the modern scientific discoveries have come from the Vedic shastras. You may visit www.dhyanfoundation.com to know which scientific discovery has come from which shastra. While most of the ancient Vedic healing sciences are lost in the dust of kaliyuga and most herbs have become extinct, a fraction of them still can be accessed and even that fraction is enough



to achieve amazing results. Divya Chikitsa Mantras as detailed in Sanatan Kriya is one such gem from the treasure trove of Vedic gyan. Divya Chikitsa Mantras use sound and vibrations to bring about the desired effect and changes in your body.

When done right their healing and transformational effects are apparent for all to see. A combination of 7 mantras they work to unclog certain nadis (energy channels) and awaken specific centres, to channelise the force of divine energies for a practitioner. It is said that the body of a deva resides in the mantra. This has been practically experienced by each one who has attended a yagya at Dhyan Ashram where complete forms of the deities were invoked through specific chants manifested in the Yagya Agni. For the mantra to bear fruit, it has to be received from a Guru who is Siddha in the mantra, in line with the ancient Guru Shishya Parampara. Guru channelises the force of the respective deity in the mantra and also imparts the dhwani (correct pronunciation) of the mantra. The efficacy of a Vedic mantra depends on the correctness of its chant; faulty pronunciation of even a single syllable changes the entire meaning

Taittiriya Samhita narrates the story of Tvashta in this regard. Tvashta

# State budgets on the brink: RBI sounds alarm



analys \$ 07

With outstanding debts exceeding the prudential threshold, the RBI urges states to adopt "next-generation" fiscal rules to ensure sustainable financial management

ccording to a report on State Finances: A Study of Budgets of 2024-25' released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on December 19, 2024, the consolidated gross fiscal deficit (GFD) of all State governments was contained within 3 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) during the financial years (FY) 2022-23 and 2023-24. For 2024-25, their GFD has been budgeted at 3.2 per cent of GDP. They have complied with the stipulation under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003 which requires them to keep it within the 3 per cent cap. But, the good news ends here. The report reveals that the total outstanding liabilities of States were 28.5 per cent of the GDP in March 2024. Though lower than the peak of 31 per cent reached as of March-end 2021, it remained significantly above the prudential debt-GDP ratio of 20 per cent mandated for the states under the Act.

Another measure of how a State government is managing its budget is its revenue expenditure (RE) about capital outlay (CO). While, the RE being on items such as salaries, wages, pension bills, subsidies etc essentially goes towards non-asset creating spending, CO results in the generation of capital assets thereby providing a foundation for income stream over some time. Greater emphasis on the latter is considered fiscally prudent whereas more of the former can lead to fiscal destabilisation. The record of many states on this crucial parameter is disconcerting. For all states, the total expenditure increased from around Rs 3428,000 crore in 2020-21 to Rs 5760,000 crore during 2024-25 (budget estimate). As regards RE, it increased from Rs 3018,000 crore in 2020-21 to Rs 4840,000 crore in 2024-25. The CO increased from Rs 410,000 crore during 2020-21 to Rs 920,000 crore dur-ing 2024-25. These numbers yield a ratio of RE to CO or RECO of 5.2 (4840,000/920,000).

In several states, the RECO is much higher than even this national average. For instance, in Punjab, at 17.1 it is more than three times followed by uducherr 14.1), Kerala (10.6) and Delhi (10.3). There are some better-performing states too such as Manipur having the best ratio (2.4), followed by Gujarat (2.9) and Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh (3.1). However, the abnormally high RECO of other states pushes up the national average. How does it compare with the Centre? The total expenditure of the Central Government increased from Rs 3042,000 crore during 2020-21 to Rs 4820,000 crore during 2024-25. Of this, the RE increased from Rs 2603,000 crore during 2020-21 to Rs 3709,000 crore during 2024-25. On the other hand, its CO increased from Rs 439,000 crore during 2020-21 to Rs 1111,000 crore during 2024-25. So, RECO for the Centre is 3.3 in 2024-25 (3709,000/1111000) against 5.2 for the States.



spending and that includes a sharp rise in expenditure on subsidies. Since 2018-19, subsidies given by the states have grown 2.5 times to over Rs 470,000 crore being the budget estimate for FY 2024-25), The RBI cites farm loan waivers, free or subsidised services like electricity, transport, gas cylinders, and cash transfers to farmers, youth and women as key **BARRING A** areas of incipient stress. It suggests that states need to adopt "next-generation" fiscal rules, COUPLE OF GOOD PERFORMERS time-bound glide paths for fiscal consolidation, and rein in subsi-LIKE GUJARAT dies and freebies so that it doesn't crowd out more productive WHICH IS expenditures. Such exhortations DOING EVEN have been made umpteen times in the past not just by the RBI but **BETTER THAN** also by several committees set by the government on 'expenditure THE CENTRE, reforms' from time to time. MOST OF THE Now, we have more jargon like

sections of the society but also to galvanise the administrative machinery and institutions to deliver benefits efficiently and prevent misuse/diversion by making the best use of technology interventions.

**Do the States understand?** The answer is a categorical 'no'. Forget a finely crafted system desired by the RBI and government committees, most of the states have put in place crude and non-transparent subsidy regimes call them freebies - a jargon for "something given free of charge" - all aimed at alluring voters and winning elections. The political parties have sought to cover under 'something' literally everything that touches the life of a person.

It includes free food, free health, free education, free LPG cylinder, Delhi. free laptops, free transport, state Already, without the MMSY, the support for marriage, and pilgrimage for the elderly; it's an unending list.

al capital. Now, ex-Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has increased the amount to Rs 2100 per month. In response, the BJP has reportedly promised a still higher cash transfer of Rs 2500 per month. Let us be clear. Unlike 'normal' budget expenses which are planned and backed by wellorchestrated efforts to garner revenue, additional financial liabilities imposed by the freebies promised in the election manifesto affect the budgetary position of the State in a totally 'uncontrolled' and 'unplanned' manner. Moreover, these freebies don't have a sunset date meaning these will continue to be given 'eternally' – no matter which party rules. This is the surest invitation to fiscal catastrophe. Take the case of

above the age of 18 in the nation-

performed a sacrifice to destroy Indra. He used the mantra, 'indrashatru' to manifest his thought. However, he placed a lofty note on the word 'Indra' instead of 'shatru' because of which the meaning of the word changed from 'slayer of indra' to 'the one who will be slain by indra' and thus the son, Vrutra, so born to him was defeated by Indra, just because of a pronunciation defect. To quote from Panini Shiksha, a mantra devoid of the correct vowels (svar) and consonants (varna) is faulty and does not convey its intended meaning. It is like a verbal thunderbolt that harms the one who is chanting, as had happened in the case of erroneous pronunciation of the word, Indrashatru). The Vedic seers had mastered this incredible science of sound in the form of mantras, they were well aware of the high degree of specificity and precision that is required to harness the power of sound.

Shiksha, one of the six vendangas, deals with the science of proper pronunciation of words and laws of euphony. Volumes have been written on Shiksha by Panini, Yadnyavalkya and Vasishtha. Shatpath Brahman states that every alphabet of a word possesses some kind of strength and explains the secret of every alphabet. Therefore it is important that one partakes the vidya of mantras from a Guru. Reading from books /internet or hearing on television/social media and starting self-practice may have detrimental effects if the chant is not proper.

(The writer is a spiritual Guru; views are personal)

Barring a couple of good performers like Gujarat which is doing even better than the Centre, most of the states have been reckless in their revenue

"next-generation" fiscal rules to convey the same message with greater intensity.

The RBI posits these rules as "combining the medium-term fiscal sustainability objective with short-term flexibility allowing state governments more maneuverability in dealing with exogenous economic shocks". The banking regulator goes on "these will involve inter alia, the use of data analytics, including machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI); improved data transparency and disclosure practices; and strengthening the institution of State Finance Commissions to deliver public services more effectively and scale up social and physical infrastructure," Put sim-ply, the RBI expects the State governments to not just bring about policy reforms and refinements to better target welfare schemes focusing primarily on the poor

In the last couple of years, the freebies promised by them have become more brazen with parties coming out with 'cash transfers' to the account of voters. Such schemes mostly directed at women have won elections for the concerned parties in elections held during 2023 and 2024 in Madhya Pradesh (MP), Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Haryana. The parties compete with each other in offering more. A common refrain is 'Who will promise more"?

Look at this. In the budget for 2024-25, Delhi finance minister Atishi announced the Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana (MMSY) under which, the AAP government will give Rs 1000 per month to all the women

financial position of the Deini government has come to such a pass that CM Atishi has recently forwarded a request to the Centre seeking a loan of Rs 10,000 crore from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF). Now, if AAP were to come to power yet again, MMSY @Rs 2100 a month would cost the exchequer an additional Rs 17,000 crore per annum.

Since 2018-19, state subsidies have grown 2.5 times to over Rs 470,000 crore (2024-25), courtesy freebies cult. This will increase exponentially, destabilising State budgets, and making a mockery of the much-touted fiscal consolidation drive. The Supreme Court has on several occasions observed that 'freebies are bad'. Will it force parliamentarians to enact a law to curb them?

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

outflows coupled with festive

discounts can make the dream

of homeownership more

achievable. First-time buy-

ers, particularly in the afford-

able housing segment, must rely on loans to bridge the

# Festive cheer meets smart choices: Navigating the real estate boom of 2024

STATES HAVE

IN THEIR

REVENUE

BEEN RECKLESS

SPENDING AND

THAT INCLUDES

IN EXPENDITURE

A SHARP RISE

**ON SUBSIDIES** 

By evaluating long-term financial goals, buyers can turn festive opportunities into lasting investments

Tith the festive season ongoing in full swing, there is a surge in consumer spending. This time is often marked by a flurry of purchases fuelled by tradition and sentiment. While the allure of buying a home can be particularly enticing during this festive period, buyers must approach such decisions with careful consideration. They must look beyond the festive fervour and reflect on key aspects that can guide them to make informed decisions

Decoding Festive Demand As per a report 'Unravelling the Trends Shaping India's Real Estate Market in 2024' by CBRE, from January to September, the luxury housing category collectively constituted 16 per cent of the overall



RAHUL MEHROTRA

housing demand. This growth has spurred devel-

opers to launch new projects, resulting in the category rep-resenting 19 per cent of the total new launches during the first nine months of 2024. This trend is only going to grow further spurred by the festive season as buyers are

club-house, larger living spaces, and modern facilities. Metro cities, in particular, have seen a wave of new project launches by developers this year, catering to various buyer segments. While luxury properties grab

headlines, the affordable housing sector remains the backbone of India's real estate market as this is where buyers purchasing their first home find

the most value. Having said that, many firsttime homebuyers are compelled to buy a property given the abundant promotional offers and incentives provided by realtors. It is so because the festive season spurs confidence as it often coincides with salary increments, bonuses, investing in end-products that and a general uptick in eco-

offer better amenities such as nomic activity. However, buyers much before they scout for a property, should evaluate the long-term aspects. Questions such as - "Can I support pay-ing the EMI?" or "Is it the right approach" may seem over-whelming at first, but assessing one's worth is very crucial at this stage.

