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# Centre scraps no-detention policy for primary class V, VIII



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

n a major change in the primary education system, the Centre on Monday directed for ending the "nodetention policy" for fifth and

eighth class, which means that students in these classes who fail their annual exams shall not be promoted to higher grade and hence will need to repeat the same class.

Failed students will h+ave a

within two months, but if they fail again, they will not be promoted. The school will not expel a student until the 8th grade.

**Education Secretary Sanjay** Kumar said that the Central chance to retake the test Government has taken this

the learning outcome among children "The Union Education Ministry has taken a big decision and abolished the 'No Detention Policy'. Students who fail the annual examination in classes 5 and 8 will be failed," Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy, told The Pioneer. However, the Government has

expelled from any school till the completion of elementary education. According to a gazette notification, after the conduct examination, if a child fails to fulfil the promotion criteria, as notified from time to time, he shall be given additional instruction and opportunity

for re-examination within a

period of two months from the

clarified that no child shall be

date of declaration of results. Continued on page 2

### **Three Khalistani terrorists** killed in Pilibhit encounter

NEW DELHI, TUESDAY DECEMBER 24, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹4

In a major anti-terror operation, three militants belonging to the Khalistani Commando Force gunned down in a operation by Punjab and Úttar Pradesh police in Pilibhit's Puranpur area early Monday morning. The encounter left two policemen injured, while police recovered a significant cache of weapons, including two AK-47 rifles and two Glock pistols, from the

The operation was carried out around 5 am near the Hardoi Branch Canal after Punjab police traced the location of the wanted militants to Pilibhit. The three militants, all hailing from Punjab's Gurdaspur district, were accused of orchestrating a grenade attack on a police outpost in Gurdaspur on December 19. According to officials, the

militants were traveling on a motorcycle when they were intercepted by the joint police team. Upon being surrounded, the trio opened fire indiscriminately using their automatic weapons. In the ensuing exchange of gunfire, all three were neutralized. Two policemen sustained injuries

The sounds of gunfire in the early hours sent shockwaves through nearby villages, with residents initially unsure of the nature of the operation. Bullet marks on police vehicles and the seizure of a motorcycle used by the militants indicated the intensity of the encounter. Continued on page 2

during the operation.

escape to Pak via B'desh PNS KOLKATA Munshi was arrested by a The arrested member of Kashmir Police and West 'Tehreek-e-Bengal Police STF from near Mujahideen' terror outfit Canning in South 24 from Kashmir was planning Parganas district on Sunday. The 'Tehreek-e-Mujahideen' to use the river route to travel to Bangladesh and eventually group is controlled from escape to Pakistan, a senior

This combo image shows arms and other items recovered at the site of an

Gurdaspur, by a joint team of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab police, in Pilibhit

**Terror suspect planned** 

encounter of three terror suspects, allegedly involved in the grenade attack in

on Monday. Bengal STF officials also believe that the arrested person, identified as Javed Munshi, has close ties with the Lashkar-e-Taiba terror group. Investigators are working to decode the notes seized from his possession to uncover more details about his plans, the officer added.

officer of the West Bengal

Special Task Force (STF) said

joint team of Jammu and Pakistan and has connections with other terror outfits in the valley, as well as in Pakistan and Bangladesh, the

The 58-year-old man was considering multiple routes reach Bangladesh, including traveling by road from Canning to Dhamakhali, and then using river routes through the Sunderbans.

officer added.

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#### No lapse, says CISF on MPs scuffle



The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) on Monday said there was "no lapse" on its part when asked about the scuffle that took place among Parliament complex during the recently concluded Winter Session and added it will choose to "keep quiet" when allegations are levelled by lawmakers. The CISF) is tasked to guard the Parliament House Complex.

'There was no lapse (on part of the force)...By lapse if you mean some weapons were allowed inside, then I can tell you that no weapon was allowed...," CISF Deputy

Inspector General (operations) Shrikant Kishore said at a Press conference. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Members of Parliament Pratap

Chandra Sarangi and Mukesh Rajput had got injured during scuffle between the Opposition and ruling BJP MPs on the premises of Parliament who were discharged from the RML Hospital on Monday.

Kishore said the force will choose to "keep quiet when the honourable members (MPs) was asked about the counterallegations made by the parliamentarians on who pushed whom.

He added the CISF was not conducting any inquiry into the incident that took place at the 'Makar Dwar' of the Parliament House Complex on December 19. Delhi Police had filed an FIR against Leader of the Opposition (LoP) and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi following BJP's complaint against him. Asked about complaints against the force since it took charge of Parliament security in June this year, the officer said the MPs, employees working in the complex and visitors are "very satisfied and happy" with their work. Kishore said the security department of Parliament will be competent to answer questions related to security, including recovery of cash from a seat in the House during the last session.

#### Delhi Govt teachers to learn how to handle bomb threats SAUMYA SHUKLA NEW DELHI authorities in the National Capital since

 $\mathbf{I}^{\text{n}}$  a way replicating the training reportedly given to school teachers in United States of America (USA) on 'how to shoot a gun, and handle a weapon' due to the rampant problem of gun shooting in schools, the Delhi Police joined hands with the Delhi Education Department, for training teachers and school staff of

all government and private schools on

how to handle bomb threats even as the

fear of such threats through emails

continue to loom among the school



This comes as an extension of the Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena's 'Samvaad' program where in a meeting with teachers, they raised the issue of Drug Abuse, Cyber Hygiene and recent Bomb threat emails. Multiple schools in Delhi have received hoax bomb threats in the last 10 days. The threats disrupted classes and triggered multi-agency search

Continued on page 2

## Bangladesh wants Hasina back, sends note verbale to India

 $B_{\text{Monday that it has sent a diplomatic note}}^{\text{angladesh's interim government said on}}$ to India to send back deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina to Dhaka. Hasina, 77, has been living in exile in India since August 5 when she fled the country amid the student-led protests that toppled her 16-year regime. Bangladeshternational Crimes Tribuna has issued arrest warrants for Hasina and several former Cabinet ministers, advisers, and military and civil officials for "crimes against humanity and genocide".

"We have sent a note verbale to the Indian government saying that Bangladesh wants her back here for the judicial process," Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain told reporters at his office. Earlier in the morning, Home Advisor Jahangir Alam said his office has sent a letter to the foreign ministry to facilitate the ousted premier's extradition from India

"We have sent a letter to the foreign ministry regarding her extradition. The process is currently underway," he told reporters in response to a query.

Dhaka and New Delhi already exists and Hasina could be brought back to Bangladesh under it. Last month, in an address to the nation on the completion of 100 days of the interim government, Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus said it will seek the extradition of Hasina. "We must ensure justice in every killing... We will also ask India to send back fallen autocrat Sheikh Hasina," he

Yunus, who assumed office on August 8, claimed that about 1,500 people, including



accused the Yunus-led interim government of perpetrating "genocide" and failing to protect minorities, especially Hindus, since her ouster.



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

The first meeting of the 39-I member parliamentary panel on the 'One Nation, marking the start will likely have implementing the BJP's longstanding election reform agenda.

### Gig workers need targeted regulatory framework: NHRC

In the rapidly expanding gig economy of India, gig often endure grueling shifts that can exceed 10 hours a day, while unpredictable incomes and the pressure of meeting unrealistic performance performance targets. However, things might change for the better for this workforce, which is

of gig workers, including health insurance and pension Continued on page 2 | were presented as part of the organizations. Hence, they do



They operate independently and are not regarded as employees of the

However, irregular incomes, often left them at the chairperson, Vijaya Bharathi Sayani said that there is a "need for targeted efforts" through regulatory long working hours, financial strain, and physical exhaustion.

Continued on page 2

#### estimated to be 65 lakh One Election' initiative is strong. students and workers, were killed while 19,931 At a recent session held by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), addressing scheduled for January 8, the not typically have access to meet others were wounded during the protest challenges faced by gig common employee benefits discussions on a major against the Hasina government. In October, workers. that full-time staff members stakeholders from the sector electoral reform proposed by Law Adviser Asif Nazrul had reportedly said The issue holds importance receive. that Bangladesh would strongly protest if the Bharatiya Janata Party-led recommended a slew of given that India's top think measures including the need India tried to refuse Hasina's extradition by tank panel Niti Aayog has National Democratic Alliance unexpected expenses, and estimated 65 lakh gig and for targeted regulatory frameworks, setting up rest citing any provision in the treaty. limited access to credit have Government. According to parliamentary In an interview with PTI in Dhaka in platform workers in the Alam said an extradition treaty between country, but the number is receiving end. Taking serious September, Yunus had said that Hasina sources, the Joint Committee points, and the creation of note of their precarious condition, NHRC's acting making political remarks from India is an redressal on Bills for simultaneous grievance likely to be over two crore as mechanisms, particularly for elections to the Lok Sabha "unfriendly gesture", asserting that she must the segment is growing remain silent to prevent discomfort to both and state Assemblies, chaired women workers. rapidly. Gig workers, also countries until Dhaka requests her extradition."If India wants to keep her until the by BJP MP PP Chaudhary, recommendations known as independent which come amidst Union contractors, are individuals introductory session where time Bangladesh (government) wants her Labour Minister Mansukh who undertake temporary or frameworks to address gig back, the condition would be that she has to officials will brief the panel on Mandaviya announcement in short-term work assignments, worker's challenges, including primarily within the service two key Bills aimed at keep quiet," he said. In recent weeks, Hasina October to put in place a framework for social security sector.

#### No face cover Shyam Benegal, pioneer of parallel cinema in India, passes away at 90 allowed for women

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

lawyers: J and K HC

The High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh recently observed that the rules dealing with the dress code for women advocates prescribed by the Bar Council of India (BCI) do not say that women lawyers can appear before courts with a face covering. The Court made the observation after a lady lawyer appeared with a face cover and turned down the Court's request to remove the

This led the Court to seek a report from the Registrar General on whether the relevant rules allow lady advocates to appear with their

face covered.

#### TN RAGHUNATHA MUMBAI

Veteran filmmaker, Padma V Bhushan and Dadasaheb Phalke award winner Shyam Benegal, a pioneer of parallel cinema in India has died aged 90, after suffering from a chronic kidney disease. He will be remembered for his films like 'Ankur', 'Nishant', 'Zubeidaa', 'Manthan', 'Mandi' and 'Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose'. Shyam Babu, as he was

affectionately known in the film circles, breathed his last at the Wockhardt Hospital in Mumbai, just nine days after he celebrated his 90th birthday with his family and friends.

The legendary filmmaker is survived by his 85-year-old wife Nira Benegal, who has been into diverse fields of activities including films, literature, music architecture and design, and daughter Pia Benegal. Continued on page 2 | Shyam Benegal, who made

significant contributions to India Cinema, introduced parallel cinema in the seventies. Rated at one stage next only to the all-time great Satyajit Ray as a filmmaker who made meaningful films, he made films like 'Ankur' (1973), (1975), 'Bhumika' 'Nishant' 'Manthan' 'Mammo' (1994), 'Sardari Begum' (1996), and 'Zubeidaa' (2001). He also made a children's film Charandas Chor (Charandas the Thief) in 1975. Born on December 14 1934 in a Konkani-speaking Chitrapur

Hyderabad, Shyam made his first film at 12 years of age, using a camera given to him by his photographer father Sridhar B. He went on to earn a Master's degree in Economics from Osmania University, Hyderabad, where he also founded the Hyderabad Film Society.

Saraswat Brahmin family in

**DECEMBER 14, 1934 – DECEMBER 23, 2024** copywriter with Mumbai-based

advertising agency, Lintas Advertising, where he steadily rose to become the creative head. Doorstep) in 1962. Having begun his career as a

Meanwhile, Benegal made his first documentary in Gujarati, 'Gher Betha Ganga' (Ganges at the

He also taught at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) between 1966 and 1973, and was the chairman of the FTII for two terms between 1980-83 and 1989-92. He began his career as a filmmaker making documentaries. One of his early documentaries, 'A Child of the Streets' (1967), garnered him wide acclaim, and he went on to make over 70 documentaries. A versatile filmmaker, Shyam Bengal had made as many as 20 feature films during his illustrious Known for spotting talent, Shyam

Benegal introduced actors - many of whom from FTII and National School of Drama (NSD) introduced actors Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri, Anant Nag, Smita Patil, Shabana Azmi, Kulbhushan Kharbanda and Amrish Puri.

Benegal was honoured by the Government of India with the Padma Shri in 1976 and the

Padma Bhushan in 1991. He has received several accolades, including eighteen National Film Awards, a Filmfare Award and a Nandi Award. In 2005, he was honoured with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, India's highest award in the field of cinema Apart from making films for the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), he also

NFDC from 1980 to 1986. With the financial support of actor Shashi Kapoor, Shyam Benegal made commercial films like Junoon (1978) and Kalyug (1981).

served as the Director of the

Benegal wrote the scripts and screenplays for his films, and authored three books based on his own films: 'The Churning with Vijay Tendulkar' (1984), based on 'Manthan'; 'Satyajit Ray' (1988), based on his biographical film, 'Satyajit Ray'; and 'The Marketplace' (1989), which was based on 'Mandi'.