#### Interest Rate Matters

The interest rate set by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is a huge factor in deciding other crucial interest rates. The repo rate is unchanged for the 10th consecutive time, and this implies that the Equated Monthly Installments (EMIs) are likely to remain manageable. Further to this, I believe there would be a pickup in demand for housing loans as the festive season progresses. Recent data from the RBI



Typically, possessions and

property deliveries are sched-

addition to stable interest rates

reveals a remarkable 40 per cent increase in home loan deployment, highlighting the diminishing gap between monthly rents and EMIs. Additionally, 80 per cent of aspiring homeowners preferred home loans as the top choice for property acquisition this year.

eration. However, it's essential to look for transparent offers that can help avoid hidden fees and unexpected costs. One should seek out reduced processing fees, flexible repay-ment plans, cashback schemes, and opportunities for negotiation that can make the festive season an advantageous time to invest.

#### What Should Buyers And **Investors Do?**

Investors and buyers must focus on long-term value by evaluating their income and cash flows to ensure manageable EMIs. The festive season uled in the latter half of November, aligning perfectly can be an opportunity to with the festive momentum.In reduce upfront costs and select properties in developand EMIs, the array of offers and discounts available during ing areas with strong ameni-ties and connectivity for better appreciation. the festive season can be The predictability in EMI another key factor of considfinancial gap as well as look for special offers and discounts. While festive discounts are great, buyers should align their decisions with pragmatic goals rather than being swayed by just sentiment. Buying a property during a festive season is certainly the start of a prosperous journey, but to truly benefit, one needs to have a stable financial plan

adding to one's portfolio. (The writer is MD & CEO, RHDFCL; views *are personal)* 

whether it's the first home or



# Israel, Hamas accuse each other of complicating ceasefire efforts as they inch closer to deal

#### AP JERUSALEM

AP MEXICO CITY

not go unpunished".

Israel and Hamas accused each other of complicating ceasefire efforts on Wednesday, as the two sides inch closer to a deal that could wind down the 14-month war in Gaza. The two sides appear closer than they have been in months to reaching an agreement that would bring home dozens of hostages being held in Gaza. However, talks have

come close before, only to collapse. Although Israel and Hamas have expressed optimism that progress was being made toward a deal, sticking points remain over the exchange of hostages for Palestinian prisoners and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, people involved in the talks say. On Wednesday, Hamas accused Israel of introducing new conditions related to the withdrawal from Gaza, the prisoners and the return of displaced people, which it said was delaying the deal. Israel's government accused Hamas of

The organiser of a Christmas fair in southern Mexico was assassinated at

his city's holiday event, authorities said late

Tuesday. The governor of the southern

state of Guerrero said gunmen killed the

organiser of the annual Christmas and

New Year's fair in the state capital of Chilpancingo. Gov. Evelyn Salgado called

the Christmas Eve killing of Martín Ramírez Ruíz "an unacceptable act that will

Salgado wrote on her social media

accounts that state prosecutors were inves-

tigating the crime. There was no immedi-

ate information on the motive, but the

gangs gain much of their income extort-

ing money from local businesses and rou-

tinely kill those who refuse to pay. In a sep-

arate statement, state prosecutors said that

another person was killed along with

Ramírez Ruíz, and that a third person in

the crowd gathered outside a church was

wounded in the attack. The gunmen had apparently waded into the crowd and directly targeted Ramírez Ruíz. Ramírez

reneging on reneging on understand-ings that have already been reached." Still, both sides said discussions are ongoing. Israel's negotiating team, which includes members from its intelligence agencies and the military, returned from Qatar Tuesday evening for internal consultations, following a week of what it called "significant negotiations".

During its October 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel, Hamas and other groups took about 250 people hostage and brought them to Gaza. A previous truce in November 2023 freed more than 100 hostages, while others have been rescued or their remains have been recovered over the past year.

Israel says about 100 hostages remain in Gaza - at least a third of whom it believes were killed during the October 7 attack or died in captivity. Sporadic talks have taken place for a year, but in recent weeks there's been a renewed push to reach a deal. President-elect

Mexico assassinated at his event

Ruíz was the head of the civic group that

for almost two centuries has organised an

arts, food and handicrafts fair that runs

from roughly Christmas to January 7. The

fair also honors the local patron saint, St.

Matthew. Two rival drug gangs, the Tlacos

and the Ardillos, are fighting for control

of the city of Chilpancingo, and violence

against officials and residents there has

reached grisly levels. In November, a for-

mer prosecutor and local police official was

arrested in connection with the grisly decapitation of the city's mayor on October

Donald Trump, who takes office next month for his second term, has demanded the immediate release of Israeli hostages, saying on social media that if they're not freed before he is sworn in, there will be "HELL TO PAY". Families of the hostages are becoming increasingly angry, calling on the Israeli government for a ceasefire before Trump is sworn in. After Israel's high-level negotiation

team returned from Doha this week, hostage families called an emergency press conference in Tel Aviv, pleading for a ceasefire and a complete end to the war. Shir Siegel, the daughter of Israeli-American Keith Siegel, whose mother was released after more than 50 days in captivity, said every delay could endan-

ger their lives. "There are moments when every second is fateful, and this is one of those moments," she said.

The families are planning a special can-dle lighting ceremony in Hostages

killing on one of the gangs. The mayor's

body was found in a pickup truck, with his severed head placed on the roof of the vehi-

cle, in an apparent message from the gang.

The same gang is thought to be responsi

they had helped arrange a truce in anoth-

er part of the state between two warring

Square Wednesday, marking the first night of Hanukkah. The agreement would take effect in phases and include a halt in fighting, an exchange of Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners, and a surge in aid to the besieged Gaza Strip, according to Egyptian, Hamas and American officials. The last phase would include the release of any remaining hostages, an end to the war and talks

on reconstruction. Israel's bombardment and ground invasion into Gaza have killed over 45,000 Palestinians in Gaza, more than half of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between fighters and civilians in its count.

The offensive has caused widespread destruction and displaced some 90 per cent of Gaza's 2.3 million people, often multiple times. Hundreds of thousands are packed into

squalid tent camps along the coast as the cold, wet winter sets in.

Tehran. Iran's government on Tuesday said it had lifted a ban on access to WhatsApp and Google Play after more than two years, the official IRNA

meeting led by reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian, who has vowed to remove restrictions on social media. Iran's telecommunication minister Sattar Heshemi in a post on X called the decision a "first step" in removing restrictions and said "the path will continue" - indicating the possibility of unblocking other services. Many people reached by The Associated Press across the capital, Tehran, and other cities said they had access to the services on computers but not yet on mobile phones. WhatsApp has been the third most popu-lar messaging platform in Iran after Instagram.

# Pakistani airstrikes killed 46 people in eastern Afghanistan: Taliban

out by the Pakistani army to

"create mistrust in the relations

between the two countries".

It said Kabul "will not accept

the violation of the country's

territory under any circum-

stances, and the country is

ready to defend its indepen-

dence and territory" and "such

irresponsible actions will def-

initely have consequences".

Meanwhile, residents in the

area told an AP reporter over

the phone that at least 13 peo-

ple were left dead, adding that the death toll could be higher.

They also said the wounded

were transported to a local hos-

pital. Pakistan has not com-

mented on the latest strikes.

However, the Pakistani military

said Wednesday that security

forces killed 13 insurgents in an

intelligence-based operation in

South Waziristan, a district

located along eastern Afghanistan's Paktika province. Pakistan's Interior Minister

Mohsin Naqvi praised

"Pakistan's brave security force'

in a statement for thwarting

"the nefarious designs" of "ter-

rorists". He didn't mention the Pakistani air strikes inside Afghanistan. The Taliban

#### AP PESHAWAR

children, a Taliban govern-ment official said on Wednesday, raising fears of further straining the relations between the two neighbours. Hamdullah Fitrat, the deputy spokesman for the Afghan government, said those killed in the strikes that targeted four locations in Barmal, a district in the province of Paktika, were refugees, adding that six others were also wounded. This comes a day after Pakistani security officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity in line with regulations, told The Associated Press that Tuesday's operation was to dismantle a training facility and kill insurgents in Paktika in Afghanistan. Earlier Wednesday Wednesday, Mohammad Khurasani, the spokesman for the Pakistani Taliban or Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, claimed in a statement that 50 people, including 27 women and children, have died in the strikes. He said they were "unarmed refugees" who fled to Afghanistan because of Pakistan's offensive in the northwest.

The TTP - a separate group but also a close ally of the Afghan Taliban - also shared photos, alleging they were of children killed during the Pakistani operation. The strikes came hours after Mohammad Sadiq, Pakistan's special representative for Afghanistan, travelled to Kabul to discuss a range of issues. Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry in Kabul summoned the Pakistani envoy and lodged a strong protest over the strikes by Pakistan's army. In a statement, it said while a representative of the civilian government of Pakistan was busy in talks with the Afghan officials, the strikes were carried

Defence Ministry denounced the attacks on Tuesday and promised retaliation. On Wednesday, the situation along the shared border seemed to be

business as usual. However, security analysts say

the TTP could launch retalia tory attacks in Pakistan. Pakistan has seen innumerable

militant attacks in the past two decades but there has been an uptick in recent months. The latest was this weekend when at least 16 Pakistani soldiers were killed when the TTP attacked a checkpoint in the country's northwest. Pakistani officials have accused the Taliban of not doing enough to combat militant activity across the border, a charge the Afghan Taliban government denies, saying it does not allow anyone to carry out attacks against any country. North and South Waziristan are former strongholds of Pakistani Taliban, who have fled to Afghanistan. Tensions were at an all-high in March when Pakistan said intelligence-based strikes took place in the border regions inside Afghanistan.

### Striking students demand justice Haiti gang attack journalists covering hospital **reopening leaves two dead AP** PORT-AU-PRINCE "this crime is not going to

#### AP BELGRADE

Haiti's online media associ-tation said two reporters were killed and several others were wounded in a gang attack on Tuesday on the reopening of Port-au-Prince's biggest public hospital. Street gangs have taken over an estimated 85% of Port-au Prince and they forced the closure of the General Hospital early this year. Authorities had pledged to reopen the facility Tuesday but as journalists gathered to cover the event, suspected gang members opened fire in a vicious Christmas Eve attack. Robest Dimanche, a spokesman for the Online Media Collective, identified the dead journalists as Markenzy Nathoux and Jimmy Jean. Dimanche said an unspecified number of reporters had also been wounded in the attack, which he blamed on the Viv Ansanm coalition of gangs.

unpunished." A video posted online by the reporters trapped inside the hospital showed what appeared to be two lifeless bod ies of men on stretchers, their clothes bloodied. One of the men had a lanyard with a press credential around his neck. Radio Télé Métronome initially reported that seven nirna ists and two police officers were wounded. Police and officials did not immediately respond to calls for information on the attack. Video posted online earlier showed reporters inside the building and at least three lying on the floor, apparently wounded. That video could also not be immediately verified. Johnson "Izo" André, considered Haiti's most powerful gang leader and part of a gang known as Viv Ansanm, which that has taken control of much of Portau-Prince, posted a video on social media claiming respon-sibility for the attack. The video said the gang coalition had not authorized the hospital's reopening. Haiti has seen journalists targeted before. In 2023, two local journalists were killed in the space of a couple of weeks radio reporter Dumesky Kersaint was fatally shot in mid-April that year, while jour-

nalist Ricot Jean was found

## "this crime is not going to go

Serbia's striking university students on Wednesday rallied outside the chief prosecutor's office to demand justice over a concrete canopy collapse that killed 15 people last month in the country's north. More than 1,000 students symbolically left letters on the doorstep of the public prosecu-

number of questionable infra-

later fuelled public scepticism

#### below. any in Serbia blame the reflected wider discontent with collapse on widespread corruption and sloppy work on the building renovation, one of a structure megaprojects involving Chinese state companies. Prosecutors have arrested 13 people over the Novi Sad tragedy, including a govern-ment minister whose release

populist President Aleksandar Vucic's rule. Protesting students on Wednesday carried banners featuring red hand prints - a protest symbol telling the authorities they have "blood on their hands.