## **Daring bank heist in Lucknow:** Three arrested after gunfight

BISWAJEET BANERJEE

ucknow witnessed a high-Listakes drama early Sunday when a gang of robbers pulled off a meticulously planned heist at the Indian Overseas Bank in the Chinhat area. The gang made off with valuables worth crores before a swift police operation led to the arrest of three suspects following a dramatic gunfight. Four of their accomplices, however, remain at large.

The robbery unfolded around 4 a.m., straight out of a crime thriller. The gang, hailing from Bihar, broke into the bank's strong room after cutting through the wires of the alarm system, rendering it silent. They moved with precision, suggesting a well-planned operation. By the time daylight revealed their audacious crime, they were already on the run, thinking they had left no trail.

But fate had other plans. Acting on a tip-off, the UP Police set up a checkpoint near Laulai's water bridge. When two cars matching the



approached, officers signaled them to stop. Instead of complying, the robbers responded with gunfire, triggering a dramatic chase.

The intense exchange ended with one of the suspects, Arvind Kumar from Bihar's Munger district, being shot in the leg. His dramatic plea for mercy with folded hands didn't deter the police from taking him into custody. Two of his accomplices, Balrampur Kumar and Kailash Bind, were also nabbed.

From the trio, the police recovered Rs 3 lakh in cash, spent cartridges. The remaining four gang members managed to flee, leaving the police on a relentless manhunt.

As investigators pieced together the crime, shocking security lapses at the bank came to light. No guards were stationed at the branch. Of the six CCTV cameras installed, only one captured usable footage, while others were poorly aligned. The robbers had entered through a vacant plot adjacent to the bank, bypassing the main entrance entirely.

Adding to the intrigue, the gold and silver jewellery, a country-made pistol, and bank's alarm system, supposedly designed to trigger at any Key aide of Khalistani terrorist Lakhbir Singh alias Landa arrested by NIA PNS NEW DELHI

> Tn a major breakthrough in I the Punjab terror conspiracy case, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Monday arrested a key aide of Khalistani terrorist Lakhbir Singh alias Landa and gangster Bachitar Singh alias Pavitar Batala, according to an official statement.

Jatinder Singh alias Jyoti of district Gurdaspur, Punjab, had been absconding since the arrest of weapons supplier Baljit Singh alias Rana Bhai in July 2024. He was arrested on Monday from Mumbai after extensive technical and on-ground efforts by the NIA.

The anti-terror agency has identified Jatinder as a member of the terror gang formed by foreign-based Landa of the banned terrorist organisation, Babbar Khalsa International (BKI), and an aide of Batala, a close associate of Landa. Jatinder Singh was providing weapons to on-ground operatives of Landa and Batala in Punjab, as per NIA investigations. He was procuring weapons from Madhya Pradesh-based



supplier Baljit Singh alias Rana Bhai, who was recently chargesheeted in the case, said the statement issued by the NIA. Investigations also revealed that Jatinder Singh had brought ten pistols from MP and delivered them to operatives of Landa and Batala in Punjab.

He had planned to smuggle more weapons from MP into Punjab but his plans were scuttled by NIA's search operations over the past several months, the statement said. Jatinder's arrest marks a major step forward in NIA's efforts to dismantle the terrorgangster nexus by preventing smuggling of arms, ammunition, explosives etc. And raising of funds for carrying out terrorist acts on the Indian

### SIA chargesheets terror operatives threatening Kashmiri pandit employees



The State Investigation Agency (SIA), Jammu, Monday filed a chargesheet against key operatives behind the notorious "Kashmir Fight", a social media handle used to issue chilling online threats to migrant Kashmiri Pandit employees, aiming to spread fear and unrest. The platform, operated by The Resistance Front (TRF)—a proscribed terrorist organization in February 2024 issued a series of threatening posts that were published on social media by the terror outfit's social media handle, following which an investigation was initiated by SIA Jammu. The charge sheet was filed before the 3rd Additional Sessions Judge, Jammu.

According to a SIA spokesman,

During the investigation, SIA apprehended Farhaan Muzaffar Mattoo, a resident of Srinagar, for his alleged role in gathering and sharing sensitive information about targeted employees".

The spokesman further revealed that Mattoo acted as a conduit, using encrypted communication platforms to pass critical data about migrant employees to handlers based in Pakistan, who then issued threats through the "Kashmir Fight" platform. The chargesheet also identified

Sheikh Šajjad Ahmad, alias Sajjad Gul, a Srinagar resident now operating from Pakistan, as the mastermind of this plot. Sajad is accused of coordinating the campaign to intimidate migrant employees and disrupt communal harmony in the

**Retired Justice V** Ramasubramaniam

appointed as new

chairperson of NHRC

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The two Bills in focus are the Constitution Amendment) Bill and the Territories (Amendment) Bill. Both were introduced in the Lok Sabha last week and were referred to parliamentary Government expanded the panel's size from 31 to 39 members after several political parties expressed interest in participating in the review of draft legislations concerning simultaneous elections.

Among the committee members are former Union ministers Anurag Thakur, Parshottam Rupala, and Manish Tewari, along with prominent first-term lawmakers such as Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Bansuri Śwaraj, and Sambit Patra.

### **ONOE JPC...** No face cover allowed for women lawyers: J and K...

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examining Registrar General's report, Justice Moksha Khajuria Kazmi on December 13 observed that the rules prescribed by the Bar Council of India (BCI) do not mention any such right. Referring to the rules under Section 49(1) (gg) of Chapter IV (Part VI), of the BCI Rules, which gives details of the permitted dress code for lady advocates, the Court noted, that "it is nowhere stated in the rules that any such attire is permissible". On November 27, a person appeared before the High Court, identified herself to be an advocate named Syed Ainain Qadri and informed the Court that she was appearing for the petitioners has no basis/occasion to in a plea to quash a domestic confirm her actual identity

She appeared before the Court with her face covered although she was wearing an advocate's attire. At the time, the case was before Justice Rahul Bharti. When the Court requested her to remove her face cover, she insisted that it was her fundamental right to appear with her face covered and the Court cannot insist that she remove her face cover. However, the Court did not entertain her appearance as counsel for the petitioners that day, since it could not confirm who she is. 'This court does not

entertain the appearance of the person identifying herself to be Advocate Ms.Syed Ainain Oadri as counsel for the petitioners as this Court both as a person as well as professional," Justice Bharti said in the November 27

The Court proceeded to

silent. Whether it was faulty

or intentionally disabled remains a question the police

are determined to answer.

What is clear is that the robbers had done their home-

work. They knew the bank's

layout, the exact location of

the locker, and the weakness-

es in its security measures.

Saturday night was strategically chosen, knowing the

bank would remain closed on

Sunday, giving them a head

start to escape. DCP East Shashank Singh

praised the swift police action

but acknowledged the chal-lenges ahead. "The gang's precise planning and execu-

tion show they are no ama-

teurs. We are following all

leads to apprehend the

absconding members and

recover the stolen assets," he

As investigators comb through 50 nearby CCTV

recordings, Lucknow residents are left intrigued by this

cat-and-mouse chase. With

four suspects still at large, the

city waits for the final chap-

ter of this real-life heist drama

adjourn the case to another date, while also asking the Registrar General of the Court to confirm if there was any rule which gives women advocates a right to appear with their face covered or to turn down a court's request to remove her face cover. The Registrar General submitted his report on December 5. However, another lawyer stepped in to represent the petitioners later, who Justice heard Kazmi reserving the case for judgment on December 6. The petition was eventually dismissed on December 13 after the Court found that there was an alternative remedy available.

### Delhi schools asked to prevent enrollment of illegal Bangladeshi migrants

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

The Directorate of Education of Delhi government on Monday issued a circular on document verification during admission, saying Delhi schools must prevent the enrolment of "illegal Bangladeshi migrants".

According to the circular, "Schools must ensure strict admission procedures, verification of students' documentation to prevent illegal Bangladeshi migrants' enrollment, implementation of greater scrutiny to detect and prevent unauthorised admissions of illegal Bangladeshi migrants, in particular."

It directed all heads of gov-

ernment, government-aided and unaided recognised private schools to refer cases to the local police and the revenue authority in case of Education.



The Directorate of Education further instructed school

heads to ensure that a careful process was followed to verify and handle all necessary documentation when enrolling migrant children. The District Directorate of Education (districts/zones) were directed to submit weekly reports of all such cases to the school branch headquarters and the Directorate of

Earlier, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi has directed its schools to take steps to identify illegal Bangladeshi migrant students during the admission process, and asked the health department to ensure that no birth certificates are issued to them. The MCD has also directed all MCD zones to remove encroachments by illegal Bangladeshi migrants. An action taken report has been sought by the MCD deputy commissioner by December 31.

The directive comes days after the Delhi L-G Secretariat ordered a crackdown on illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, with the issue becoming the latest flashpoint between the ruling AAP and the BJP ahead of the Assembly elections in Delhi due in February.

## PIONEER NEWS SERVICE Retired Supreme Court Judge Justice V

Ramasubramaniam has been appointed as the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). The President of India's warrant was issued to him on Monday. The NHRC Chairperson is selected by the committee headed by Prime Minister, comprising Lok Sabha Speaker, Home Minister, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and

Justice Ramasubramanian completed law from Madras Law College and started praced as Judge in Madras High Court in 2006. He served as Chief Justice of Himachal Pradesh High Court from June 22, 2019, until he was appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court on September 23, 2019. He demitted office

Deputy Chairperson of Rajya

The appointment has been made consequent upon the retirement of Justice Arun Mishra from the post on June

NHRC serving as the acting chair-

person. which was later amended by

#### on June 29, 2023. member Vijayabharathi Sayani was

The NHRC was established on 12 October 1993, under the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993.

the Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Act,

#### Gig workers need targeted regulatory... wages, stress-free working rating system, which lacks a (formerly WeFast a global

She noted that over 83 per cent of app-based drivers work more than 10 hours daily. This puts them under the physical and mental strain added by policies like '10-minute deliveries' and unrealistic targets which also result in "avoidable accidents".

NHRC Secretary General Bharat Lal echoed similar views stating that it is crucial to check the implementation of laws such as the Social Security Code 2020 and the various other labour laws in India to ensure Gig Workers welfare.

He also noted that some states like Karnataka, Rajasthan and Iharkhand are focusing on providing social security to gig workers but more needs to be done to address their other major concerns relating to health insurance, minimum

session expanding the e-Shram portal to support gig workers, offering maternity benefits, crèche facilities, and rest points for women, and building financial literacy to promote transparency. Additionally, the participants called for welfare schemes that provide health benefits, accident insurance, old-age protection, and

The need for a grievance redressal mechanism for women gig workers, awareness of POSH (Prevention of Sexual Harassment) policies, and enforcing minimum wage and income transparency were also emphasized. Furthermore, the discussion raised concerns about the arbitrary gig worker

their concerns. At the same Other key suggestions from time, it was felt that there should be measures ensuring included minimum wage enforcement and income transparency in all sectors engaging gig workers

by the aggregators to bridge gender disparities. The session also discussion on threats posed by the climate change induced heat stroke and floods which are becoming a norm. In this connection, the experts batted unemployment safeguards. for developing schemes addressing the risks posed by global warming to ensure workers' safety during extreme weather conditions by the

employing companies. If these measures are implemented in toto, gig workers can look forward to a brighter future, feel experts. A recent survey by Borzo

from around 2,000 gig workers from Tier I and II cities, like Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru has revealed that approximately 78% of gig delivery workers employed with food delivery apps like Swiggy, Zomato, and platforms like Amazon earn less than Rs 2.50 lakh per annum. Thus, highlighting the pressing need for reform and improved welfare for this

growing workforce. The NHRC session was attended by various gig employing companies like Big Basket, Urban Company, Zypp Electric and Ola Electric besides representatives from NITI Aayog, Labour Department of Karnataka and Governments, Raiasthan National Labour Cooperative Federation of India Ltd among

### Three Khalistani terrorists killed in Pilibhit encounter

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Police recovered two AK-47 rifles, two Glock pistols, and large quantity of ammunition from the site. Visuals of the operation and the seized weapons have surfaced, highlighting the scale of the encounter.

The militants were wanted for their involvement in the grenade attack on the Bakshiwal police outpost in Gurdaspur's Kalanour area. The Khalistan Zindabad had claimed Force responsibility for the attack on social media, naming Jaswinder Singh Baghi, alias Mannu Agwan, as the mastermind. Investigations revealed the attackers had

used an auto-rickshaw to reach the outpost, which was later seized by the police. Senior officials termed the operation a significant success in the fight against terrorism. "The militants posed a grave threat, and their neutralization is a crucial step in ensuring public safety," a senior police officer said.

"The operation underscores the need for coordinated efforts among state police forces to tackle cross-border terrorism and neutralize threats posed by extremist groups," DGP Prashant Kumar said. Investigations are ongoing to trace the militants' network and potential accomplices.

#### During the arrest, the STF seized an Aadhaar card with an address in Srinagar, cash amounting to Rs 50,000, and

planned escape...

Terror suspect

two mobile phones. The STF has gathered sufficient evidence indicating that Munshi had traveled to Bangladesh multiple times and had maintained contact with senior members of Lashkar-e-Taiba, the officer said. Investigators are

analysing the call records from the two mobile phones seized from Munshi. "The call records could be crucial in identifying who he was in contact with and in understanding his motives for staying in the area," said an officer, noting that they suspect Munshi may have been trying to recruit people.