In an apparent attempt to defuse the student strikes, Vucic has been advertising what he describes as "favourable" loans for voung people to pur

## Spice tins honour role of Indian soldiers in WW 2 Christmas truce

#### PTI LONDON

A UK historian has highlighted further evidence of the widespread contributions made by Indian soldiers to the First World War effort as part of the British with the dis-

an unofficial "Truce in No Man's Land" during the war and his research led him to the discovery of one of the spice tins - only the second one known to still be in existence. He knew that the 39th Garhwal Rifles were at Givenchy France during



Iran restores access

news agency reported. The report said the country's Supreme Council of Cyber Space made the decision in a

ble for killing 11 market vendors, includ-ing four boys, in late October. The vendors, members of an extended family, were abducted as they travelled to sell their wares. Their bodies were found dumped in the bed of a pickup truck on an avenue in Chilpancingo. Chilpancingo, a city of about 300,000, is so completely dominat-ed by gangs that in 2023, one of them staged a demonstration of hundreds of people, hijacked a government armoured car, blocked a major highway and took police hostage to win the release of arrest-ed suspects. Violence in Guerrero reached such unprecedented levels that earlier this year, Roman Catholic bishops announced

Pakistan's airstrikes on east-ern Afghanistan killed 46 people, mostly women and



world 08

Haiti's interim president, Leslie Voltaire, said in an address to the nation that journalists and police were among the victims of the attack. He did not specify how many casualties there were, or give a breakdown for the dead or wounded. "I

send my sympathies to the people who were victims, the national police and the journalists," Voltaire said, pledging dead later that month.

cutor Zagorka Dolovac that 'students expect you to fight for law and justice, without political abuse or corruption". Dolovac's office later responded with a statement inviting a

student delegation to a meet- tion crashed onto the people

drug cartels.

been blockaded for weeks as part of a wider movement demanding accountability over the November 1 tragedy in Novi Sad when a huge concrete construction at the railway sta-

tigation. Striking students have received wide support in Serbia from their professors, farmers, actors and others. Tens of thousands joined a student-led protest in

apartments. The increasingly autocratic Serbian leader has faced accusations of curbing democratic freedoms despite formally pursuing European Union membership for the Belgrade on Sunday that also Balkan nation.

estv of

#### PTI UNITED NATIONS

N Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has paid tributes to Brigadier General Amitabh Jha of India, who was serving with the UNDOF at Golan Heights, and said he will be remembered for his "leadership and unwavering commitment to United Nations peacekeeping.

Brigadier Jha was serving as Deputy Force Commander of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) from April 2023 and had recently served as acting Force Commander of UNDOF in complex circumstances, following the fall of the Assad Government in Syria. "He will

Nations peacekeeping, including in the United Nations Organization Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) as a Military Observer from 2005 to 2006," a statement by the spokesman for Guterres said late on Tuesday. The Secretary-General extends his heartfelt condolences to Brigadier General Jha's family and to the Government of India for their loss, the statement added. Earlier, the Indian Army while paying tributes to Brigadier Jha in post a post on X said, "#GeneralUpendraDwivedi #COAS and

All Ranks of #IndianArmy expresses deepest condolences on the untimely

demise of Brigadier Amitabh Jha due to medical reasons. Indian Army stands firm with the bereaved family in this hour of grief." According to the UNDOF website, Brigadier Jha joined the UNDOF Mission on April 14, 2023.

He was an Infantry Officer & prior to his deployment to UNDOF, had commanded a Brigade in Glaciated Mountainous terrain of India, and a Specialised unit as Commanding Officer. Jha had a keen interest in reading on "military diplomacy, geopolitics, Indo- Pacific, modern & small wars, sub-conventional warfare & tribes & culture," it said, adding, he was a keen sports enthusiast, who played troop games and enjoyed backpacking in the mountains.

covery of spice tins that were used during the Christmas truce in 1914. Professor Peter Doyle,

a military historian at G o l d s m i t h s , University of London, is quoted in 'The Times' on Wednesday



the Christmas of 1914.

which led him to explore

UN Sec-General pays tributes to Indian peacekeeper to showcase how new be remembered for his leadership and unwavering commitment to United research has found that these spice tins ended up in

the hands of German soldiers when the Western Front fell silent as soldiers walked across no man's land to exchange handshakes, gifts and a game of football 110 years ago. Doyle organ-ised an exhibition about the truce, including details around these spice tins, at the Great War Huts Museum in Bury St Edmunds, eastern England. "The truce was not just a case of 'Anglo-Saxon' to 'Saxon' fraternisation," Doyle is quoted as saying. "Up until recently, people didn't really believe or expect Indian soldiers took part in the truce, though they may have been observers," he said. The spice tins were part of morale boosting Christmas gifts to soldiers in the war by Princess Mary, the daughter of Britain's King George V. For British soldiers, her gift was made up of a smoking kit, which was deemed inappropriate as many members of the Indian army were non-smokers. Instead, their tins were filled with spice along with a picture of Princess Mary in place of a cigarette card for their UK counterparts. Doyle, the author of 'For Every Sailor Afloat, Every Soldier at the Front: Princess Mary's Christmas Gift 1914', documents how Princess Mary aged just 17 set out to send a Christmas gift to all those on active service. His book is set against the backdrop of

whether the spice tins may have become part of the Christmas truce there, along with the men who carried them. He approached Robin Schafer, a German historian who went into the archives and found references in German newspapers to men receiving the spice tins as gifts during the brief cessation of hostilities 110 years ago. A soldier named Wilhelm Althoff wrote: 'Some Indians gifted us figs [and] a shiny metal box with spices." Doyle and Schafer hope that more of these tins, which Doyle describes as "unprepossessing", may be found by people in Germany and elsewhere if they go looking. They also hold out hope that some photographs of the event may exist, as picturetaking was initially encouraged in German trenches to boost morale. During the First World War (1914-18) India, which at that time included Pakistan and Bangladesh under British colonial rule, sent the largest share of Commonwealth soldiers to the war effort at over 1.4 million. Shrabani Basu, historian-author of For King and Another Country: Indian Soldiers on the Western Front, 1914-18' has also documented their immense contributions to the war effort. Today there are descendants of the soldiers living in Britain who can be proud of what their ancestors achieved," she notes.

# Japan's foreign minister seeks 'positive' direction in bilateral ties during China visit

#### AP BEIJING

Tapanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya met with top Chinese leaders Wednesday during his visit to Beijing, the first since the heads of the two countries met at a summit in Peru last month, in an effort to make positive inroads in the bilateral relationship. The two neighbours have had a tense relationship in recent years. At the top of Iwaya's agenda is China's ban on Japanese seafood in response to the release of treated radioactive wastewater into the sea from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, as well as China's increasingly assertive military activity in the East and South China Seas.

Iwaya met with China's premier Li Qiang Wednesday as well as Wang Yi, his Chinese counterpart. "Currently the China-Japan relations are at a crit-



ical period of improvement and development," said Li, in his remarks. "China is willing to work together with Japan to move towards the important direction proposed by the leaders of the two countries." "I want to build a relationship where the people of both countries feel that Japan-China

relations have developed and progressed in a positive direction," said Iwaya, ahead of his meeting with Wang. His trip comes just before US President-elect Donald Trump is to take office in January. Tokyo considers the Japan-US alliance the lynchpin of its diplomatic and security poli-

cies, a tone emphasised in the past four years under US President Joe Biden's direction, but it's unclear how Trump will impact the alliance. Japan has revamped its approach to defense in response to Chinese actions in recent years, boosting military spending and shifting away from a principle of self-defense.

Earlier this year, Japan protested when a Chinese military plane flew into Japan's airspace, while in the summer, a Chinese survey ship sailed into Japanese territorial waters. While how US-China relations come out under the Trump administration is unclear, Japan is seeking stability in its relationship with its neighbour and hopes to develop ties in areas of mutual interest, including the economy and the elderly care industry. Iwaya told reporters before his departure Tuesday that he will also hold bilateral highlevel people and cultural exchange

talks, joined by the education minis-ters from the two sides."The relationship with China, our neighbouring country, is one of Japan's most important," Iwaya told reporters Tuesday. he said. "The two countries share important responsibilities for the peace and prosperity of the region and the international society.

Iwaya, a security expert, is also expected to reiterate his concern about Japanese nationals detained in alleged spying allegations.Japan maintains that the water discharged from the Fukushima plant is treated and diluted to levels much safer than international standards and adequately monitored, but China calls the water contaminated. Both agreed in September to work toward easing the seafood ban by allowing China in multinational sampling missions under the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).



# Fate of Trump's Cabinet picks unclear as **Republicans prepare to take power in Senate**

#### AP WASHINGTON

The fate of President-elect Donald Trump's Cabinet is still unclear after Republican senators spent much of December carefully dodging questions about Robert F. Kennedy Jr. 's views on vaccines, accusations of sexual misconduct against Pete Hegseth and Tulsi Gabbard's 2017 meeting with then-President Bashar Assad of Syria

While some GOP senators have indicated they are all-in for Trump's picks, others have withheld support, for now, especially on some of his more controversial nominees. The dynamic is injecting uncer-

tainty into the process as Republicans prepare to take the Senate majority in January with a four-seat margin and as Trump aggressively challenges them to confirm his Cabinet immediately.

It's not unusual for senators to wait until after confirmation hearings to publicly announce a decision. But Republicans are under more pressure than usual as Trump and his allies make clear that they will confront senators who don't fall in line.

"You only have control of the Senate because of Donald Trump," the president-elect's son, Donald Trump Jr., warned during a media appearance this month. "Without that, you'd be relegated to insignificance? There has been one casualty of

the process so far - former Kep. Matt Gaetz of Florida, who



this time around.

sent" role. Among the senators

to watch are moderate Republicans Lisa Murkowski

withdrew from contention as attorney general after senators relaved private concerns. But Trump has enthusiastically stood by the rest, including Kennedy for secretary of Health and Human Services, Hegseth for secretary of Defense and Gabbard for director of national intelligence.

With hearings starting by mid-January, before Trump is even inaugurated, senators will soon have to decide how closely they will scrutinize the nominees and whether they are willing to vote against any of them. Republicans will have a 53-47 majority, so Trump cannot lose more than three votes on any nomination if Democrats are united in opposition.