In an effort to empower teachers and (CvGene) awareness.

Approximately 247 teachers from East Delhi participated in the program where they were sensitised about security and "Cyber Hygiene" and "Cyber Hygiene" (CyGene) in schools. "The Delhi Police and the Delhi Education Department are committed to ensuring the safety and security of our schools. This training

and we are proud to have had the opportunity to work with Education Department to make it a Deputy Commissioner of Police (Shahdara) Prashant Gautam

In the training, teachers learned how to respond to bomb threats in schools, including evacuation procedures

They were also educated on the role they can play in preventing substance abuse among students, including identifying warning signs and

Teachers learned about the importance of Cyber hygiene in schools, including how to protect student data and prevent cyber bullying. Retired ACP Prabhat Sinha, who is an expert in Cyber Crime, presented a detailed PowerPoint presentation on

cybercrime, offered practical prevention measures, and discussed case studies to highlight the challenges teenagers face in the digital world.

The session also focused on

real-life case studies relating to issues faced by students concerning both cyber hygiene (CyGene) and drug abuse, providing teachers with tools to identify and address these problem's effectively. 'The teachers, as future influencers, have a direct impact on students. It is crucial that they are wellequipped with the knowledge of current issues such as cyber hygiene (CyGene) and drug abuse to ensure the safety and well-being of their students," said Gautam. The session concluded with a

lecture and PowerPoint presentation on hoaxes, educating teachers on identifying hoaxes, scams and malicious online activities that can pose risks to

### Centre scraps no-detention policy for primary class V, VIII new

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This new rule applies to over run schools, including Vidyalayas, 3,000 Central government-Navodaya Vidyalayas, and Sainik Schools, as per senior education ministry officials. Following the amendment to the Right to Education Act (RTE) in 2019, at least 18 states and Union Territories have already done away with the 'no-detention policy' for the two classes. According to Ministry of Education officials, the notification will be applicable to over 3,000 schools run by the central Government including Kendriya Vidyalayas, Navaodyala Vidyalayas and Sainik Schools. Since school education is a State subject, states can make their decision

states and 2 UTs including Delhi have done away with the no-detention policy for these two classes.

"If the child appearing in the re-examination fails to fulfil the promotion criteria again, he shall be held back in fifth class or eighth class, as the case may be. During the holding back of the child, the class teacher shall guide the child as well as the parents of the child, if necessary, and provide specialised inputs after identifying the learning gaps at various stages of assessment," the notification

"The examination and reexamination shall be competency-based examinations to achieve the holistic development of the amendment was approved in child and not be based on

skills. The Head of the school shall maintain a list of children who are held back and personally monitor the provisions provided for specialised inputs to such children and their progress with respect to the identified learning gaps," the notification

read. States and UTs that have scrapped the no-detention policy include Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Iharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Delhi, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Jammu

and Kashmir. Asked about the delay in the notification since 2019, the official explained

Education Policy (NEP) was announced within six months of the amendment. "By the time the amendment was made, the NEP was

announced within a few months. The department education and (school literacy) decided to wait till the recommendations of the new National Curriculum Framework (NCF) were ready to be able to take a holistic view. The NCF was ready in 2023 and subsequently the Ministry of Education took the decision and made some changes in rules of RTE implementation," the official added. The decision announced

through an official notification now reverses the 2019 amendment to the Right to Education Act. In July 2018, the Lok Sabha passed a bill to amend the Right to Education (RTE) Act, which aimed to end the 'no detention policy in schools. The amendment introduced regular exams for Classes 5 and 8, with a provision for students who fail to have a re-examination opportunity within two months. In 2019, the Rajya Sabha

approved the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, which sought to remove the 'no detention policy' for up to Class 8 to improve learning outcomes. The bill granted state governments the discretion to either continue or abolish the policy, allowing them to hold students back in Classes 5 and 8 if they fail their year-end exams.

#### Delhi Govt teachers to learn towards achieving this goal,

authorities, on Monday, the Delhi Police Shahdara District and Crime Branch Unit of Delhi Police in collaboration with Director of Education Department, Delhi, Veditha Reddy, IAS jointly organised a training program for teachers in Delhi. The program aimed to educate teachers from government and private schools on how to handle bomb threats in schools, the role of teachers in preventing drug abuse, and cyber hygiene

program is an important step

said.

communication protocols.

providing support.

CyGene, sharing insights on the growing threats of

other

# BJP leader Thakur releases 'aarop patra' against Kejriwal

Senior BJP leader Anurag Thakur on Monday released an 'aarop patra (charge sheet)' against AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal, accusing him of turning Delhi into a "corrup-tion lab" through a series of "scams". The 'aarop patra' document highlights the expenditure on the redevel-opment of the Civil Lines home where Kejriwal lived when he was the chief minister, his and former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia's arrest in the excise policy case, and that of Satyendar Jain in a separate money laundering case, air pollution, the polluted Yamuna and poor sanitation, among others. Ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls, the state unit of the BJP has formed a "chargesheet committee" that has so far issued detailed reports listing the alleged failures of the ruling

Addressing the media at the Delhi BJP office, party MP and former Union Minister Anurag

AAP MLAs.

has stories of AAP's corruption. Arvind Kejriwal has made fake promises to people living in Delhi. He said would provide free medical, water and electricity, but people still pay for these services. AAP said that they would make Delhi corruption free but their eight ministers and 15 MLAs were jailed." Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva, and other party leaders attended the

Reacting to BJP MP Anurag Thakur's 'charge sheet' with allegations of corruption against Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders, former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal Monday said the BJP had no agenda ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls except to abuse him. Slamming them for lacking a Chief Ministerial face or any meaningful agenda, Kejriwal asserted that the BJP is attempting to contest the elections by focusing solely on targeting him with abuses.

"What kind of a party is this which came to power promising to give corruption-free



government but was involved in eight to nine scams related to the liquor policy, Delhi Jal Board, DTC, Waqf Board," Thakur charged while releas-

"Ghotale Pe Ghotala, Kejriwal Ne Banaya Delhi Ko Bhrashtachar Ki Prayogshala" (Kejriwal turned Delhi into a laboratory of corruption with scams), Thakur gave the slogan and asserted that the BJP will remove the AAP from power in Delhi. "Kejriwalji, you often say you are number 1. In what area are you number 1? In the country, the

most polluted capitals. Delhi has India's most corrupt ministers," Thakur said.

costliest water is provided by your government. Delhi is number 1 amongst the world's

from Sikhs For Justice and Pannu has also accepted this. In the Punjab Assembly polls, they took the support of Khalistani groups. AAP is providing security to illegal Rohingya immigrants," the BJP said in its accusations against AAP.

"This is the only government where the Health Minister, Deputy CM, and the CM have all been imprisoned. Promises were made to establish free clinics and large hospitals in Delhi, but today, 70% of patients are forced to seek treatment in private hospitals. The AQI once crossed 1200 and is still above 500. They promised a corruptionfree Delhi but have themselves plunged into the depths of corruption," he said.

The term of the 70-member Delhi Legislative Assembly ends on February 23 next year and polls are to be held before

The former Union minister also targeted the AAP and Kejriwal over education and health, alleging it failed to open new Mohalla Clinics

use the Centre's funds to boost the city's healthcare infrastructure.

He charged that the smog tower in Connaught Place, which was supposed to pro-vide relief from air pollu-

tion, was lying defunct although the AAP govern-ment spent crores of rupees on advertisement. He cited water shortage, lack of sanitation, damaged roads, and other issues to corner the ruling AAP. Thakur also alleged that the AAP has been supporting "anti-national" forces and Kejriwal questioned India's surgical strikes tioned India's surgical strikes. He said the party got the support of "Khalistanti elements' during the Punjab polls.

The BJP president added that Rs 52 crore was spent merely decorating Kejriwal's "Sheesh Mahal," not including the cost of the house. This is not a mansion but a museum of corruption.

Once a BJP government is formed, this museum will be opened to the public to reveal how Kejriwal squandered

### **AAP launches door-to-door registration** for city Govt's two financial aid schemes

**STAFF REPORTER** NEW DELH

AP supremo Arvind Kejriwal, along with Chief Minister Atishi and former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, on Monday launched the door-to-door registration for women and elderly citizens under the Delhi government's two financial aid schemes, 'Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana' and 'Sanjeevani Yojana' respective-

Únder the Chief Minister's Mahila Samman Yojana, every woman in Delhi is entitled to receive Rs 2100 every month, and under the Sanjeevani Yojana, people aged above 60 years will be provided free treatment at all Delhi hospitals. At 12 pm on Monday, former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal arrived at South Market in East Kidwai Nagar in New Delhi assembly, to start the registration drive for women with the AAP chief personally registering several women, matching their voter ID cards with the voter list on the Election

Commission's website. While women listed as voters were immediately registered, and some women had voter ID rds but found their na missing from the voter list, those missing from the voter list couldn't proceed. Assuring

such women, Arvind Kejriwal assured them to have their names added to the voter list, enabling them to claim the scheme's benefits, which are

with verified voter status. Addressing the media after registering women for the scheme, Kejriwal stated, "Today, we have started this initiative in my constituency. CM Atishi and I have personally registered several women to

exclusively for Delhi residents

begin this scheme." women to preserve it carefully. "This is, in a way, a special

card for women—a yellow card. she added.

Everyone must keep this yellow card safe," he said, holding up the card as a symbol of empowerment. Meanwhile, Chief Minister

Atishi tweeted, "A new era of women empowerment is beginning with the registration of 'Mahila Samman Yojana' in Delhi. Today, I registered the initial beneficiaries of this scheme with Arvind Kejriwal." "Now, our sisters and daughters in Delhi will not have to Kejriwal also emphasized the depend on anyone for their this scheme of Arvind Kejriwal ji, Rs 2100 will be credited to

The senior AAP leaders in also launched the registration process for the 'Sanjeevani Yojana' in Jangpura with the constituency's candidate Manish Sisodia also visiting households in the area, reaching out to senior citizens.

Kejriwal also informed residents about the scheme, assisted with filling out registration forms, and handed over 'Kejriwal Kavach Cards' to newly registered participants. The card guarantees benefits once AAP returns to power Talking to the media after the

registration drive, he said said, "We conducted the registration of some senior citizens in the Jangpura constituency. The registration for the Mahila Samman Yojana and the Sanjeevani Yojana has begun today. We started the registration for Mahila Samman from the New Delhi constituency. Now, we have commenced the registration for the Sanjeevani Yojana in the Jangpura constituency. Here, we registered some senior citizens."

He added that under the Sanjeevani Yojana, senior citizens above 60 years of age will have their medical expenses covered by the Delhi government, whether they get treated in government or private hos-

He stated that while all treatments in Delhi government hospitals are free, under the Sanjeevani Scheme, senior citizens will now be able to receive treatment in private hospitals as well, with all expenses covered

by the Delhi government.
"Within just a few hours of its launch, approximately 2.5 lakh women had registered for the Mahila Samman Scheme. The registration process will continue until every household in two schemes will prove to be game changers in people's lives,"

## LG takes potshot at Kejriwal over city's hellish civic amenities

The Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Monday took a potshot at former Chief Minister and AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal, stating that after 10 years your eyes have opened to the miserable conditions and hellish 'civic amenities' prevailing in Delhi. In a post on X, Kejriwal stated, "LG sahab: Thank you for drawing our attention to the problems of Rangpuri pahadi. Our team is constructing a new drain there and cleaning it on a war footing. You visited New Rohtak Road and also told us about the drain overflow and broken road there. You will be happy to know that the road on one side has been built there and soon the road on the other side will also be ready. Also, a new drain is being built there at a cost of Rs 150 crore. If you see any problem in any part of Delhi, just tell us - we will solve it." Responding to the tweet by him, the Delhi LG said, "The 'our team' you have mentioned in today's post on is the same officer/department who accompanied me on the tour of Rangpuri and Kapashera on 21.12.2024 and to whom I had

He alleged that it would have



the same promptness and concern for the places like Kiradi, Burari, Sangam Vihar, Gokulpuri, Mundka, Nangloi, Ranikheda, Kalandar Colony, etc., identified by me after the

"I would have been happy if you had also paid attention to those Delhi Government schools, where students of two classes are taught by ghost teacher in the same room with their backs towards each other," he claimed, adding that he should take cognizance of those mohalla clinics where the condition is dilapidated and doctors do not come to the clinics. "You will remember that on many occasions during the last two and a half years, in writing towards many serious problems been better if you had shown of Delhi and Delhiites and

requested you to solve them," the letter read. Saxena added that it would be

appropriate to remind you that no work has been done on these issues till date and Yamuna has reached the highest level of pollution this year. "If you don't mind, I will personally hold you responsible for this, since you had filed a petition in the Supreme Court to stop the cleaning work going on in the Yamuna," he claimed. Asking him to personally go out in the city and assess the situation, the LG said, "Day before yesterday also, through my post on "X" I had requested you to visit Rangpuri and Kapashera, but even on this occasion, instead of going there priate to send your self-proclaimed temporary Chief Minister Atishi there."