The outcome of the confirmation process, and the level of dissent in the Senate, will likely set the tone for Trump's presidency and his relationship with Congress, which was frequent-Sen. John Curtis of Utah. ly tumultuous during his first

term. He often clashed with the Senate, in particular, but has signalled he expects Republican senators to be more compliant 'It's not about putting yeses on the board, it's about keeping nos off the board," said Oklahoma Sen. Markwayne Mullin, one of Trump's top allies in the Senate, who speaks with him frequent-While most Senate Republicans have scrambled to display as much loyalty to Trump as possible, a handful have made clear that they are willing to defend the body's "advise and con-

of Alaska, Susan Collins of Maine and incoming freshman

"Anybody who wants to give me heat for doing my job, bring it on," Curtis said Sunday on ABC's "This Week" when asked about vetting Trump's nominees. "This is my job. It's my constitutional responsibility? Still, even moderate senators have shied away from directly criticising Trump's picks. And not a single Republican has gone on the record against a nominee. Several of Trump's picks are expected to sail to confirmation, perhaps even with some Democratic votes. Sen. John Fetterman, D-Pa., has indicated he will support Florida Sen. Marco Rubio for secretary of State and Rep. Elise Stefanik for United Nations ambassador, as have a few other Democrats.

For the more controversial nominees, though, party unity will be key.

One of Trump's most embattled picks is Hegseth, a Fox News host and veteran who some see as inexperienced and has publicly questioned whether women should serve in combat. He has also faced allegations of sexual assault and excessive drinking that he has denied. But it's all given some senators pause, despite Trump's enthusiastic support.

Hegseth has faced particular pressure from Iowa Sen. Joni Ernst, herself a combat veteran who has worked to address sexual assault in the military. She has met with Hegseth several times, and has not yet said she will support him. She will have a chance to question him, publicly and face-to-face, in a Senate Armed Services Committee confirmation hearing that is scheduled for January 14

Though a hearing for Gabbard has not vet been set, senators will also be able to question her publicly and in a classified setting about her trip to Syria after the US had severed diplomatic relations.

Gabbard has defended the trip. saying it's important to open dialogue, but critics hear echoes of Russia-fuelled talking points in her commentary. Assad fled to Moscow earlier this month after opposition forces overtook Syria in a surprise attack, ending his family's five decades of

# Russia targets Ukrainian energy infrastructure on Christmas Day

Ukrainian Energy Minister

Herman Halushchenko said

energy

AP KYIV

 $R^{\mbox{ussia}}$  launched a massive massile and drone barrage targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure on Wednesday, striking a thermal power plant and prompting Ukrainians to take shelter in metro stations on Christmas morning.

The strikes on Ukrainian fuel and energy sources included 78 air, ground, and sea-launched missiles as well as 106 Shaheds and other types of drones, Ukraine's air force said.

It claimed to have intercepted 59 missiles and 54 drones, with 52 more drones being jammed. In Russia, meanwhile, one woman died and three people were wounded after falling debris from a downed drone sparked a fire in a shopping mall in the city of Vladikavkaz. The head of Russia's republic of North Ossetia-Alania, Gov. Sergey Menyaylo, said security footage showed that the explosion took place outside the Alania Mall Wednesday morning. At least one person was killed in Russia's attack on Ukraine's Dnipro region, Vice Prime Minister Oleksii Kuleba said on Telegram, adding that heating was disrupted for 155 residential buildings. He also said 500,000 people in the Kharkiv region were without heat. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said one Russian missile passed Moldovan and Romanian air-

space. "Putin deliberately chose Christmas for an attack. What could be more inhumane? Zelenskyy said on X. "They continue to fight for a blackout in Ukraine."

Timchenko, CEO of DTEK wrote on his X account.

world 09

Russia again "massively attacks At least seven strikes targeted infrastructure. Kharkiv, sparking fires across Ukraine's air force said that the city, regional head Oleh multiple missiles had been fired Syniehubov wrote on Telegram at the Kharkiv, Dnipro and At least three people were Poltava regions in the east of the injured, local authorities said. country. He said the power dis-"Kharkiv is under massive missile fire. A series of explosions tributor took the necessary measures to limit consumption. rang out in the city and there "As soon as the security situaare still ballistic missiles flying tion allows, energy workers will establish the damage in the direction of the city. Stay in safe places," Kharkiv Mayor caused," he said. State energy Ihor Terekhov said. operator Ukrenergo applied Russia's Ministry of Defence said in its morning report Wednesday that it had shot preemptive power outages across the country due to a "massive missile attack," leading

down 59 Ukrainian drones overnight, including over the Belgorod, Voronezh, Kursk, Bryansk and Tambov regions, as well as over the Azov Sea. It did not mention the incident in North Ossetia-Alania. Four people were also killed as a result of Ukrainian shelling in

the town of Lgov in the Kursk this year. region, regional head Alexander Khinshtein said. Three people "Denying light and warmth to millions of peace-loving people as they celebrate Christmas is a died after several residential depraved and evil act that must answered," Maxim

to electricity going out in sev-eral districts of the capital,

Kyiv. Ukraine's biggest private energy company, DTEK, said

Russia struck one of their ther-

mal power plants Wednesday

morning, making it the 13th

attack on Ukraine's power grid



### LOST & FOUND

Kiran Aggarwal D/o Satpal Aggarwal R/o 425, Kohat Enclave, Pitampura, Delhi 110034 have lost cancelled lease dead of the mission in New Delhi but | Property No. 425, Kohat Enclave, Pitampura, Delhi 110034. Finder Please Contact: 9871063925

PD(1142)A

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Anju Bala C/o Anil Sharma R/o P-33 Krishan Vihar, Sultanpuri C-Block North West Delhi-110086 have changed my name to Anju to

PD(1144)A

DELHI-

PD(1145)C

I, RAVI KUMAR TANWAR S/o RATTAN SINGH R/o WZ-1420, Nangal Raya New Delhi, South West Delhi, Delhi-110046 have changed the name of my minor son RUDRAKSH TANWAR aged 12 years and he shall hereafter be known as VEDANSH TANWAR.

#### PD(1146)C

I, hitherto known as RAJAN KUMAR alias RAJA BABU S/o SURENDRA SINGH, R/o WZ-856, Nangal Raya, South West Delhi, Delhi-110046, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as RAJA BABU.

#### PD(1147)C

Dutch citizen sentenced to three years prison in Russia for punching police officer



#### AP MOSCOW

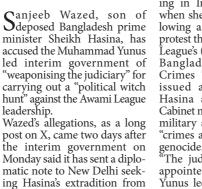
Russian court sentenced a ADutch citizen to three years in prison on Wednesday after he Westerners as bargaining chips found guilty of punching a



recent years. Some analysts have said that Moscow may be using jailed

as tensions rema

#### Hasina's son claims Yunus govt weaponising judiciary for 'political witch hunt' PTI WASHINGTON farcical trial process through India. Hasina, 77, has been livation of thousands by law ing in India since August 5



when she fled Bangladesh following a massive student-led protest that toppled her Awami League's (AL) 16-year regime. Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) has issued arrest warrants for Hasina and several former Cabinet ministers, advisers, and military and civil officials for "crimes against humanity and

The judges and prosecutors appointed by the unelected Yunus led regime to conduct

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER (Website : mppgcl.mp.gov.in)

M.P. POWER GENERATING COMPANY LIMITED

International Crimes Tribunal makes it a political witch hunt that forsakes justice and marks another ongoing onslaught to persecute Awami League leadership," Wazed said in his post on Tuesday. An IT entrepreneur, Wazed is based in the US and has been an ICT adviser in Hasina's government. "The kangaroo tribunal and subsequent request for extradition comes while hundreds of leaders and activists are extrajudicially killed, framing of outrageous murder charges, illegal incarcer-

enforcement and violent attacks including looting vandalism and arson going on with impunity everyday fuelled by denial of the regime," he added. On Monday, India confirmed receiving the 'note verbale' or diplomatic communication from the Bangladesh high comrefrained from commenting on it. Under the provisions of the India-Bangladesh extradition treaty, extradition may be refused if the offence is one of a "political character."



THE PIONEER () ASSIFIEI

police officer.

Harry Johannes van Wurden was arrested and placed under house arrest following an altercation with a police officer in central Moscow in October, Russian news agency RIA Novosti reported, citing police. It said that van Wurden punched the officer in the face following a disagreement about a knocked-down road sign.

Van Wurden was found guilty of using violence against a government official by the capital's Khamovnichesky District Court, Russia's Interfax news agency said. The charge carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

A number of foreign nationals from the US and Western Europe have been jailed in

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform all concerned that Sh. Yuvara Singh Chauhan son of Sh. Tejpal Singh, R/ Gali No.3, Village-Chhalera, Sector-44, Noida had executed a WILL on dt. 06.03.2023 i respect of Residential Plot No.A-146. Secto 151, Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar-U.F area measuring 162.0 Sq.Mtrs., in my favou which is registered in the office of Sub-Registrar, NOIDA. Whereas Sh. Yuvarai Singh Chauhan died o

13.12.2024 and after his death I, Satish Chauhan son of Sh. Amichand Chauhan, R/c H.No.5, Gali No.3, Near Primary School Village-Chhalera, Noida, want to get mutation of the said property on the basis of WILL in m favour. If anyone has any objection, he/she wi submit his/her objection in th Residential(Plot), Deptt. of Noida Authorit within 30 days of the publication of this notice SATISH CHAUHAN

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to all concern that Sh. Ishwa Dayal Sharma S/o Harbhajan Lal Sharma R/o 3413, Malyam Street, Delhi Gate New Delhi-110002, who is the original allottee of Plot No 34, Block-D, Sector-40, Noida(U.P), had sold the said property on General power of attorney basis to the following person(s). GPA was executed on in favour of Mrs. Madhu Kapoor W/o Sh. Madho Kapoor R/o B-31, Near DAV School, Sector-56 Noida (U.P) which is registered on Dated 26.02.1997 in Sub Registrar office Delhi. The agreement to sell was not registered or not executed. So it is informed to all concern that the said property is going to be transferred in favour of Mrs. Charu Bansal W/o Sh. Rajiv Bansal R/o 16/331-B. Khaioor Road Karol Bagh Centrel Delhi. If any one has/have any objection he/ she may file his/her objection along with the sufficient proof in the Residential Plot Department of the Noida Authority within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice. Mrs. Madhu Kapoor

Kremlin's militar Ukraine. Those d ed Wall Street Io Evan Gershkovi corporate secur Paul Whelan an Europe/Radio Li ist Alsu Kurmasł All three Americ freed as part of th

oner exchange si the Cold War in vehemently deni brought against range from espion ing false informat Russian army.