### Delhiites wake up to biting cold wave as parts of city receive light showers

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

Delhiites woke up to a biting cold wave with fog on Monday morning even as parts of the national capital received light showers. The minimum temperature recorded in the city stood at 8.6 degrees Celsius, according to the Safdarjung Observatory, a notch below the seasonal average while the maximum settled at a chilly 20 degrees Celsius. Palam weather station recorded a rainfall of 0.4 mm. Other stations, including Safdarjung,

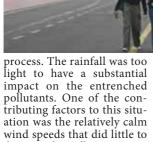
Lodhi Road, Ridge, and Aya

Nagar recorded trace amounts

of rainfall as of 8.30 am.

However, the light rain failed to improve the Air Quality Index (AQI) in the capital which remained in the 'severe' category for the second straight day at 406 indicating the persistent air pollution issue faced by the capital. The air quality index was in the severe category despite implementation of the stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) to curb air pol-

Initially, there was a glimmer of reprieve in the morning when the AQI showed mild improvement, moving to the higher range of the "Very Poor" category. However, this improvement was short-lived, as the air quality worsened to "Severe" again by the afternoon. Typically, rainfall is seen as a natural cleanser of the atmosphere, helping to wash out pollutants and improve air quality. However, Monday's weather conditions were not conducive to this



disperse the pollutants.
The air pollution in Delhi was— over 74. 4 times — the limit prescribed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in the morning. The overall level of PM2.5 (a chief pollutant) in Delhi was 372 micrograms per cubic meter as compared to 311 micrograms per cubic meter on Sunday after-The overall level of Particulate

Matter under 10 microns was 570 as compared to 457 micrograms per cubic meter a day before.

The level of Nitrogen dioxide (NO2) was recorded 69.7 micrograms per cubic meter, as against the World Health Organization's (WHO) limit being far stricter at 25µg/m3. According to SAFAR-India, Alipur station read an AOI of Alipur station read an AQI of , while Anand Vihar recorded 443, Ashok Vihar 460, Bawana 475, Burari

Crossing 445, Dwarka Sector 8 393, IGI Airport 357, ITO 414, Jahangirpuri 453, Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium 405, Mandir Marg 403, Mundka 446, Najafgarh 372, Narela 428, North Campus DU 416, Okhla Phase 2 428, Punjabi Bagh 424, RK Puram 429, Rohini 468, Siri Fort 422, Sonia Vihar 456, Vivek Vihar 438, and Wazirpur 464 among others. Notably, air quality in Dwarka-Sector 8 and Najafgarh hovered just below the 'severe' threshold. The Decision Support System (DSS) of the Delhi Air Quality Management has not been updated since December 21. The ventilation index lower than 6000 m2/s with average wind speed less than 10 kmph is unfavourable for dispersion

of pollutants. However, December 24 and 25 are expected to witness mainly clear skies. On both the days, the IMD predicted smog/moderate fog in most of the places and dense fog in isolated places in the mornings. Smog/shallow fog conditions are expected on both the

#### Congress expected to release its second list of candidates in next few weeks

SAUMYA SHUKLA NEW DELHI

Health insurance, month-ly stipend and free bus rides for women allowance, free electricity, and a road map to make Delhi pollution free- these are among the key promises that the Delhi Congress is likely to announce in it 'Nyay Patra', which is expected to be released on Christmas ahead of the high octane Delhi assembly elec-

It is also expected that the party releases the second list of candidates for the elections in the next few days. "It is expected that either Rajesh Lilothia or Rajkumar Gautam will be made to contest from Seemapuri and will be announced in the second list," the source said.

Lilothia is currently serving as the President of scheduled castes department in All India Congress Committee (AICC) and has been an MLA from Patel Nagar. Meanwhile, former Delhi Minister and Dalit leader Rajendra Pal Gautam quit the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and stepped down as the legislator of Seemapuri recently, following which he joined the Congress, saying he sought "to accelerate the struggle for social justice". According to sources in the party, in the Delhi Congress Manifesto Committee Meeting which was held on

Monday, senior party leaders

deliberated and approved the

key points that they are going

to promise to the people of Delhi in a bid to win the elections, slated to be held early

next year. Congress is going to make five to six big promises to the people of Delhi through its manifesto, a party source said. He added that on the lines of Rajasthan, the peo-ple of Delhi will also be promised health insurance of Rs 25 lakhs.

In an answer to the 'Mukhya Mantri Mahila Samman Yojana' where the AAP government has promised to provide a monthly stipend of Rs 2,100 to women above the age of 18, the Congress will promise to provide Rs 3,000 per month to the women. The manifesto is also likely to promise 300 units of free electricity to the people of Delhi if the Congress makes a comeback in the elections and wins them.

Other promises include free bus service to women of Delhi and a road map to make the national Capital pollution free, the party source said, adding that Congress's manifesto for Delhi Assembly may be released in the next one or two days.

Addressing a press conference, Delhi Congress President Devendra Yadav demanded the resignation of Union Home Minister over his remarks on B.R. Ambedkar and also announced that the party will organise protests across the different districts of Delhi in

### Coaching centre deaths: LG approves immediate suspension of two DFS officers



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

 $M^{
m onths}$  after the unfortunate incident of death of three students in basement of Rau's Coaching Centre at Old Rajender Nagar, Delhi Lieutenant Governor(LG)Vinai Kumar Saxena has approved the immediate suspension of two Group 'A' officers of the Fire Safety Department, Delhi government, Raj Niwas said on

Giving details, official said Ved Pal, Divisional Officer, and Udai Vir Singh, Assistant Divisional Officer, have been placed under suspension following a thorough investigation into the incident. On 27.07.2024, the basement of

the coaching center was flooded within minutes due to heavy rainfall, leading to the unfortunate demise of the three students trapped in the basement of the building which was being used as a library. A detailed inquiry conducted by the District Magistrate (Central) revealed that the two suspended officers had inspected the premises for the issuance of a Fire Safety Certificate. However, they were found to

have concealed information about the misuse of the basement as a library and failed to refer the matter to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). Consequently, the Fire Safety Certificate was erroneously issued on 09.07.2024.

The investigation also pointed fingers at the MCD authorities, who were found to have neglected their duty to inspect and seal the illegally operating basement library and issued a completion-cum-occupancy certificate in September 2021. Strict action is also being initiated against other MCD and Public Works Department (PWD) officials, responsible for the poor drainage infrastructure in the area.

Following the suspension orders, the matter will be referred to the National Capital Civil Service Authority (NCCSA) for recommending further disciplinary action. Saxena had expressed deep sorrow over the incident and emphasizing upon criminal negligence and administrative failures, had ensured that proper penal action will be taken against those responsible.

#### City CEO iterates availability of Voter Helpline Number for electoral queries

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Electoral Officer of Delhi R. Alice Vaz, IAS has iterated the availability of the Voter Helpline Number 1950 (Toll-Free) to assist citizens for their electoral queries and complaints. This effort focuses on improving accessibility and ensuring that every voter receives accurate information and time-

ly support. The Voter Helpline - 1950 serves as the first point of contact for citizens seeking assistance with electoral services. Callers can inquire about various queries, including EPIC (Voter ID), Electoral Roll, Polling Station Details, Online Registration, Voting Dates, and other electionrelated matters. The helpline is designed to provide comprehensive and user-friendly support to all voters in English and Hindi language.

In addition to providing information, the helpline facilitates complaint registration. Citizens can report issues related to electoral services by dialing this toll-free number, 1950. Feedback and suggestions from callers are also encouraged to help improve the quality of services offered. To ensure inclusivity and accessibility, the helpline offers assistance in approved local/regional language. It operates seven days a week, from 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM, allowing citizens to connect at their convenience. For further information, citizens can call 1950 (Toll-Free) or visit official

https://www.ceodelhi.gov.in/ of the Chief Electoral Officer, Delhi.

# Congress running smear campaign against Shah, accuses BJP

The BJP on Monday accused the Congress of running a smear campaign against Union Home Minister Amit Shah and said, instead of indulging in such "drama", it should apologise for always "insulting and humiliating" B R Ambedkar.

It also accused the Congress of using out of context a small portion of Shah's recent speech in the Rajya Sabha in a bid to "establish its political identity"

The Congress has launched a weeklong nationwide campaign against Shah, alleging that he insulted Ambedkar with his remarks while participating in a debate on the Constitution in the Rajya Sabha last week.

As part of the "Ambedkar Samman Saptah", Congress workers and leaders will hold marches and press conferences to remember Ambedkar's legacy, the party

Hitting back, senior BJP leader and former Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad minister Ravi Shankar Prasad alleged that the Congress, which "always" insulted Ambedkar during his life-time, was doing a "drama" of remembering his legacy. "The Congress, which always insulted B R Ambedkar, is holding press conferences

holding press conferences across the country... Stop this drama. Stop this hypocrisy," Prasad said in a press conference at the party ĥeadquarters.

"The Congress must tender an unconditional apology for all the insults and humiliations



legacy after his death. First of all, publicly apologise and then hold press conferences," he added. The BJP leader asserted that the people of the country were very mature. "Its (Congress) efforts will not succeed."

Prasad said the BJP would hold press conferences around the country to "expose" the Congress by telling people how the party and its leaders insulted Ambedkar. "We have all the proof," he added.

The BJP leader also slammed Congress general secretary KC Venugopal for describing as a "badge of honour" the FIR against Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi in connection with last week's face-off between

ruling and opposition MPs on the Parliament premises.

"A case was filed against Rahul Gandhi for pushing and shoving (BJP) MPs and a Congress general secretary, who is very close to him, said it was a badge of honour in their fight to honour the lega-cy of BR Ambedkar... What a

bundle of lies," he said. Rahul Gandhi is wearing "badge of dishonour for insulting and humiliating the legacy of Ambedkar", he charged.

Prasad said the BJP believed that all those who made "some honest efforts" to build the nation should be respected. "This is the difference (between the Congress and the BJP)... We honour even our staunch rivals who have tried to build the nation in their own ways. We published a book on EMS

leader and Kerala's first chief minister] when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was prime minister,"

After the BJP assumed power under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lok Janshakti Party chief Ram Vilas Paswan was conferred with the Padma

Bhushan and Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar) supremo Sharad Pawar the Padma Vibhushan, he added. Asked about Jawaharlal Nehru, Prasad said, "The biggest proof of honouring our rivals is the prime ministers' memorial and museum. Earlier, only Nehru's memorial was there. Now, there is (a memorial of) every prime minister. The country should

remember all the prime min-

## Nearly 10 lakh Govt jobs provided in mission mode: PM Modi

रोज्ञगार

<mark>71000</mark> से अधिक युवाओं को

नियुक्ति पत्रों का विंतरण

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI** 

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said his government has provided nearly 10 lakh permanent government jobs to youths in the last one or one and a half years which, he asserted, is a

Addressing recruits at a Rozgar Mela through a virtual event, where over 71,000 people were given appointment letters, he said never before in the tenure of env before in the tenure of any previous government were jobs provided in such a "mission mode".

The young population is at the centre of his government's policies and programmes, he said, adding honesty and transparency have driven the recruitment process.

The prime minister said 'Rozgar Melas' (recruitment drives) are empowering the youth and unlocking their potential. "The youth of India today is full of new confidence, succeeding in every sector.

Noting that a large number of recruits are women, Modi said it is the endeavour of his government that they become self-dependent in every field. The government's decision to grant 26-week maternity leave to women has helped them a lot in their careers, he said and



underscored that women are

the majority owners of the

house constructed under the

'PM Awas Yojana'. Women-led

development is taking place in

Modi said making maximum use of the Indian youths' abil-

ities and talent is a priority of his government, and that they

are at the centre of a host of

schemes, be it start-up India,

digital India or reforms in

space and defence sectors. The National Education

the country, he said.

Policy has taken steps for the development of youngsters, he said, highlighting its emphasis on the use of mother tongues.

His government has ensured that language is not a barrier by ensuring that youngsters can take recruitment exams in 13 Indian languages, he

Noting that former prime minister Charan Singh, whose birth anniversary is being observed on Monday, stood

for the development of rural India and for the country's progress, Modi said his government has followed this by creating job and self-employment opportunities in villages. It was his govern-ment's good fortune to bestow Bharat Ratna on Singh earli-

er this year, he said. Speaking at the event, Union minister Jitendra Singh said more than 29 per cent of the 71,000 recruited came from the Other Backward Classes

The backward classes recruit ment has seen a 27 per cent rise under the Modi government compared to the UPA's 10 years in power, he said. The Schedules Castes and Scheduled Tribes accounted for 15.8 and 9.6 respectively for Monday's recruitments, Singh added.

In his address, Modi said the development of a country relies on the hard work, capability, and leadership of its youth, and India is committed to becoming a developed ted to becoming a developed nation by 2047 as its policies and decisions focus on empowering its talented

He said India is now the world's fifth-largest economy and the third-largest startup ecosystem. Similarly, youths pursuing careers in sports have confidence that tĥey will not fail because they now are supported by modern training facilities and tour-

Modi said the country is undergoing a transformation across various sectors, becoming the second-largest in

mobile manufacturing.
India is also making strides in renewable energy, organic farming, space, defence, tourism, and wellness, creating pays exportantiate and ing new opportunities and reaching new heights in each area, he added.

### CISF launches new transfer-posting policy to ensure 'better work-life balance'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

The CISF on Monday said it has unveiled a new organisational transfer and posting policy in order to ensure a "better work-life balance" for its personnel who guard some of the most vital assets and infra-structure in the country.

The policy will "impact" over 98 per cent of the paramilitary force's about 1.70 lakh workforce with personnel to retire within two years being the first category to be given "choice or preference posting" followed by women staffers, working couples and the remaining falling in the fourth

The policy, to kick in from December 31, is meant for nongazetted officials (NGOs) in the ranks from constable to inspector, as grievances related to this issue is "higher" in these ranks, officials said. The policy is aimed to satisfy

the force members when it comes to their transfer and posting, and place of work...Without compromising on the operational requirements of the force," CISF Inspector General (Administration) K C Samantaray briefed the media. The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has replaced the last such policy that was enacted in 2017. "The policy has been



made after conducting extensive consultations on the ground. We aim to make the CISF a future ready force to cope with emerging security challenges with training and building expertise in various security domains. 'We also see that there is a pro-

found shift in social norms and family dynamics and work-life balance is not desirable but essential," the IG said. He said "more and more women" were joining the force and that "working couples" are increasing in the force and hence the policy is borne out after considering all such issues.

The IG said special care will be taken to ensure that the education of the children of the force personnel does not suffer and transfer orders will be issued in such a time that the academic cycle of their wards does not get

"Choice-based posting in CISF has been made a rule as compared to being an exception earlier. Personnel who want to get a choice transfer or posting will have to opt for it," he said.

As per the CISF officials, personnel retiring within two years will be given the first preference while issuing posting orders followed by women personnel, then working couples and the rest will fall in the last category. The IG said "domain experts and personnel who are highly talented" will also get preference in their choice posting due to their skills and demanding nature of work.

The domain experts are those who are adept in areas like information technology, cyber security, data science, aviation security, anti-drone solutions, weapons and tactics, among

### PM Modi, Dhankhar, Yogi | Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas to be showcased at R-Day Parade 2025 pay tributes to Charan Singh on birth anniversary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh(UP)Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday paid tributes to former prime minister Charan Singh on his birth anniversary.
Dhankhar recalled Charan

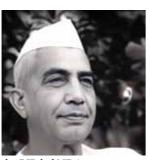
Singh's contribution to the agri sector. Talking to reporters at Kisan Ghat here after paying tributes to Singh on his 122nd birth anniversary, Dhankhar said it is an occasion for everyone to take a resolve that agriculture is necessary for India's rise. Agro sector and farmer welfare

are fundamentals for a passage to a developed nation at 2047, he said. Dhankhar said as Singh was committed towards holistic development of farmers, it was time for all of us to "converge our energies and get into the job that these celebrations are festive occasions for the farmer and would be game changer for the country's economy

In his tributes, Prime Minister Modi described Charan Singh as a true well-wisher of the poor and farmers. In a social media post, Modi said Singh's dedication and spirit of service to the country will continue to inspire everyone.

Born in 1902 to a Jat family in western Uttar Pradesh, Singh went on to become a promi nent leader, especially in north India, and an axis of anti-Congress politics after he quit the Congress. He also served as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh

The Modi government bestowed the Bharat Ratna on him this year, acknowledging his contribution to public life. His grandson Jayant Singh is a minister in



He recalled Singh's belief that India cannot prosper if its farmers remain poor, emphasising that the prosperity of the nation is integral to the wellbeing of its 'Annadata' farmers. 2014 are now recognised glob-

ally as a model for agricultural development", he stated. Reflecting this vision, the double-engine government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been relentlessly working to

Uphaar Yojana.

the BJP-led NDA government. Minister Yogi Adityanath said in a social media post "Humble tributes to former prime minister 'Bharat Ratna' Chaudhary Charan Singh ji on his birth anniversary. He dedicated his life to the upliftment of villages, poor and deprived and farmer welfare! Heartiest greetings of 'Farmers' Day' to the people of the state and the farmers who provide food!" The chief minister also attended a programme marking the 122nd birth anniversary of the former prime minister. He said, "Chaudhary Charan Singh's birth anniversary has been observed as 'Kisan Samman Diwas' in Uttar Pradesh since 2002."

'The initiatives launched in

uplift farmers, he added. Adityanath paid floral tributes to Singh's statue at the Vidhan Sabha and distributed new tractors to 11 farmers under the Chief Minister Krishak



Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas will be showcased through tableaux at Kartavya Path during Republic Day Parade 2025, defence ministry said here on Monday.. Every year states/UTs and

Union government ministries/ departments showcase their tableaux on Kartavya Path as part of Republic Day Celebration (RDC). For RDC-2025, the theme for tableaux has been decided as 'Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas,' it said. Since the beginning of this year, a consultative process has been adopted by the

Ministry of Defence to decide on various aspects related to tableaux. A meeting at senior official level was held in April 2024 to deliberate on quality. Various suggestions received during meeting has been included in process. Theme for tableaux was also decided based on suggestions from State/UTs.

There is a well-established system for selection of tableaux for participation in the Republic Day Parade as per which Ministry of Defence invites proposals for tableaux from all State/ UTs and central ministries/ departments.

The tableaux proposals received from various State/ UTs and central ministries/ departments are evaluated in a series of meetings of the Expert Committee, comprising eminent persons in the field of art, culture, painting, sculpture, music, architecture, choreography etc. Tableaux are one of the



time allotted for tableaux in done by the Expert

important components of the overall duration of parade, Republic Day Parade. Due to shortlisting of tableaux is

While evaluating the tableaux ideas presented by various states/UTs and ministries, key aspects like conceptual uniqueness and novelty, creative expression with a clear, communicable message, combining subtlety as well as directness, striking balance between Virasat and Vikas in each tableau, exclusion of repetitive ideas, special attention to details like colors, forms, textures, flow, rhythm, proportions and balance, ensuring a well-composed aesthetic experience of grand scale were taken into consideration for selection.

Following 15 states/ UTs have been selected for showcasing their tableaux on Kartavya Path for RDC-2025: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chandigarh, Dadar Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu, Goa, Gujarat,

NHRC questions TN Govt about

Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and West In addition, 11 Ministries/

Department of Union government have also been selected for RDC-2025. All the states/UTs, irrespec

tive of their selection for Kartavya Path, are invited to display their tableaux during Bharat Parv in Red Fort (26th-31st January 2025).

The entire selection process is robust, fair, transparent, based on merit and free from any bias. The selected tableaux would showcase India's diverse strengths and its constantly evolving cultural inclusiveness marching into glorious future, showcasing Swarnim Bharat - Virasat aur Vikas' to the world audi-

### Delhi HC denies anticipatory bail to former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar

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नेविधान जोगीकृत आणि अस्तिनित इतार साम अधिर अध्यासम्बद्धाः

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI** 

 $D_{\text{Monday refused to grant}}^{\text{elhi High Court on}}$ anticipatory bail to former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar in the criminal case lodged against her for cheating and wrongly availing of OBC and disability quota benefits in the civil services examination. "Anticipatory bail plea is dismissed. Interim protection from arrest is vacated," Justice Chandra Dhari Singh said while ruling on the plea. Justice Singh said a strong

prima facie case was made out

against Khedkar and investi-

gation was required to

unearth the conspiracy. It

was a classic case of fraud

committed on a constitution-

al body as well as society, the

judge said. Khedkar is

accused of misrepresenting

information in her application for the UPSC Civil Services Examination, 2022, to get reservation benefits. The counsel for the Delhi

Police as well as the complainant, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), opposed the plea for prearrest bail. The UPSC was represented by

senior advocate Naresh

Kaushik and lawyer

Vardhman Kaushik. The UPSC initiated a series of actions against Khedkar in July, including lodging a criminal case, for availing attempts in the civil services exam by faking her identity.
The Delhi Police registered

an FIR under provisions of the Indian Penal Code, Information Technology Act and Right of Persons with Disabilities Act.

### death by electrocution of two labourers PIONEER NEWS SERVICE Taking suo motu cognisance

**I** of a media report that two persons, working as contract labourers with the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (Tangedco) died due to electrocution, The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to the State Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, Tamil Nadu calling for a detailed report in the matter

within two weeks.
The NHRC noted that while repairing a high-tension overhead power line near Olaiyur Ring Road in KK Nagar, Tiruchi in the Southern State on December 18.

The Commission has observed that the contents of the media report, if true, indi-



cate gross negligence on the part of the electricity depart-ment resulting in the death of two labourers," said the Rights body in a statement issued here. The Commission has also noted that such incidents have occurred earlier too in the state. This is a serious human rights violation and a matter of concern for the Commission, it further added.

The notice is expected to include the status of the FIR registered in the matter and

to the next of kin of the two victims, said the statement. The Commission would also

like to know the steps taken/proposed by the State government and Tangedco to ensure that such incidents do not recur, it added.

According to the media report, as per the preliminary investigations, the power supply to the cable was not fully turned off during the repair work. The workers were on the job without any protective gear. In a similar incident, a worker

was electrocuted to death while repairing a transformer in the Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu last year. Last month, a migrant worker was reportedly electrocuted during Cyclone Fengal and his body was found near an ATM in Muthialpet, pointed out the NHRC in a

Shimla receives second snowfall

of the season, brings cheer to

tourists and farmers alike

# Open merit aspirants protest outside J and K CM's residence, demand rationalisation of reservation quota

**MOHIT KANDHARI 🔳** JAMMU

Demanding rationalisation of reservation quota in government jobs and scholarships, a large number of open merit aspirants led by a Member Parliament from Srinagar Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi Monday laid a siege to the official residence of Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah for several hours.

Braving inclement weather conditions under sub-zero temperatures these aspirants peaceful holding demonstration placards which read 'Stop Genocide Against Open

PDP legislator Waheed Ur Rehman Parra along with other party leaders including Iltija Mufti also joined the peaceful protest outside the CM's residence.

Kashmir's chief cleric Mirwaiz



extended support to a sit-in protest called to demand rationalisation in the reservation policy in Jammu

While expressing concern, Mirwaiz said that the matter should be addressed with justice and fairness by those at

Reacting to the developments taking place outside his residence, the Chief Minister invited a group of students.

the that government would address the reservation issue within the period of six months. Minister assured protesting student delegation that their demands would be addressed and the sub-

After briefing them on various steps initiated by his newly

formed government Omar

student

committee would submit its report within 6 months", the Spokesman of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference posted on X(earlier Twitter). KNC MP Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi also termed the time frame given by chief minister Jammu & Kashmir a 'positive

development'. thankful to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah who listened to students over the reservation issue and gave a time frame of six months to

solve this grave and sensitive issue," MP Ruhullah said. He said the time frame set by CM Abdullah doesn't mean it

will take a full six months. "It may take two or three months only. As one month has already passed, I'm hopeful that the matter will be resolved in the coming five months," he said.

Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi also that maintained rationalisation of reservation quota should be ensured as per population proportion, and that he is not satisfied with the formation of the cabinet subcommittee, but satisfaction of students matters to him.

Earlier addressing a student gathering he said that there should be no discrimination in reservation policy, and the policy should be ensured as per the Supreme Court ruling or as per the population

driving. Parking would be arranged along the Leisure

Also, concerned traffic official of the area will set up

alcohol checkpoints in their

respective areas so that

Christmas Day and New Year

2025 can be celebrated with joy as well as safely and

Valley and adjacent areas.

advance booking for New

Himachal Pradesh's capital, Shimla, on Monday witnessed the second light snowfall of the season, bringing cheer to tourists, locals and farmers.

PTI ■ SHIMLA

Residents cald in woolen clothes stepped out to enjoy the snowflakes under an overcast sky, as icy winds swept through the region. Tourists were seen reveling in the snowfall at The Ridge and mall road in town.

Snowfall was also occurred in nearby tourists spots of Kufri and Narkanda besides higher reaches including Kharapathar, Chaurdhar and Chanshal, the weather officer

local meteorological department had forecast rain and snow in mid and higher reaches on Monday, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday.

Snowfall, often termed "white manure" for apples, has raised hopes for good yields among farmers in the upper Shimla region. Apple farming contributes about Rs 5,000 crore to Himachal Pradesh's farming economy.

The snowfall is expected to boost tourist footfall in the state providing a fillip to local tourism business. A local hotelier Sushant Nag said that hotel occupancy is set to rise as snowfall draws tourists.

Another Shimla-based hotelier Rahul Chawla said that snowfall ahead of Christmas and predictions of more in the coming days could lead to a 50 percent increase in tourist arrivals. Shimla Hotel and Tourism Stakeholders Association president M K Seth had earlier said that that there are heavy bookings for Christmas and over 30 percent

Meanwhile, intense cold wave persisted in the lower hills of Himachal Pradesh, with Una, Hamirpur, Chamba and Mandi experiencing cold wave conditions and Sundernagar reeling under severe cold wave. Shallow fog was witnessed in Mandi and Sundernagar areas, the meteorological department said. The department on Monday issued an orange alert for severe cold in Bilaspur,

Una, Hamirpur and Mandi districts till Thursday.

Tabo was coldest place in the state at minus 10.6 degrees while Celsius Sumdo, Kusumseri and recorded lows of minus 5.3 degrees Celsius, minus 3.7 degrees Celsius and minus 2.5 degrees Celsius, respectively, it said. A yellow warning for dense fog over parts of the Bakra Dam reservoir area and Balh valley in Mandi has been issued from Tuesday to issued from Tuesday to Thursday. According to the weather station.