Letter No. : 5

in high over the ry operation in detained includ- ournal reporter	Tender Particulars/Tender Number				stimated Cost Rs.) including GST	Tender Cost & EMD in Rs.		Last Date and Time for closing of Online submission	
vich, Michigan urity executive nd Radio Free	Supply, Erection and installation of 20 mtr. high mast with complete accessories for power house at SSTPP, MPPGCL, Dongalia. (T-2024_MPPGC_386126)				66.33 Lakhs	2000/- 1,32,70		20.01.2025 up to 15:30	
Liberty journal- sheva. cans, who were	AOH work of Bo No. 2 at 2x600M (T-2024_MPPGC_38	W, SSTPP,			371.35 Lakhs	5000/- 3,71,35		13.01.2025 up to 15:30	
the largest pris- since the end of n August 2024, lied the charges t them, which	Procurement for set o of 200 NB Branch S AHP of 2x660 MW, S (T-2024_MPPGC_38	Segregating v tage-II, SSTF	alve (BSV) ins	talled at	53.52 Lakhs	2000/- 1,07,10		17.01.2025 up to 15:30	
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Name of V	Vork	Cost of Tender Form	Earnest Money (Rupee in Iakh)	Validity of Tender	Time o Complet		Ca Re	ntractor's tegory of gistration tendering	
	arikaran work in tura Govindpur	₹ 5000.00 + 18%	₹ 10.32 Lakh	120 Days	15 Mon (includir Rainy Sea	ng	in Ro	"A" & Higher bad work in htral Govt./	

Electrospinning Unit at Door University.Dehradun. Uttarakhand The tender documents are available on Uttarakhand government e

procurement www.uktenders.gov.ir Interested firms may apply through e-tender

Store & Purchase Officer

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform all concerned that SH BHOOP SINGH son of Sh. Nanuva. R/c illage-Illahabas, Dadri, Sector-86, Phase NOIĎA, had executed a WILL on D No.SU-12, Sector-86, Noida, Distt. Gautar Budh Nagar-U.P. area measuring 127.0 Sq.Mtrs., duly allotted by the Noida Authority against 5% Villager Quota against Khe No.193 & 310, Village-Suthiana, Noida, Distt &W) Gautam Budh Nagar-U.P., in our favour which is regd. Whereas Sh. Bhoop Singh died of 26.05.2024 and after his death We, Manvi o SH, Ramu, R/o 158, Vill, Behlolpur, Secto 35, Noida & Kirti Bhati S/o Sh. Dinesh Bha R/o 7118, Vill, Shahdara, Sector-141, NOIDA ant to get mutation of the said property on th pasis of WILL in our favour. If anyone has an objection, he/she will submit his/her objectio in the Residential(Plot), Deptt. of Noida Authority within 30 days of the publication of this notice. MANVIR & KIRTI BHATI

Anju Bala for all purposes PD(1143)C

I, Abhinav Aggarwal S/o Anil Kumar Aggarwal R/o B-150, Sector-51, Noida GB Ngr, UP, hereby inform that as per adhaar my father's name is Anil Agarwal and as per Passport & Pan Card my father's name is Anil Kumar Aggarwal. Both Anil Kumar Aggarwal and Anil Agarwal are one Person only for all future purposes.

I, RAJINA, W/O. JAMIL

AKHTAR, R/O, C- 584,

110033, HAVE CHANGED MY

KHATOON. RAJINA AND

RAJEENA KHATOON IS THE

TO RAJEENA

JAHANGIRPURI

SAME PERSON

NAME

I, Magi Devi, Mother of No.15808086M L/Nk Jagdish Prasad Saran, R/o-Vill- Charnisara, Post-Gudha Bhagwandas, Dist-Nagaur, Rajasthan, have changed my name from Magi Devi to Mangi Devi, vide affidavit dated 25/12/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1148)C

I, Sunita, W/o- JC-472281L Sub Sunil Kumar Nunia, R/o- Vill+Po- Nunia Gothra, Teh-Chirawa, Dist-Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan-333026, have changed my name from Sunita to Sunita Devi, vide affidavit dated 25/12/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1149)C

#### M.P. ROAD DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD. (M.P. State Highway Authority) (Govt. of M.P. Undertaking) MPRDC 45-A, Arera Hills, Bhopal-462011 (CIN : U45203MP2004SGC016758) Ph. No. : 0755-2597290, 2765205, Fax : 0755-2572643, Website : mprdc.gov.in NIT No. 12513/664/Procu./MPRDC/NDB/CW/2024 Date : 24.12.2024 NOTICE INVITING TENDERS Madhya Pradesh Road Development Corporation Limited (MPRDC) Bhopal invites online tender for Upgradation of following roads in the state of Madhya Pradesh under proposed NDB Loan : · Pkg. Name of Road Length | Estimated | Bid Security | Cost of Bid | Period of No. (in Km) Project Cost (EMD) Document Completion (In Rs. Cr.) (in INR Cr.) (in Rs.) (In Months) 10 Upgradation of Gadasarai 47.32 227.37 2.27 50.000/ 24 Pandariya Road (CG Border) 11 Upgradation of Bachhon-Chandla- 57.64 299.56 3.00 50,000/-24 Sarwai-Gorihar-Chandrapura Road (MP - UP Border) 12 Upgradation of Ujjain - Maksi Road 38.95 273.45 50,000/-24 2.73 13 Upgradation of Morar-Chitora Road. 29.40 127.35 1.27 50,000/-24 The dates for purchase, submission, etc. are mentioned in the key dates. Tender forms can be purchased online only up to 15:30 hrs. on 04.02.2025 from website www.mptenders. gov.in. The bidders have to submit the Technical bid as well as Financial Bid online only. The Addendum/Corrigendum (if any) shall only be published on the website of www. mptenders.gov.in only. If holiday is declared by Govt. of M.P. on the date of opening, the same will automatically be shifted to subsequent working days. MPRDC reserves the right to accept/ reject any/all tenders without assigning any reason thereof. M.P. Madhyam/117983/2024 MANAGING DIRECTOR

The Supe em) In anticipati the information w

SI. No.	Name of Work	Cost of Tender Form	Earnest Money (Rupee in Iakh)	Validity of Tender	Time of Completion	Contractor's Category of Registration for tendering
1	PD PWD Almora Improvement and Damarikaran work in Goluchina Galli Bashura Govindpur Motor Road under State Sector in Someshwar Constituency of District Almora (In anticipation of sanction)	₹ 5000.00 + 18% GST	₹ 10.32 Lakh	120 Days	15 Month (including Rainy Season and Winter Season)	Class "A" & Higher in Road work in Central Govt./ Any state Govt./ Any Govt. Undertaking.
2	PD PWD Almora Improvement and Damarikaran work in Dholaghat Rikhe Silani Motor Road under State Sector in Someshwar Constituency of District Almora. (In anticipation of sanction)	₹ 5000.00 + 18% GST	₹ 3.25 Lakh	120 Days	15 Month (including Rainy Season and Winter Season)	Class "B" & Higher in Road work in Central Govt./ Any state Govt./ Any Govt. Undertaking.
3	PD PWD Almora Improvement and Damarikaran work in Pokhari Bagniya and Pokhari Binwal via Chaykhan to Baliya Link Motor Road in Km 1 to 9 under CM Ghoshna No. 284/2024 in Jageshwar Constituency of District Almora. (In anticipation of sanction)	₹ 5000.00 + 18% GST	₹ 12.25 Lakh	120 Days	15 Month (including Rainy Season and Winter Season)	Class "A" & Higher in Road work in Central Govt./ Any state Govt./ Any Govt. Undertaking.

# money 10



# Infrastructure projects, marketing campaigns drive tourism growth in 2024

#### PNS 📕 NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, several undertook key initiatives in 2024 to boost tourism in the country. These included infrastructure development projects under Darshan Swadesh and PRASHAD schemes, promotion and marketing campaigns like "Bharat Parv" and "Dekho Apna Desh," and participation in international travel fairs to showcase India's diverse tourism offerings to the global market.

Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned a total of 76 projects for an amount of Rs.5287.90 Crore under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, out of which 75 projects are physically complete.

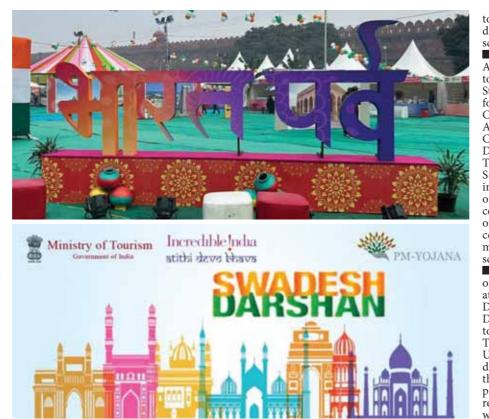
■Ministry of Tourism has Swadesh revamped its Darshan Scheme as Swadesh Darshan 2.0 (SD2.0) with the objective develop to sustainable and responsible destinations following a tourist & destination centric approach. 34 projects have

been sanctioned for Rs.793.20 Crore under SD2.0.

Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned a total of 48 projects for an amount of Rs.1646.99 Crore under the PRASHAD Scheme, out of which 23 projects have been completed

A total of 65 projects for an amount of Rs 937.56 Crore have been sanctioned under the Assistance to Central Agencies Scheme, out of which 38 projects have been physically completed.

Ministry of Tourism has formulated guidelines for 'Challenge Based Destination Development' as sub scheme of Swadesh Darshan 2.0 Scheme to enhance tourist experience across all points of the tourist value chain. Under this scheme, proposals have been invited under four thematic categories (i) Spiritual Tourism, (ii) Culture & Heritage, (iii) Vibrant Program, Village (iv) Ecotourism and Amrit Dharohar Sites. The Ministry of Tourism has selected 42 destinations under various



tourism themes development under the scheme

As a follow up to the Budget Announcements 2024-25, a total of 40 projects across 23 States have been sanctioned for an amount of Rs. 3295.76 Crore under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) -Development of Iconic Tourist Centres to Global Scale to infuse long term interest free loans for a period of 50 years to States for comprehensive development of iconic tourist centers in the country and branding & marketing them at global scale.

of Tourism Ministry organized "Bharat Parv" event at the Red Fort grounds, Delhi, as part of the Republic Day Celebrations from 23rd to 31st January, 2024. Thematic Pavilions of States/ UTs were setup to showcase diverse tourist attractions of the country. Cultural performances by various regional cultural associations were also organized. The wonders and attractions

event promoted Vocal for Local, through the participation of local artisans Local,

from across the country by displaying and selling their products. Launched 'Dekho Apna Desh People's Choice 2024' - a

Nationwide poll to identify the most preferred tourist attractions under 5 categories. It is also an effort to identify attractions and destinations for development in mission mode, contributing to India's journey towards Viksit Bharat@2047.

■Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the Ministry of Education is organizing a nation-wide Dekho Apna Desh Schools Kendriya Contest for (KV) Vidyalaya and Navodaya Vidyalaya (NV) Schools. The students are expected to create physical brochure of their District's tourism attractions, destinations, experiences, and other offerings. The initiative aims to make the students aware about the tourism

country. India Global Chalo Diaspora Campaign was launched to enable Indian diaspora members become Incredible India ambassadors. The campaign has been implemented in the spirit of Jan Bhagidari for an Atulya and Viksit Bharat to encourage the Indian diaspora to invite their 5 non-Indian friends to travel to India every year. One lakh free e-visas for foreign tourists visiting India under 'Chalo India' campaign have been announced for the remaining part of the current

present in each district of th

Financial Year. ■On the occasion of the 46th Session of the World Heritage Committee held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi in July 2024, an 'Incredible India' exhibition was set up at Bharat Mandapam to highlight India's rich cultural heritage, age-old civilization, geographical diversity, hidden gems in tourism along with modern developments, for the delegates.