Thick ground frost is expected in isolated parts of the lower hills during this period, it added.

The weather office said an active western disturbance is likely to affect the western Himalayan region and adjoining plains from Friday. Light rain and snow are likely at isolated places over the state on Monday and Tuesday and at many places on Friday and Saturday, causing a gradual fall

in temperatures, it said. High-altitude tribal areas and mountain passes continued to experience biting cold, with temperatures 14 to 18 degrees below freezing point, the Met

### Defence Minister Rajnath Singh pays tribute to former Haryana CM Om Prakash Chautala



**PTI** ■ CHANDIGARH

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday visited Teja Khera in the Sirsa district and paid tributes to former Haryana chief minister Om Prakash Chautala, who passed away last week.

Singh reached the Chautala family's farmhouse in the Teja Khera village and met the departed Indian National Lok Dal chief's sons Abhay Singh Chautala, who is an INLD leader and Ajay Singh Chautala, who heads the JJP party. He also met O P

Truck runs over

younger brother Chautala's and former Harvana minister Ranjit Singh Chautala and offered condolences to the Chautala family. Ex-chief minister Chautala was former deputy prime minister Devi Lal's eldest of the four sons. Chautala, who was a five-time

chief minister, died in Gurugram on Friday. He was

89. Speaking to reporters at Teja Khera, Singh recalled his association with O P Chautala

and said he shared "deep relations" with him. He said that as chief minister of Haryana five times, he not

only served people of the state, but the services which he rendered for the farming community can never forget that. "He was son of a great leader (Devi Lal), but in the political sphere, he carved out his own identity," said Singh about Chautala, whose party was part of the NDA earlier. He said that Chautala was a flag-bearer of the anti-Congress front all his life. He also said that Chautala

walked the path shown by Sir Chhotu Ram, Chaudhary Charan Singh and Chaudhary Devi Lal (all of whom were considered the messiahs of farmers).

On Saturday, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, Shiromani Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Singh Badal were among prominent personalities who reached Teja Khera to attend the last rites of the departed leader.

#### Gurugram traffic police gear up for Christmas and new year celebrations, focus on curbing drunken driving

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

A head of Christmas Day and New Year celebrations the Gurugram Traffic Police has made special preparations for smooth traffic

operation in the city.
Traffic officials said special attention would be kept on drinking and driving.
For this, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Traffic Virender Vij, has assigned the duties of

has assigned the duties of traffic police officers to celebrate Christmas Day and Year New safely and peacefully. The DCP has issued

guidelines to all the officers posted in traffic to perform their duties with more vigilance during Christmas Day and New Year celebrations.

He also gave necessary directions to the traffic personnel to keep an eye on drinking and driving.

children in Haryana's Hisar

Meanwhile, a total of 57 people, including 06 traffic inspectors, 12 zonal officers, 33 ORS and 06 RSOs, have been deployed in the traffic police during Christmas Day, which also includes 6 traffic check posts. Apart from this, a total of 105 traffic police officers will be appointed especially for the New Year, including 11 zonal officers, 83 ORS, and 11 other traffic employees, which also 10 includes traffic checkpoints. Traffic would policemen deployed at ten traffic posts in Sector 29 and the MG Road, keeping arrangements in mind. Notably, there are more than 150 pubs in the city, where young men and women attend in large numbers for the New Year celebrations.

Cranes and ambulances have been put on standby in accident-prone areas, and arrangements have been made against drinking and

#### peacefully. According to data released by the Gurugram traffic police, a total of 25,615 drivers,

including 218 female drivers, who were driving after consuming alcohol, have been challened from 1 January 2024 to 22 December 2024.

"We requested people to celebrate Christmas Day and New Year celebrations celebrations peacefully and give their cooperation to the Traffic Police Gurugram. Traffic Police Gurugram is always ready for their service and security. Be careful and be safe. It is important to follow

### NCP's Chhagan Bhujbal meets | Brick kiln wall collapse kills four | BJP revamps Tripura leadership, appoints over 90 per cent new faces as mandal presidents

in Budana. The work of  $\mid$  **PTI**  $\blacksquare$  AGARTALA

The BJP has brought in over 1 90 per cent new faces as presidents of 'mandal' committees in Tripura, replacing old-timers, a party leader said

on Monday. The change in the assemblylevel organisational set-up was introduced after the party's tally in the 2023 state elections had decreased to 32 from 36 seats.

Party's returning officer (RO) for the selection of 'mandal' presidents, Samarendra Chandra Deb on Monday Samarendra declared the names of 60

'mandal' presidents. "During the selection of the 'mandal' presidents for 60 assembly segments, we ensured representation of all sections of people because the party believes in 'Sabka Saath Vikash'. Sabka Women constitute three per cent of the newly selected 'mandal'

to ST, 18 per cent to SC and 36 new 'mandal' presidents for category," he told reporters. Deb said almost all such

committees got new heads as the party had put a restriction on the upper age limit at 45 for the post of 'mandal' presidents. BJP activists, who are below

45 years of age, are now 'mandal eligible for presidents in Tripura as the party's central leadership instructed the state unit to bring new faces to strengthen the organisation in assembly segments. Those who had already completed two terms as 'mandal' presidents did not get another chance to lead the party at local levels, he said. Around 90 per cent of the 60 'mandal' presidents are new faces. The party has followed a proper guideline to bring new faces to the forefront," he

Chief Minister Manik Saha on

constituencies. "Congratulations to newly appointed presidents. I firmly believe under your able that

leadership, the party will be strengthened more," the chief minister wrote on Facebook. BJP's Tripura unit general secretary Amit Rakshit said the move to appoint new faces as 'mandal' presidents was introduced following instruction from Delhi to give a fair chance to young leaders

to serve the party. According to him, over 11 lakh people have already enrolled their names online as BJP's primary and active members during a drive that commenced in October. Apart

from membership, the BJP has received over 2 lakh applications offline, seeking enrollment as primary

#### people sleeping on footpath, killing three and injuring six **PTI** ■ PUNE

Two toddlers and a man I were killed and six other persons injured after a truck ran over people sleeping on a footpath in Maharashtra's Pune city in the wee hours of Monday, police said.

The incident took place at 12.55 am on the footpath in Wagholi area where several persons were sleeping, they said. The victims comprised labourers and their family members hailing Amravati. The labourers had come to Pune a couple of days back in search of jobs, the police said. The truck driver, identified as Gajanan Totre (26), was arrested after the incident and his medical test was being done to ascertain if he was driving under the influence of alcohol, an official

"There were many people sleeping on the footpath near Kesnand Phata area, most of them labourers. They were run over by a truck, leading to the death of three persons," a senior police official said.

The deceased have been identified as Vaibhavi Pawar (1), Vaibhav Pawar (2) and Vishal Pawar (22), the police

The six injured persons - Janki Pawar (21), Rinisha Pawar (18), Roshan Bhosale (9) Nagesh Pawar (27), Darshan Vairal (18) and Aalisha Pawar (47) - were admitted to the Sassoon General Hospital, they added.

Additional Pune Commissioner of Police (East Region) Manoj Patil said the truck driver lost control over the wheels near Wagholi police station and rammed his vehicle into several people sleeping on the footpath at 12.55 am.

"Prima facie, the people who were injured and died were labourers and their family members from Amravati

### CM Devendra Fadnavis amid Mahayuti government row

**PTI** ■ MUMBAI

Senior NCP leader Chhagan Bhujbal,who is sulking over not being included in the new Mahayuti government in Maharashtra, met Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis here on Monday.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, Bhujbal said he had an elaborate discussion with the CM on the prevailing political and atmosphere in the state.

The former state minister was accompanied by his nephew Sameer Bhujbal during the nearly 30-minute meeting with Fadnavis at the latter's 'Sagar' bunglow in Mumbai. "Fadnavis told me that the Other Backward Classes have played an important role in the landslide victory of the Mahayuti in the assembly elections (held on November

the OBC community's interest is not harmed," Chhagan Bhujbal said. He also said Fadnavis has sought some time to think over the issues pertaining to OBCs. 'He (Fadnavis) said he would

arrive at some decision in 10 to 12 days," the NCP leader added. OBC leaders are opposed to activist Manoj demand reservation for the Maratha community in the Other Backward Class (Kunbi) category. Bhujbal has also been vocal about his opposition to the demand. Asked if he was planning to switch over to the BJP, Chhagan Bhujbal refused to elaborate and said he has already spoken his mind on the issue of him being ignored in the ministry expansion.

On Sunday, representatives of OBC organisations from different parts of Maharashtra

**PTI** ■ HISAR

 $\Gamma^{
m our}$  children were killed when a wall of a brick kiln collapsed on them while they were asleep in Budana village of Harvana's Hisar district, police said on Monday.

A girl was critically injured in the incident that took place on Sunday night in the Narnaund police station area. The deceased were identified as Nisha (3 months), Suraj (9), Nandini (5) and Vivek (9), they said.

According to sources, many families of labourers from

pillars near the chimney is going on at the kiln. The children and some labourers were sleeping near the wall of the brick kiln when it collapsed on them.

While Suraj, Nandini and Vivek died on the spot, Nisha succumbed on the way to the hospital, said Superintendent of Police (SP), Hansi, Hemendra Kumar Meena. The condition of a five-year-

old girl, Gauri, is critical. She is undergoing treatment at Hisar Civil Hospital. All five children hail from Badhav village in Ambedkar Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh, police said. SP Meena visited Hisar Civil Hospital after the incident and met the families of the deceased. The victims' families have not given any written complaint in the matter. If a complaint is received, action will be taken

#### met him in the city. 20) and he will take care that Uttar Pradesh work at the kiln accordingly, he said. presidents, 23 per cent belong Monday congratulated the members of the party. Kumbh Mela 2025: No more 'Kumbh mein bichchrey bhai' drama as UP gears up with tech-savvy systems

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE PRAYAGRAJ** 

The age-old cinematic trope The age-old chieffalls dope of loved ones getting separated in the chaotic crowds of the Kumbh Mela is set to become a thing of the past. The Uttar Pradesh government is pulling out all the stops to ensure that the Maha Kumbh 2025 in Prayagraj will be a secure and seamless experience for crores of pilgrims.

Through meticulous planning and cutting-edge technology, the state administration aims to eliminate the fear of separation at the mega event. The Prayagraj Mela Authority, in collaboration with the Police Department, is rolling out an advanced lost-andfound system that prioritizes prevention and

reunions. At the forefront of this initiative are digital Khoya-Paya centers, which will



feature a robust registration system. Missing persons' details will be swiftly recorded and shared across multiple platforms, including popular social media channels like Facebook and X (formerly Twitter). Officials believe this tech-driven approach will replace heart-wrenching tales

of separation with reassuring stories of timely reunions. "Announcements at regular intervals and the use of digital platforms will ensure no family has to endure prolonged anxiety," said a senior official overseeing preparations. "Our aim is to redefine the Kumbh as a place

and cherished memories. Special measures are being implemented to protect vulnerable groups, especially women Any individual children. claiming a lost child or woman must provide verifiable identification. In cases of uncertainty, police timely reunions," said a

will intervention be immediate, leaving no room for error or potential harm. This system eliminates the fears depicted in movies where lost individuals are taken away by the wrong people. Instead, we are ensuring their

safety through a secure and organized process," the official added.The theme of siblings or loved ones getting separated at the Kumbh has been a staple in Indian cinema, from the 1943 classic Taqdeer to the 1970s hit Mela. The Maha Kumbh 2025, however, is poised to rewrite this narrative with its techpowered approach.

In cases where a missing individual remains unclaimed for over 12 hours, authorities will step in to provide shelter and care. "The dramatized chaos of separations will give way to a reality of safety and

government spokesperson. For the first time, advanced face recognition cameras, powered by artificial intelligence, will be installed at key railway stations catering to Maha Kumbh pilgrims. The Prayagraj Railway

Division is spearheading this initiative, alongside the deployment of over 650 CCTV cameras and 100 FR cameras.

"With nearly 10 crore devotees expected to travel by train, these FR cameras will play a crucial role in monitoring crowded areas and identifying suspicious individuals. This ensures prompt action in case of anomalies," said Amit Singh, PRO of Prayagraj Railway Division. The cameras, which will be operational by January, will cover all nine railway Prayagraj, stations in monitoring platforms,

shelters, and access routes.

surveillance system is aimed at preempting security risks and ensuring the safety of pilgrims.

government's proactive measures are set to transform the Maha Kumbh 2025 into a modern, secure, unforgettable event. With these advancements,

pilgrims can enjoy a enriching spiritually experience without the fear of getting lost or encountering said mishaps," Dwivedi, a senior police officer stationed in Kumbh Nagari.

The Maha Kumbh, a confluence of faith and tradition, is now also becoming a showcase of technology and meticulous planning, ensuring that the 2025 event is not just memorable but also worrywww.dailypioneer.com

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

### Attack and aftermath

Christmas market attack in Germany reigniting polarising debates about immigration and national security

recent attack on a Christmas market in Magdeburg, Germany, has reignited contentious debates about immigration and national security, which is security and left dozens injured, has sent shockwhich claimed the lives of five individuals and left dozens injured, has sent shockwaves across Germany, leading to both solemn remembrances and polarising political rhetoric. On the evening of December 20, a car driven by Taleb al-Abdulmohsen, a 50-year-old psychiatrist originally from Saudi Arabia, careened into a crowded Christmas market. The attack lasted three harrowing minutes, during which over 200 people were struck, leaving 40 with critical injuries. Authorities arrested al-Abdulmohsen at the scene, and he now faces multiple charges of murder, attempted murder, and grievous bodily harm. Despite living in Germany for nearly two decades, the suspect's motives remain unclear. Investigators have yet to establish any ideological or

political motivations.

In the wake of the tragedy, far-right groups have amplified their calls for stricter immigration controls and mass deportations. On December 21, approximately 2,100 demonstrators gathered in Magdeburg to voice their outrage. Protesters, some wearing black balaclavas, carried banners with slogans like "Reimigration Now" and "migration kills." The term "reimigration" has become a rallying cry for far-right factions advocating the forced removal of immigrants and individuals deemed non-ethnically German. Chants such as "Anyone who doesn't love Germany should leave" and "We must take back our cities,

our villages, and our homeland" echoed through the streets. The incident has deepened divisions within Germany over immigration and integration policies. Critics argue that far-right groups are exploiting the tragedy to stoke xenophobia and advance their anti-immigrant agenda. Meanwhile, local communities have sought to counter the rhetoric of hate with acts of solidarity. A silent vigil was held at Magdeburg's Cathedral Square on the same evening as the protest, with participants lighting candles in memory of the victims. German authorities have called for calm and emphasised the need for a thorough investigation. Chancellor Olaf Scholz expressed condolences to the victims' families and condemned both the attack and the use of such tragedies to spread divisive ideologies. The attack has reignited debates over Germany's approach to immigration and the balance between openness and security. While far-right voices call for stringent measures, advocates for multiculturalism warn against the dangers of collective punishment. This incident underscores the fragility of Europe's social cohesion in times of crisis. As Germany mourns, the challenge lies in addressing security concerns without succumbing to fear-driven policies that erode the values of inclusivity and tolerance that underpin the nation's democratic fabric.



People dressed as Santa Claus during Christmas celebration, in Chennai

# Macau: The glittering gem in Xi Jinping's China



For the Chinese Communist Party, Macau is a beacon of controlled capitalism, showcasing the potential of the "One Country, Two Systems" framework

President Xi Jinping landed in Macau, the world's gambling capital, the air was thick with anticipation. Macau, often dubbed the "Las Vegas of the East," is much more than a beacon of wealth and opulence. For Xi and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), it is a sparkling gem in the palm of China's vast and complex economic system—a model of the "One Country, Two Systems" framework that allows capitalist practices to thrive under the watchful eye of a socialist regime. Xi's visit underscored the stark contrasts between theory and practice in the CCP's governance and the lessons it offers not only for China's neighbours but for the world at large. Macau's significance lies in its

unique identity. A former Portuguese colony, it returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1999 under the promise of autonomy. Today, its glitzy casinos, luxury hotels, and sprawling Special Economic Zone (SEZ) generate billions annually, contributing substantially to China's GDP. But while the dice roll and fortunes are made on Macau's gaming tables, the CCP's control remains unyielding.

The irony is palpable. The CCP, a party built on anti-capitalist ideology, oversees the largest SEZ in the world in Shanghai, nurtures capitalism in Hong Kong, and allows gambling—once condemned as a moral vice—to flourish in Macau. This duality reflects the pragmatic philosophy first espoused by Deng Xiaoping: "It doesn't matter if a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice." This approach has been pivotal in transforming China into the world's second-largest economy. Yet it also lays bare the contradictions at the heart of CCP

Xi Jinping's Macau visit was not merely ceremonial. It was a reaffirmation of the CCP's ability to adapt and wield capitalist tools while maintaining a tight grip on wer. in Macau, XI emphasised stability and loyalty to the central government. This aligns with his broader strategy of tightening trolled capitalism. The success control over regions that might of these regions bolsters the

veer toward autonomy or dissent, as evidenced in Hong Kong. The "One Country, Two Systems" model—once lauded as a masterstroke of governance—has increasingly become a tool for consolidating Beijing's authority. Hong Kong's story is a cautionary

A vibrant hub of multinational corporations (MNCs) and transnational corporations (TNCs), it has been at the forefront of economic globalisation. However, its recent struggles with political dissent and Beijing's heavy-handed responses reveal the limits of the "Two Systems" promise. The CCP's crackdown on prodemocracy movements in Hong Kong has sent a clear message: economic freedom does not translate to political autonomy. Macau, in contrast, has largely avoided such conflicts, partly due to its economic dependence on Beijing and the absence of a robust prodemocracy movement. Yet, this does not make Macau immune to the inherent tensions of "One Country, Two Systems.

As Xi extolled Macau's success, he also warned against complacency and stressed the need for "long-term stability," a euphemism for unwavering allegiance to the CCP.For the CCP, Macau and Hong Kong are not just economic engines;



MACAU'S SIGNIFICANCE LIES IN ITS UNIQUE IDENTITY. A FORMER **PORTUGUESE** COLONY, IT **RETURNED TO CHINESE** SOVEREIGNTY IN 1999 UNDER THE PROMISE

OF AUTONOMY

party's narrative that socialism with Chinese characteristics can coexist with, and even benefit from capitalist mech-

The underlying contradictions are hard to ignore. The CCP's insistence on ideological purity clashes with its pragmatic embrace of market-driven policies. This duality is reflected in Xi's leadership, which combines Maoist centralisation with Dengist pragma-

For Maoists, Naxalites, and urban Naxals in India, as well as other ideologues clinging to rigid dogmas, Macau stands as a testament to the power of adaptation. The CCP's ability to evolve, to reconcile its Marxist-Leninist roots with the demands of a modern, globalised economy, has been the cornerstone of China's rise. This is a far cry from the ideological purism that often paralyzes leftist movements elsewhere

India, too, can draw inspiration from Macau. As the world's largest democracy grapples with its development challenges, it must consider the role of SEZs, MNC headquarters, and even industries like gambling in driving economic growth. While gambling remains taboo in much of India, the success of Macau snows now regulated gaming can become a major revenue

Similarly, expanding SEZs and creating hubs for MNCs can transform India into a global economic powerhouse. At the heart of this debate is the question of whether ideology should dictate policy. The CCP's approach—that opinion is not an iron rod—offers a compelling case for pragmatism. Yet, the party's intolerance for dissent, as seen in its suppression of Mao's "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom" campaign, highlights the dangers of unchecked authority. The CCP's success in economic management is undeniable, but its human rights record and stifling of democratic aspirations serve as stark reminders of the cost of its iron-fisted rule.

As Xi Jinping departed Macau,

the world was left pondering the paradoxes of modern China. Under his leadership, the CCP has doubled down on centralisation, curbing dissent while championing economic liberalisation. Macau's glittering casinos and towering skyscrapers are symbols of this duality, where capitalism thrives under the shadow of socialism. For Xi, Macau is more than a gem in China's palm; it is a symbol of the CCP's ability to adapt and endure. Whether in the neonlit streets of Macau or the corridors of power in Beijing, the CCP's experiment in controlled capitalism continues to shape the future of Chinaand the world.

(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

## Navigating the intersection of technology, law and human rights



In a world increasingly shaped by digital technologies, the concept of 'digital arrest' has emerged as a controversial tool in cyberspace

he term 'Digital Arrest' often referred to as the restriction, monitoring, or apprehension of individuals through online mechanisms extends beyond the confines of traditional legal systems to encompass actions in cyberspace, such as freezing digital assets, blocking online accounts, or limiting access to certain platforms or limiting individual freedom in a virtual or online environment.

As technology permeates every aspect of life, the implications of digital arrest have grown even more sig-nificantly, offering both opportunities and challenges in governance, security, and individual rights in dismantling operations such as ransomware groups, hacking collectives, and online marketplaces for illegal activities. For instance, international efforts have led to the closure of dark web platforms such as Silk Road and the apprehension of their oper-

Also, Cryptocurrencies and digital financial assets have brought about new forms of digital arrest, where govern- even individual users can ital rights and responsibili-

ments or agencies freeze digital wallets associated with criminal activities thereby preventing the illicit flow of funds and supporting global financial regula-

While the concept is still evolving, digital arrest encompasses aspects of cybersecurity, legal frameworks, and the social consequences of living in a highly digitised world.

At its core, this kind of arrest involves leveraging technology to enforce restrictions or punish actions taken in the digital sphere. Various government agencies, corporations, and

participate in acts akin to digital arrest, raising questions about authority, power dynamics, and accountabil-

ity in cyberspace. To balance security and individual rights in the digital era, taking measures such as establishing transparent and enforceable regulations that define the scope of digital arrest; overseeing the use of digital arrest mechanisms to ensure accountability and prevent misuse; developing universal guidelines for promoting fairness and consistency across jurisdictions and most importantly raising public awareness about dig-

ties can equip individuals with the knowledge and tools needed to engage effectively and securely in the digital world.

As the digital world continues to evolve, so too will the methods of enforcement and resistance. New technologies, such as artificial intelligence and blockchain, may influence how digital arrests are carried out and challenged.

Transparency in enforcement, the right to appeal, and global cooperation on ethical standards are essential steps in creating a just digital society. There is no denying that digital arrest represents the intersection of technology, law, and human rights in the digital age. While it offers tools for enforcing order and combating crime, it also poses risks to freedom and privacy.

As society becomes increasingly reliant on digital infrastructure, the concept of digital arrest will likely continue to evolve, demanding thoughtful and ethical approaches to its implementation.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

#### **CONTROVERSY OVER AMBEDKAR**

Madam —The row over the insult to Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar is neither factual nor logical since the home minister never insulted Dr Ambedkar in his speech by words or intention; rather, the fact is that no leader from the BJP has ever insulted Dr BR Ambedkar publicly or in Parliament or state assemblies, whereas Congress has a documented history of opposition to Ambedkar. It is no secret that the first PM, JL Nehru, was never on good terms with Dr Ambedkar, and MK Gandhi too had an uncomfortable equation with Ambedkar, while it may be argued that the twin Congress leaders (Gandhi and Nehru) were right when it comes to national interest and the movement of Indian independence to oppose Dr Ambedkar.

Unfortunately, the national politics has reached the spot where Dr BR Ambedkar has been established as a godly figure, though he never participated in any struggle for Indian independence for which the Congress claims sole credit and abuses Bharatiya JanaSangh and BJP for their nonparticipation, never mentioning Ambedkar for his nonparticipation because that would be politically incorrect. Neither making Ambedkar the god nor considering the Constitution a heavenly document would be democratically or even constitutionally correct.

Jai Prakash Gupta | Ambala Cantt

#### **APATHY AT ITS WORSE**

Madam—This is our modern India. When a Jaipur gas tanker explosion left motor mechanic Radheyshyam Choudhary with 85 per cent burns. He bravely walked 600 meters while engulfed in flames, even calling his brother before succumbing to his injuries at SMS Hospital. Shockingly, by mid-morning, videos of the aftermath of the gas tanker explosion on the national highway were circulating online, with more than one showing a burning man struggling to stay

### **Indian diaspora remits \$129 billion**



**LETTERS** TO THE EDITOR

n 2024. Indian expatriates achieved a historic milestone by sending \$129 billion in remittances. This amount not only surpasses India's vast defence budget and foreign direct investment but also exceeds the combined budgets of Pakistan and Bangladesh. This flow of funds symbolises not just economic support but also the hard work, dedication, and unwaver-

the cacophony unleashed by the accident, but bystanders just filmed his suffering rather than offering aid. Pathetic. People believe in publicity rather than providing succour and relief. No wonder, actually; these days people do anything for a short time of fame. They will upload such videos to garner views and likes, maybe monetise. They keep refreshing their page to see like and comment status anxiously.

It's more horrible that in the quest for social media, people have forgotten to be human! Shame on us. People want to know that this is the reality of our Sanskar. We have read many cases like these where precious lives could have been saved by the onlookers instead of taking useless videos. It's high time that YouTube and Instagram stop paying people for videos. Moreover, big vehicles like tankers and buses should be given a separate lane. It's there in all developed countries. It's important to react with improvements so that such foolish

mishaps don't happen. on his feet as he scampered for help amid Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

ing love of Indians for their homeland. Remittances have unlocked new avenues for development in rural and urban areas, fostering investment in education, healthcare, and infrastructure. It has provided stability to rural economies while empowering small and medi-

um enterprises Indians living abroad establish their identity on foreign soil through resilience and courage. By dedicating a significant portion of their income to the development of their families and nation, they exemplify cultural values and familial commitment. This inflow strengthens India's foreign exchange reserves and energises local businesses. With strong policy measures, the government can further enhance this success. Remittances are not merely economic contributions; they represent the collective effort and national pride of Indians across the globe.