#### Government committed to improve quality spending BPCL picks Andhra Pradesh for in FY26: Finmin report amid legal tussle with SEBI India's last greenfield refinery project

#### PTI NEW DELHI

The government will continue its focus on improving quality spending, strengthening the social security net and bring down the fiscal deficit to 4.5 per cent of the GDP in FY26, a finance ministry document said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is schedule to present the Budget for 2025-26 in Parliament on February

The Union government is committed to pursuing the glide path of fiscal consolidation as announced in the Budget for FY 2021-22 and to attain a level of fiscal deficit lower than 4.5 per cent of GDP by FY 2025-26, according to finance ministry statements on the half yearly review of the trends in receipts and expenditure and deviation in meeting the



obligations of the government approach would help further under the Fiscal strengthen the Responsibility and Budget macro-economic Management Act, 2003. fundamentals and ensure The statements were tabled in overall financial stability," it the Lok Sabha last week. said According to the statements, the Budget 2024-25 was "The thrust will be on improving the quality of presented in the backdrop of public spending, while at the same time, strengthening the global uncertainties caused by

needy. This

social security net for the

and

India's sound macroeconomic fundamentals have cushioned the country from the vagaries afflicting the

global economy. "It has also helped the nation pursue growth with fiscal consolidation. As a result, India retains its pride of place as one of the fastest growing economies in the world. However, risks to growth still remain," it said. expenditure Total was

estimated at about Rs 48.21 lakh crore, of which, expenditure on revenue account and capital account were estimated at about Rs 37.09 lakh crore and Rs 11.11 lakh crore, respectively, as per the Budget Estimate (BE) of 2024 - 25

nation's

As against total expenditure of Rs 48.21 lakh crore, the expenditure in first half of FY25 was Rs 21.11 lakh crore the wars in Europe and the or about 43.8 per cent of BE. Taking into account the grant

for creation of capital assets. the effective capital expenditure (Capex) was projected at Rs 15.02 lakh crore.

Gross Tax Revenue (GTR) was estimated at about Rs 38.40 lakh crore with an implied tax-GDP ratio of 11.8 per cent. Total non-debt receipt of the

Centre was estimated at about Rs 32.07 lakh crore. It comprised tax revenue (net to Centre) of about Rs 25.83 lakh crore, non-tax revenue of about Rs 5.46 lakh crore, and miscellaneous capital receipts of Rs 0.78 lakh crore.

With above estimates of receipts and expenditure, the fiscal deficit was pegged at about Rs 16.13 lakh crore in BE 2024-25 or 4.9 per cent of GDP.

In H1 of FY25, the fiscal deficit is estimated at Rs 4.75 lakh crore, or about 29.4 per cent of BE

PTI NEW DELH

Ctate-owned Bharat SPetroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) has picked Andhra Pradesh for setting up a new oil refinery-cumpetrochemical complex, which may be the last greenfield project in India which has detailed a very ambitious energy transition

plan to net zero emissions. In a stock exchange filing, BPCL said its board at a meeting on Tuesday "accorded its approval to commence pre project activities for setting up of a greenfield refinery cum petrochemical complex in east coast at Andhra Pradesh at an estimated cost of Rs 6,100 crore".

The pre-project activities include initial studies, land identification, and acquisition, preparation of detailed feasibility report,



environment impact assessment, basic design engineering package, and front-end engineering design, it said.

While the firm did not reveal the capacity or the timelines for completing the project, the refinery could be at least 9 million tonnes (180,000 barrels per day) capacity.

BPCL is India's third largest oil refiner behind state-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and Reliance Industries Ltd. It currently owns refineries at Mumbai (12 million tonnes a year capacity), Kochi in Kerala (15.5 million tonnes) and Bina

in Madhya Pradesh (7.8 million tonnes). It had lost a fourth oil refinery to Oil India Ltd in the aborted privatisation plan.

BPCL had to give up its Numaligarh refinery in Assam to Oil India Ltd when the government was attempting to privatise the company. The transfer was to keep the Numaligarh unit within the public sector to honour the Assam Accord. But BPCL privatisation was aborted due to lack of interest by bidders. The planned unit in Andhra Pradesh is being touted as India's last greenfield refinery project. BPCL is part of a consortium that is pursuing a 60 million tonnes a year refinery-cum-petrochemical complex on west coast in Maharashtra that was conceived six years back but is yet to get off the drawing board due to land acquisition

## Cement industry looks for better growth in 2025

PTI NEW DELHI

Middle East

The Adani group has plans in



woes



poor

#### **Government extends duty**free import of yellow peas

#### PTI 📕 NEW DELHI

February 28, 2025.

The government has extended the import of government has yellow peas without duty and MIP (minimum import price) till February next year. However, the imports are subjected to registration under online Import Monitoring System, with immediate effect, for all import consignments where Bill of Lading (Shipped on Board) is issued on or before

"Import of yellow peas....Is without the MIP free condition and without port restriction, subject to registration under online import monitoring system, with immediate effect, for all import consignments where the bill of lading (shipped on board) is issued on or before February 28, 2025," the directorate general of foreign trade (DGFT) has said in a notification.

¬he Indian cement industry, I witnessing a consolidation and heightened rivalry between two corporate houses snapping smaller players, pins its hope on 2025 for an in sales improvement realisation, higher margins and acceleration in demand, expecting around 8 per cent sales growth helped by an increased government spendings on big-ticket infra projects. Over 50 MTPA (million

tonnes per annum) capacity are being acquired for USD 4.5 billion by two leading players -Aditya Birla group firm UltraTech Cement and billionaire Gautam Adani-led Ambuja Cements, besides organic expansion of the existing units as they have kept their war chest ready prowling for opportunities. The industry faced challenges on numerous fronts in 2024, right from moderate capacity utilisation to lower sales

stake in the company, it said.



realisation, which impacted the topline of several makers, contraction of margins and slower volume growth. However, 2024 would also be known for big-ticket acquisitions by UltraTech and Adani Cement to consolidate their positions and achieve their targeted growth ahead of

time. Adani Cements, a lateral entrant in the secto,r completed the acquisition of Saurashtra-based Sanghi Industries, Penna Industries and recently announced to

acquire CK Birla group firm Orient Cement as part of its inorganic growth strategy.

Besides, it has also snapped up small players facilities as My Home and its subsidiary ACC has also acquired Asian Concretes and Cements. These acquisitions and

expansions helped Adani Cement to cross a 100 MTPA capacity with a pan-India presence in 2024 within two years of entry in the sector, with 70 MTPA acquired capacity from Swiss firm Holcim.

MTPA by FY28, just a shade below market leader UltraTech's current capacity of 156.66 MTPA grey cement. Aditya Birla group is also firing on all cylinders to maintain its lead, and has plans for 200 MTPA capacity by FY27. In 2024 it announced acquisition of South-based India Cements Ltd and is in the process of acquiring Kesoram Industries' Cement Business.

According to Deloitte India Partner Rakesh Surana, 2024 was a year of consolidation for the cement industry, marked by significant mergers and acquisitions.

Ola Electric on Wednesday said it has expanded its network to 4,000 stores This trend has highlighted a structural shift in the sector, nationwide, a four-fold with the largest companies increase from its existing accounting for a substantial network. The company has share of the overall capacity. Currently, the top five cement opened over 3,200 new stores co-located with service collectively producers command an estimated 60-65 facilities. The expansion spans per cent of the industry's capacity," he said. beyond metros and Tier I and II cities into smaller towns

# Ola Electric expands pan-India network

#### PTI NEW DELHI

and tehsils, Ola Electric said in a statement. "With our newly opened

stores co-located with service centres, we have completely redefined EV purchase and ownership experience, setting new benchmarks with our #SavingsWalaScooter campaign," Ola Electric Chairman & Managing Director Bhavish Aggarwal said

Swan ties up with AG&P for India FSRU

#### PTI 📕 NEW DELHI

Business tycoon Nikhil Merchant-run Swan Energy has lined up a floating LNG receipt and regasification unit for its proposed liquefied natural gas import project at Jafrabad in Gujarat, the firm said in a regulatory filing.

Swan signed a Heads of Agreement with Singapore's AG&P Terminals and Logistics to form joint venture companies to provide a floating storage and regasification unit (FSRU) and a floating storage unit to operate the Jafrabad terminal as well as for supplying LNG. A joint venture company (LNG supply company) will be incorporated "for the purpose of supplying LNG in Îndia or any other jurisdiction", Swan said in the



filing, adding it will hold 51 per cent equity stake and the balance 49 per cent equity stake shall be held by AG&P LNG

venture Another joint company (vessel company) will be incorporated "for the purpose of providing floating storage and regasification unit (FSRU) and floating storage option with AG&P LNG to

have equity participation in Swan Energy's LNG Terminal," it said.

With domestic natural gas production meeting barely half of the country's needs, the fuel in its supercooled, liquid form is imported to meet feedstock demand for feedstock demand for generating electricity, making fertiliser and CNG sales. The country has seven LNG import facilities -- 3 in Gujarat (Dahej, Hazira and Mundra), and one each in Maharashtra (Dabhol), Kerala (Kochi), Tamil Nadu (Ennore) and Odisha (Dhamra)

unit (FSU) to operate Swan LNG Pvt Ltd's LNG Terminal. AG&P LNG will hold a 51 per Swan said all the transactions cent equity stake and Swan with AG&P are subject to due will hold 49 per cent equity diligence by both the parties; and the terms and conditions AG&P LNG will also collaborate with Swan for for the proposed deals will be decided post due diligence. regasification of LNG into Swan in August announced plans to divest for USD 399 million its majority 51 per

cent stake in the 5 million tonnes per annum LNG FSRU, Vasant One, to Turkey's state-owned gas company Botas. The remaining 49 per cent stake is held by Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (IFFCO) but it is not known if the fertiliser company plans to divest its share.

The FSRU, which was built by then-Hyundai Heavy Industries, was delivered to Swan four years ago and was originally destined for its Jafrabad import terminal. But project timelines were delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic that was followed by a typhoon. The FSRU subsequently was

leased by Swan subsidiary Triumph Offshore to Botas under a one-year bareboat charter with a reported day rate of USD 250,000.

## **GoMechanic eyes over 3-fold** business growth by 2027

#### PTI 📕 NEW DELHI

ar services and repair platform GoMechanic expects over three-fold rise in net revenue to Rs 700 crore by 2027 and thereafter go for public listing, a top official of the company said.

GoMechanic Co-Founder and CEO Himanshu Arora told PTI that the company at present has around 3 per cent market share and aims to raise it to  $\overline{10}$  per cent in the next three years. The company is also looking to diversify offerings, foraying into the two-wheeler and

electric vehicle services segment. 'We sit at about 3 per cent of the market share right now and to be servicing every 1 car out of ten would be around 10 per cent by 2027. By 2027, we expect our brand to generate approximately Rs 700 crore in revenue. We believe that an IPO is a natural next step for GoMechanic's growth story," Arora said.

The company at present provides services through 800 garages across 125 cities and plans to scale up to 2,500 garages across 500 cities by



2027

GoMechanic was acquired by Servizzy, a subsidiary of the Lifelong Group, in March 2023 after anomalies in its financial records were found under previous management and the firm was put on sale by the investors.

"It has been only about 20 months since we acquired the brand... The trajectory clearly indicates that an IPO is on our roadmap," Arora said.

GoMechanic posted a revenue of Rs 210 crore in the financial year 2023-24 and a revenue of Rs 85 crore in the April-June 2024 guarter. "Our spares and accessories are also growing fast. We should be clocking about Rs 432 crore this financial year in gross merchandise value and roughly around Rs 200 crore in the net revenue," Arora said.

# Anupati, Raju emerge winners at Junior **National Equestrian Championship**

#### PTI 📕 NEW DELHI

Yavyashree Sai and Raju Singh emerged the best performers in the show jumping and dressage categories respectively on the concluding day of the first half of Junior National Equestrian Championships. In the young rider category Anupati, who was astride Abra ka Dabra, secured 32.60 marks without conceding any penalty in the showjumping event on Tuesday. two-phase

She finished ahead of Avik Bhatia, Geetika Tikkishetty, and Monu Kumar to be adjudged the best in her event.

In dressage freestyle, Raju, who rode Louk, did extremely well in his event, securing 65.18 marks. It was a very competitive event in which Javeer Verma, Geetika and Navyasjree ran him close.

"It was extremely satisfying to see in this junior championship the talent

India has. It gives EFI hope that separated the winners and confidence that the and other participants was also produce high-octane game will grow fast in the very country. Almost all the Federation of India secretary categories saw very close competition. The margin

the pioneer

DEHRADUN | THURSDAY | DECEMBER 26, 2024

thin,"

**JATIONAL EQUESTRIAN** 

CHAMPIONSHIP 2024

UB SIOR, NIOR DUN OTER)

half of the championship will Equestrian competitions that will conclude on December 29," general Jaiveer Singh said. 'he said. "I am sure that the second In the children dressage

category, Subh Chowdhri, astride Furstentanz, trumped the challenge of Pranav Deepak, Punnet Jakhar and Deepak, Punnet Jakhar and Jaiwant Nawle while in the children show jumping event, Mogil Anbu pipped Divyaraj Singh Rathore, Sresh Raju Mantena and Eera Shree Harsha to emerge winner.

Adding to the accolades in the children I category, Jaiveer Singh Nagra was awarded the best rider title for his exceptional performances throughout for the competition, cementing his place as one of the brightest young talents in Indian equestrian sports. Sahil, astride Candy, logged

93.5 points to emerge winner in the overall individual tent pegging event, finishing ahead of Mohammad Alhamad Chishty (80), Shahrukh Khan (79) and Adeel Ahkter (76).

The action will next resume on December 27 with junior (age group 14-18) and children II (age group 10-12) category events.

Mohun Bagan's set-piece proficiency gives them edge against Punjab FC

#### PTI 📕 NEW DELHI

Armed with a strong all-proticient at set-pieces, Mohun Bagan Super Giant will fancy their chances when they face Punjab FC in the Indian Super League here on Thursday.

The Mariners have won both their previous ISL matches against Punjab FC. However, Punjab FC have already haster two sides Murtheri beaten two sides, Mumbai City FC and Odisha FC, who managed the double over them last season, showing their ability to bounce back. Mohun Bagan enter this match after an eight-game unbeaten run that was ended with a defeat to FC Goa in their last fixture. Head coach Jose Molina has never lost consecutive games in ISL history, and the Mariners themselves have not suffered back-to-back away defeats in a single season.

Punjab FC, on the other hand, have lost their last two matches on the road, conceding six goals across these outings, as many as they conceded in their previous five games combined. However, their home record

has been solid, with four wins in five games, including a 2-0 victory against Mohammedan SC in their last home outing. Right now, Mohun Bagan lead the points table with 26 points from 12 games, whereas Punjab FC are positioned seventh, having garnered 18

points from 11 matches. Punjab FC have conceded only one goal in the opening 15 minutes of matches this season, the joint lowest in the league alongside Odisha FC. This defensive strength could give them an early foothold against the Mariners. Punjab FC's Nikhil Prabhu

(33) and Tekcham Singh (28) rank first and second, respectively, in interceptions this season. Their defensive awareness will be key in

countering Mohun Bagan's attacking threats. Mohun Bagan have scored six goals from corners this season, the most by any team in the ISL. Contrastingly, Punjab are the only side yet

to score from a corner this campaign. Mohun Bagan's goal difference of +11 after 12 games is their best-ever in ISL history at this stage, underscoring their balanced performance across attack and defence.

### PKL eliminators: UP Yoddhas to take on Jaipur | Former Chelsea player Oscar returns to Brazil's Sao Paulo from China Pink Panthers, Patna Pirates face U Mumba

#### PTI PUNE

UP Yoddhas will play Jaipur Pink Panthers, while Patna Pirates will be up against U Mumbai in the eliminators of the Pro Kabaddi League here on Thursday.

In the fray for the top prize are Haryana Steelers and UP Yoddhas, both of whom have never won the title, and along with them are three-time champions Patna Pirates, season 8 winners Dabang Delhi KC, season 1 and 9 title holders Jaipur Pink Panthers, and season 2 champions U Mumba, who sealed qualification for the playoffs with the last game of the league stage.

The winners of the eliminators will take on Haryana Steelers and Dabang



Delhi KC in the semifinals scheduled for Friday. Haryana Table toppers Steelers, who are through to the semi-finals, are gunning for their first PKL title while Dabang Delhi KC have been

together 15-match different. а streak, which unbeaten

helped them secure the second position on the points table. UP Yoddhas, who had to go back to the drawing board one of the best teams this before the season began, have season and have stitched seen their young raiders and

the defence step up in style and U Mumba stormed into the PKL Season 11 playoffs with a superb win against the Bengal Warriorz in the final league stage game this season. Among the highlights for U Mumba this season has been that the young brigade have

led from the front. Having finished sixth on the points table, Jaipur Pink Panthers are looking for their third title. And coach Sanjeev Baliyan believes that the mentality and preparations for the playoff week has to be

"The playoff is a different kettle of fish and there are no second chances like during the league stage. And moreover, to win the PKL title again, the whole squad has to play well, and support Arjun Deshwal."

#### AP SAO PAULO

Former Chelsea midfielder Oscar is returning to his Brazilian boyhood club Sao Paulo after 14 years, which included a long spell in Chinese soccer. Sao Paulo president Julio

Casares posted photos Tuesday on his social media channels which showed him with the 33-year-old former Brazil international. Casares described the move as "a

super transfer." Minutes later, Oscar thanked China's Shanghai Port, where he played for eight seasons, for his time at the Chinese Super League club.

'Today I finish a cycle that marked my life forever," he said. "I leave with my heart full of gratitude and pride for Brazilian everything we achieved Internacional, in 2010.



Oscar joined Sao Paulo on a free transfer. Neither the Brazilian club nor the player disclosed the duration of their deal, but local media reports said he signed a three-year contract.

Oscar is returning to a club he sued to leave for another team



In 2012, Oscar joined Chelsea and won one Europa League title and two Premier League trophies at the English club.

Oscar joined Shanghai in the middle of Chelsea's 2016-17 season for a transfer fee reported to be \$73 million. He won three Super League titles in China and became a fan favorite in Asia.

Bromwich Albion manager Carlos Corberan as its new head coach through June 2027Valencia fired Rubén Baraja on Monday after another setback in La Liga left the Spanish club stuck in the

Relegation-threatened Walencia has hired West

relegation zone and sparked renewed protests against Singaporean owner Peter Lim. "Carlos Corberan has been

appointed as coach of Valencia CF, signing a hrougt contract f

Former Manchester City player Benjani Mwaruwari challenges NADA update on Hima Das ruling in bid to lead Zimbabwe soccer federation

# suspension creates confusion

that

#### PTI NEW DELHI

sian Games gold medallist Asprinter Hima Das, who was exonerated for 'whereabouts' failure by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA), was handed a retrospective suspension by the same body in an unusual turn of events.

The 16-month suspension period ran from July 22, 2023 to November 21, 2024 and the athlete is now free to take part in tournaments but what has created a flutter is that the she had been competing in events as recently as in June this year. NADA has recently announced that she was suspended by its anti-doping panels for failing to provide her



whereabouts.

Known as the 'Dhing Express', she was handed the suspension under a case resolution agreement as per the NADA website. She is currently training Thiruvananthapuram.

The timeline around her suspension has confusion as the athlete has been competing since April this year,



Athletics Federation of India (AFI) source also confirmed that her suspension got over in November. A 'case resolution agreement' is made between

the anti-doping agency and the athlete when both parties consent, and the athlete agrees created to accept the consequences imposed without pursuing including further appeals.

#### AP HARARE

participating in the Indian Former Manchester City Benjani Grand Prix meet in Bengaluru and the National Inter-State Mwaruwari on Tuesday challenged a ruling to block him from potentially becoming the new head of Zimbabwe's soccer federation. Benjani, who also played for Portsmouth, Sunderland and Blackburn in the Premier League, last week filed his nomination to become the next president Zimbabwe of the Football Association (ZIFA). But an ethics committee of the association on Monday didn't include the 46-year-old among those eligible to contest the January elections, without immediately giving a reason.



"Our client is aggrieved by your committee's decision and he intends to appeal ... Without any further delay," the player's lawyers wrote to ZIFA's interim boss Lincoln

Mutasa. "We are instructed by our client to humbly request that you urgently provide us with full written reasons why your committee concluded that Mr. Benjani Mwaruwari

fails to meet eligibility criteria stipulated in the ZIFA statutes?

Zimbabwe has been under a FIFA - appointed normalization committee since July 2023 when soccer's governing body lifted the southern African country's 17-month international ban caused by government interference.

A new executive will be elected in late January. Former Zimbabwe international Benjani still has a chance, however, through an appeals committee of the federation.

Another prospective ZIFA president barred by the ethics committee is a controversial but popular local cleric, Walter Magaya.

Valencia's statement on website said early Wednesday. "A buy-out option in his contract with West Bromwich Albion was taken up to allow

him to leave." No official figure was given but the compensation for the former Valencia youth player was reported to be in the

region of \$3 million. The Spaniard led West Brom to its current seventh place in England's second-tier Championship.

West Brom earlier said in a statement that the 41-year-old Corberan "is set to return to his homeland with the club's gratitude and best wishes following a two-year tenure at

The Hawthorns? Chris Brunt, Damia Abella and Boaz Myhill "will oversee first-team duties until further notice?

# Indian cricket in 2024: Painful trophy wait ends before rare loss at home triggers transition talk

#### PTI 📕 NEW DELHI

The monkey was finally off India's back in a rollercoaster 2024 when the financial giants of international cricket ended a 13-year wait for a world title, lost a rare Test series at home and dealt with transition triggered by both expected and unexpected retirements by the stalwarts of the game.

There was plenty of action over the last 12 months that kept the loyal Indian fan interested.

World Cup triumph; T20 farewell to Rohit and Kohli The Indian cricket team and its

unparalleled fan base were desperate for an ICC trophy after repeatedly faltering in the knock-out stages over the past decade, most recently in the ODI World Cup final at home last year.

The trophy finally came home after Rohit Sharma and Co. Played a near perfect tournament to become the T20 World Cup champions in the

USA and the Caribbean. India's clarity of thought throughout the one-month long event was remarkable and with a little bit of luck on their side, especially in the final at Barbados, they were able to go the distance. On undercooked pitches in

New York, they were pace heavy before unleashing their trump card Kuldeep Yadav from the Super 8 stage of the tournament.

India picked as many as four spinners in the squad but played three in Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel and Kuldeep. With Jadeja not getting to do much with both bat and ball, Axar came of age in the competition producing matchwinning performances with both and ball.

The pace duo of Jasprit Bumrah and Arshdeep Singh also played their part to perfection, collecting 15 and 17 wickets respectively. In the batting department, Rohit led from the front with a

fearless approach demoralised opposition attacks. His approach was best summed up in the Super 8 game against Australia where he tore into the likes of Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins to make all the

difference in the game. His opening partner Kohli was not able to make the contributions that were expected out of him but the superstar came up with an innings of immense substance when it mattered the most -his not-so-fluent 76 of 59 balls kept India in the final after a poor start.

The contributions from allrounder Hardik Pandya, future captain Survakumar Yadav and Rishabh Pant, playing his first international event following his comeback from a lifethreatening car accident, were also noteworthy. A better script could not have

been written for the likes of Rohit and Kohli, who got to say goodbye to the T20 format



with the coveted trophy in their hands. It was also a fitting farewell for head coach Rahul Dravid, whose tenure drew to a close

Change of guard in coahing; Surva's unexpected elevation With Rohit calling it a day, it was expected that Hardik will lead the T20 side into the

transition phase, having captained the side in the former's absence.

However, Dravid's successor Gautam Gambhir had a different line of thinking as he played a major hand in elevating India's best T20 batter position ahead of the series in spinner R Ashwin.

Sri Lanka. To be fair to Suryakumar, the team has ticked all the boxes since he took over, also witnessing the rise of Tilak Verma and rebirth of the likes of Sanju Samson and Varun Chakaravarthy.

All three were simply sensational in India's recent T20 series in South Africa.

Alongside Samson, Abhishek Sharma has also shown the talent and resolve at the top of the order and could serve India for long. India hit rock bottom against

Kiwis

While India moved on from the mighty duo of Rohit and Kohli in the shortest format rather quickly, the same is unlikely in the Test team.

The chatter around the future of senior players in the Test team has gained momentum after India's first whitewash at home in a three-match series and more recently, the sudden Survakumar to the leadership retirement of premier off-

India's loss to New Zealand in their own backyard was easily one of the most embarrassing outcomes for the team in Test cricket over the past decade. Having slayed 'Bazball' earlier

in the year against England, India blanked Bangladesh and were expected to hand out a similar treatment to the visiting Black Caps.

However, in a stunning turn of events, the spirited Kiwis outbatted and out-bowled Rohit and Co. To script their biggest series wins overseas.

The Indian batters' weakness against the turning ball was exposed threadbare and the duo of Ashwin and Jadeja, who run through sides for fun at home, were bettered by Mitchell Santer and Ajaz Patel. It was only after landing in Australia, Ashwin made up his mind on retirement but his underwhelming outing against New Zealand may have contributed to his big decision. With Ashwin gone and Mohammed Shami not not

available, a Test transition is well underway Down Under. The outcome of the remaining two Tests will determine where the Indian batting stands.

Jay Shah becomes youngest ICC chairman

India is the engine of the global game and its influence on the sport increased further with the elevation of Jay Shah as ICC chairman, making him the fifth from the country at the helm of the governing body after Jagmohan Dalmiya, Sharad Pawar, N Srinivasan

and Shashank Manohar. Shah took over in early

December and has already made his presence felt by ending the deadlock over the hosting of the Champions Trophy in Pakistan by ensuring consensus for a reciprocal hybrid model in which India will not be required to travel across the border for any ICC event till 2028.

Likewise, Pakistan too will get a neutral venue in case of an event in India.

# sports 12



# Visitors have exploited Australia's 'brittle' top order: Shastri

#### PTI MELBOURNE

ormer coach Ravi Shastri has backed India to win the Boxing Day Test, saying the visitors have exploited Australia's "brittle" top order to have their "nose ahead" in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Shastri added that Indian pace

spearhead Jasprit Bumrah is "almost single-handedly" responsible for the visitors keeping the series levelled at 1-1.

"I think India would take this, the way the series is poised. Any overseas team being 1-1, especially with the games being in Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane, they would take this.

"Going 1-1 into Boxing Day is the best case scenario. I would say India have their nose ahead," Shastri told news.Com.Au.

Australia's top order comprising Khawaja, Nathan Usman Marnus McSweeney and Labuschagne have been unable to

#### score against Bumrah.

It has have forced them to hand a debut to teenage sensation Sam Konstas while dropping rookie opener Nathan McSweeney. 'It's been pretty brittle. When vou look at this Australian line-up, it's been a long time since I've seen an Australian line-up where the top order is that brittle. India have exploited that and continue to exploit it," Shastri said.

All-rounder Mitchell Marsh has also largely struggled for runs. In the last year, Labuschagne, Marsh, Khawaja and Steve Smith all had average less than 30 in Test cricket. "India is 1-1 in the series and that man (Bumrah) has almost singlehandedly got India into that position," Shastri said.

"As far as Konstas goes, I think he's As far as Nonstas goes, ruma neo very refreshing. He's got flair, he's got flamboyance. But Test cricket is Test cricket. His technique will tighten up and he will be the future for Australia."

Shastri feels McSweeney was

unfortunate to have been axed after just three Tests.

"McSweeney was verv unfortunate. He did the hard yards but he's a middle order batsman. I see him travelling to Sri Lanka when the Australian team go there and rebuild his career from there. "But I think it's a good move getting Konstas in because you need someone who can take the attack to the Indian team, because the punches were coming from nowhere"

India have won the last two series in Australia and now have the opportunity to become only the third touring side to win three consecutive series Down Under, joining the West Indies (1984/85, 1988/89, 1992/93) and South Africa (2008/09, 2012/13, 2016/17).

"Massive. No team has done that in a long time. Australia hammers sides when they come here. For India to pull off three on the trot will be something special.

"But they'll have to play good cricket. I see Australia coming hard in this Test match, especially with the bowlers. It's the batting that'll be the challenge for Australia more than anything else?

Shastri feels India has come to Australia with a strong intent to win.

"India have come here to win, they haven't come here to fill in the numbers. Even when I was the coach, our mantra was to play

extremely hard, fair and to win. 'You have to think of a method to beat Australia and not just compete. You've got to plan properly, how to take your 20 wickets. India have done that and been very aggressive.

"They've been in the face of Australia and give as good as they get. It's been entertaining and feisty stuff. The first day of the Boxing Day Test will determine which way the series will go," he added

# Cummins' message for Konstas: Have fun and don't overthin

yeah,



#### PTI MELBOURNE

ustralia skipper Pat ACummins understands what a teenager goes through on a high-profile Test debut and knows what he needs to tell a young Sam Konstas: and don't "Have fun overthink".

Konstas, 19, is all set to make his debut against India in the Boxing Day Test, starting Thursday. Konstas has created a lot of buzz in Australian domestic cricket and his Test debut at the expense of Nathan McSweeney has

become quite an event. When the skipper was asked about his feelings during his Test debut at 18, Cummins spoke about an element of naivety that can stop a kid from overthinking about how big a deal it is. "I spent a bit of the time

wondering why or how I was there, how it happened so quick. I just remember being really excited and I think it's similar to Sammy (Konstas)

seen everything before. But there's almost just as many positives in having that

freedom and naivety just to go out and see the ball and hit the ball." Indians can throw some

be a pushback round the

know they're good players so no doubt they'll throw some challenges at us at some point.

stand-in skipper at

"Look, hard to say. It was a good Test match here a few years ago. I think Rahane got 100 from memory. So yeah, it always seems like a boxing day every year is a test match. Last year was a great Test match against Pakistan as well." The Indian team is in transition but Cummins wants to keep focus intact on his set of players. "Every team always has something they're kind of grappling with or trying to improve on. As I said previously, I'm really happy our team's travelling. "I thought after Perth we bounced back brilliantly in Adelaide and last week in Oueensland. So for us it's about focusing on what we do well and getting excited for a great week." Head fit, Lyon is king at MCG, Boland is world class Head coach Andrew McDonald has already spoken about Travis Head being fit and the left-hander's extended net session was an indicator. Head had sustained a quadriceps niggle while batting in the second innings in Brisbane. "Trav is good to go. So he'll play. He just ticked off some final things today and yesterday. No stress, no kind of worries about injury with Trav. So he'll go into the game fully fit." With heat wave and forecast of 40 degree centigrade on Boxing Day, the obvious

and their children, who met

Santa Claus in a 10-minute video posted online by

Ronaldo on Tuesday. The former Real Madrid and Manchester United great

appeared to decline to ski with his family. He wished his followers - including 645

- a

in

million on Instagram – "Merry Christmas"

Spanish.

question of extra spinner was wicket here at the MCG. Nathan Lyon had some "It's just a really well balanced success here. So

wouldn't be surprised if good, quite consistent to what coverage, feels nice and firm. the ground tomorrow and there's a little bit on offer for it has here for the last few "See how the heat changes it, I kind of assess but yeah it spin. The pitch looks really years I think. A bit of grass don't know really. We'll get to looks like a good wicket."



# The entire nation is celebrating

Veer Baal Diwas

26 December 2024, Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi

## **On this occasion Prime Minister Narendra Modi** will

Interact with recipients of the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

Address children from across the country

And

Launch the Suposhit Gram Panchayat Abhiyan

having experience and you've

challenges at some point Even in a slump, Virat Kohli and Rishabh Pant are players whom this Australian team really respects. There are two Test matches and there could

corner. "I really hope not but you

Asked if his opposite number Rohit Sharma's poor form is an advantage, Cummins reminded Rahane's century as

Melbourne.

"There's a level of naivety that you just want to go out and play like you do when you're a kid in the backyard," Cummins said during the pre-match press interaction. "You just want to take the game on, have fun and not overthink. So that's the message to Sam. That's definitely how I felt as an 18year-old, I was just really excited," Cummins fondly recollected.

shared with Cummins Konstas, how he, as a teenager, handled his debut back in 2011.

"I was saying this to Sam the other day, I remember as an 18 year old I was thinking if I didn't have a great game it wasn't my fault, it was the selector's fault for picking me. "I was like, well they're the idiots that picked an 18 year old. You're so young starting out your career it's just it's boxing day doesn't get any better than this so just enjoy the moment," he enjoy laughed.

For Cummins, having 38-year-old opener Usman Khawaja, who is exactly double Konstas' age is a boon for the youngster as he will have calming influence at the other end even as youngsters with uncluttered mind always have an edge. "There's so much value in

## Cristiano Ronaldo takes family to Lapland for Christmas vacation

#### AP HELSINKI

Scccer star Cristiano Ronaldo said it was "just a little cold" as he posed barechested in the snow before taking an icy dip in a pool during a Christmas vacation in Finland's Lapland region. The 39-year-old Portuguese international traveled with partner Georgina Rodriguez The top 1,000 Gram Panchayats will be awarded

50% of the prize money will be given to Anganwadi workers/ helpers and Gram Panchayats

50% of the prize money will be spent on improving nutrition in Anganwadi centres



#### Watch the live broadcast on DD News from 12 PM onwards