#### **ACTION AGAINST MINING MAFIA**

**RK Jain** | Barwani

Madam — The operation of the mining mafia is a well-known fact for a long time to both the governments of Rajasthan and Haryana, including the efforts put forth by the general public in complaining against such acts with no stoppage of the bringing down of the Aravalli hills. However, a common man hesitates to lodge an FIR, as he is aware of the consequences he will face with negligible police protection for a limited time and the creation of animosity with the mafia, resulting in a threat to his life and discouraging him from fighting with such a large force. Sending inspecting teams to the blasted site from both the government is purely an eyewash in the eyes of the public until concrete action is taken at a national level involving the NIA. A strategic policy with amendments to the existing mining rules is required to be pondered upon to make it pragmatic and not theoretical to be effective.

R S Narula | Patiala

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### **FIRST COLUMN**

### **SUCCESS THROUGH WORKPLACE INTELLIGENCE**

It is the ability to adapt to the work environment through emotional and cognitive intelligence



n today's dynamic work environment, workplace intelligence has become a cornerstone for achieving personal growth, team cohesion, and organisational excellence. Workplace intelligence refers to the ability of individuals and organisations to navigate, adapt, and thrive in the professional environment through effective understanding, communication and decision-making. It encompasses emotional intelligence, social intelligence, and cognitive intelligence blended together with technological advancements thereby creating a comprehensive approach towards addressing the root causes of toxicity and fostering a positive workplace culture. There is no denying that such intelligence not only plays a pivotal role in creating a healthy, harmonious and productive professional environment but also equips individuals and organisations with the tools to identify, mitigate and prevent toxic behaviours that can undermine morale, collaboration and overall success.

It is often believed that employees with high workplace intelligence can manage their tasks efficiently and adapt to new challenges with minimal disruption. By leveraging cognitive and emotional intelligence, they can prioritize effectively and maintain focus, leading to improved productivity. Also, social and emotional intelligence enables them to work harmoniously with others, promoting effective communication and minimizing conflicts. Strong teamwork followed by leaders with workplace intelligence inspires trust, and motivation and navigate through complex challenges with clarity and empathy. It even enhances creativity, innovation and the achievement of their collective goals and even reduces stress, boosts morale, and contributes to overall job satisfaction. In an era of rapid technological advancements and shifting market dynam-



ics, workplace intelligence equips employees and organisations with the resilience and adaptability needed to stay competitive. By fostering emotional and social intelligence, workplace intelligence helps identify and mitigate toxic behaviours, thereby ensuring a positive and respectful work environment.

By promoting training and development, organisations can invest in training programmes that focus on emotional intelligence, communication skills and technological proficiency. Open and constructive feedback mechanisms help the employee grow and refine their workplace intelligence over time. Emphasising diversity and inclusion helps individuals develop social intelligence by interacting with people from different backgrounds and perspectives. Encouraging continuous learning and adaptability ensures that employees remain agile and open to new ideas and methods. Remember, a workforce with high workplace intelligence is more likely to generate creative solutions and drive innovation. Employees are more likely to stay in organisations where they feel valued, supported, and empowered. Today, companies such as Heineken, Cooley, Cruise Automation, Urban Company, Amazon, Chipotle and many more are known for fostering workplace intelligence to attract top talent and build trust with stakeholders.

By investing in the development of workplace intelligence, organisations can create environments that promote collaboration, innovation, and sustainable success, ensuring they remain agile and competitive in an everevolving world. As organisations continue to navigate the complexities of globalisation and digital transformation, the importance of workplace intelligence will only grow. Artificial intelligence, remote work and diverse teams are shaping new paradigms that demand a more nuanced understanding of interpersonal and technological dynamics but organisations that invest in fostering workplace intelligence will gain a competitive edge, as their employees will be better equipped to adapt, innovate, and lead in an ever-changing world.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

# A roadmap for financial sustainability of India Post



India Post is at a crossroads. As private courier services continue to expand their market share with speed and convenience, it must adapt to stay competitive



ndia Post, a vital lifeline in connecting citizens across the country, needs to undergo a comprehensive review of its services. This reform should focus on introducing innovation, ensuring greater revenue generation for the Department of Posts (DoP), and maintaining affordability for the public. As private courier services continue to gain traction due to their convenience and efficiency, India Post must adapt to remain competitive and relevant in a rapidly changing environment.

Rationalising Postal Tariffs and **Eliminating GST on Select Services** The current structure of postal services includes highly subsidised offerings, such as postcards priced as low as 50 paise. While such subsidies aim to make communication accessible, they are often exploited. For instance, during Lok Sabha elections in 2019, political parties used postcards extensively, resulting in significant costs to the public exchequer. Similarly, postcards are frequently misused for commercial purposes, such as reminders by chit-fund companies. These subsidised services, rarely used by the common man, burden taxpayers without corresponding benefits.

To address this, printed or rubber-stamped postcards should be discontinued unless they are sponsored. The introduction of sponsored Meghdoot postcards priced at Re1 and printed postcards priced at Rs10 could ensure a sustainable revenue model. Similarly, the tariff for registered newspapers could be rationalised to Rs1, reflecting the increased cost of inputs for small newspaper production.

Additionally, while normal postal services are exempt from GST, applying GST on premium services like Speed Post is counterproductive. It results in a redundant transfer of funds between government departments. Rationalising tariffs for Speed Post to Rs 20 or Rs 30 per 50gram weight slabs and aligning other domestic and international postal tariffs in multiples of Rs 10 would streamline the system and reduce inefficiencies. International postal rates could follow a consistent structure, with uniform tariff increases per weight slab for air and sur-

THE 'MY-STAMP INITIATIVE. WHICH ALLOWS INDIVIDUALS TO PRINT PERSONAL **IMAGES ON** POSTAGE STAMPS, HAS BEEN MISUSED. **REPORTS** INDICATE INSTANCES OF

**INDIVIDUALS OBTAINING** STAMPS WITH THEIR PHOTOS TARNISHING THE PROGRAM'S **CREDIBILITY** 

**NOTORIOUS** 

face mail

Generating Revenue Through Sponsored Postal Stamps

To boost revenue, the DoP should introduce sponsored postal stamps. These stamps, carrying advertisements or approved messages, could be issued in bulk to sponsors at a fixed charge per printed stamp. This initiative could attract businesses, encouraging them to utilise  $\,$ postal services over private courier companies.

Additionally, a new series of definitive postal stamps and stationery could be launched annually on the first day of the financial year. These stamps should maintain consistent color schemes for specific denominations while showcasing new designs based on a selected theme. Commemorative stamps, previously issued in arbitrary denominations like Rs 12 and Rs 41, should be standardised to denominations in multiples of Rs 10. Furthermore, the practice of printing stamps of different denominations on the same sheet, except for miniature sheets, should be discontinued as it complicates

Miniature sheets, being collectible items, should be priced higher than the face value of the stamps they contain. Such measures could not only enhance revenue through philately but also rekindle public

interest in postal services.

Replacing "My-Stamp"

Sponsored Stamps

The "My-Stamp" initiative, which allows individuals to print personal images on postage stamps, has been misused. Reports indicate instances of notorious individuals obtaining stamps with their photos, tarnishing the program's credibility. Since no robust mechanism exists to screen applicants' backgrounds, the programme is susceptible to abuse. Discontinuing the "My-Stamp" concept in favor of sponsored stamps could address this issue. Sponsored stamps would

not only ensure better regulation but also offer a significant revenue stream.

Enhancing Consumer Convenience with Sticker Receipts

Currently, receipts issued by the Postal Department include a sticker only on the portion retained by the Department, leaving the consumer without one. Adding stickers to consumer receipts would eliminate the need for gum to paste them onto dispatch registers or documents. This small change could save public resources and improve the user experience, especially for organisations that rely heavily on postal services.

Introducing RTI Stamps and **Rationalising Postal Orders** 

Postal orders in low denominations such as Rs 1, Rs 2, Rs 5, and Rs 7 were discontinued due to high handling costs. For example, the handling cost of a postal order in 2011–12 was Rs 37.45, far exceeding its value. To minimise losses, higher denominations like Rs 100, KS 200, and KS 500 could be introduced. Furthermore, RTI-specific stamps in denominations of Rs 2, Rs 10, and Rs 50 could replace postal orders for fees under the RTI Act, streamlining the payment process. This approach aligns with recommendations from the Central Information Commission and addresses the issue of unfeasible copying charges below Rs10 due to the absence of lowerdenomination postal orders.

Managing Inoperative and **Matured Accounts** 

Unclaimed deposits in post office accounts often remain unnoticed due to deceased account holders failing to inform legal heirs. This creates a risk of fraud, as unscrupulous individuals may attempt to claim such funds in collusion with postal employees. To mitigate this risk, the Postal Department should send registered letters to account

their accounts or claimed matured deposits for over three years. If no response is received within three months, the funds should be frozen in fixed accounts and made accessible only after rigorous verification. Publishing details of such accounts could help legal heirs claim their rightful amounts, subject to stringent scrutiny. The introduction of successive nominations, as practiced by LIC of India, would further safeguard deposits and simplify inheritance process-

**Expanding Postal Services** Through Bank Counters

The closure of post offices in key commercial areas, such as Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi, has caused inconvenience for businesses that rely on Registered and Speed Post services. With banks increasingly adopting government savings schemes, their branches could be utilised for booking postal services. Offering banks a nominal commission for hosting these services would not only enhance accessibility dut aiso integrate postai and banking ecosystems more effective-

**Revamping the Postal Ecosystem** for Sustainability

India Post's transformation should emphasise efficiency, innovation, and customer-centricity.
Rationalising tariffs, eliminating wasteful subsidies, and leveraging sponsored services are crucial steps toward financial sustainability. Additionally, addressing operational inefficiencies and improving service delivery will help India Post reclaim its position as a trusted and competitive communication medium.

By embracing these changes, India Post can not only secure its financial future but also continue serving as a cornerstone of India's communication network.

(The writer is a Guinness World Record holder and RTI Consultant; views are personal)

### India's math geniuses shine bright in international math competition 2024

India, a nation with a rich legacy of mathematical brilliance, added another feather to its cap by triumphing at the UCMAS International Competition 2024

ndia has long been a land of great mathematicians, **▲**from Aryabhata to Ramanujan to Bhaskara, each leaving an indelible mark on the world with their mathematical ingenuity. Today, India continues to excel in the field, as evidenced by its stellar performance at the Universal Concept of Mental Arithmetic System (UCMAS) International Competition

2024 in New Delhi, where the country bagged both the highest individual and team trophies.

The competition, the world's largest event for Abacus and Mental Arithmetic, brought together over 6,000 students from nearly 30 countries. Participants faced the challenge of solving 200 arithmetic questions in just eight min



utes, relying solely on the Abacus or mental math techniques—a feat that truly felt like magic. For the second time, the World's Largest Abacus & Mental Arithmetic **Event- UCMAS International** Competition 2024 was held in India at the Delhi University Multipurpose Hall.

Students from across the world competed with each

tal prowess in solving a very large number of mathematics problems in the quickest possible time to win the awards. This landmark event reaffirms its global significance in nurturing young minds in mathematics.

The competition aimed at promoting brain development, enhancing cognitive skills, and demonstrating the incredible abilities students can achieve through Abacus and Mental Arithmetic. Presenting the trophies to top performers, former Union Minister Meenakshi Lekhi rightly said, "Smart brain produces smart solutions for every problem and prosperity is moving forward only when we have smart brains." Commending the efforts of the young par-

the importance of such initiatives and said, "UCMAS is enhancing cognitive skills and academic excellence." The blend of the ancient tool of the Abacus with modern teaching methodologies creates a unique educational experi-

Over 3 million children across the world have benefited from the Abacus and Mental Arithmetic curriculum, which encourages creativity, visualisation, and focus while developing strong arithmetic abil-

In today's competitive academic environment, maintaining mental wellbeing has become an uphill battle for many children. The relentless pressure to excel often leads to stress, anxiety, and even depression. other showcasing their men- ticipants, Lekhi emphasised In some heartbreaking cases,



extreme steps, as seen in recent reports from Rajasthan's Kota district—a hub for competitive exam preparations. However, innovative educational programmes like the and Mental Arithmetic course are emerging as a ray of hope, helping children manage stress while fostering mental stability and weekly classes guided by

self-confidence.

According to Dr Snehal Karia, CEO of UCMAS India, the course is designed to enhance children's mental stability by boosting their concentration, focus, and memory. It equips them with the confidence to understand and embrace their individuality, effectively reducing anxiety and depression. The Abacus & Mental Arithmetic program's key lies in its structured approach to building self-assurance through innovative teaching methods.

The encouragement and skills imparted during the training play a pivotal role in shaping a child's bright future. The program comprises eight levels, each lasting three to four months. Children attend

trained instructors, working through specially designed books and activities. Unlike conventional education, the course serves as a supplementary learning system to enhance cognitive abilities. There is an urgent need to complement the school's curriculum by focusing on brain development. The course improves memory, sharpness, and alertness.

As a result, students perform better academically and approach challenges with greater confidence. In a world where competition often overshadows creativity and selfworth, programs like Abacus & Mental Arithmetic provide children with the tools they need to thrive-mentally, emotionally, and academically. Alexan Wong, CEO of

Corporation, said, "The competition not only tests their skills but also serves as a platform to demonstrate their creativity, visual memory, and focus—all of which will shape their future success."The competition itself is a testament to the transformative power of such programs, where students not only test their math skills but also demonstrate the broader cognitive benefits that shape their academic and personal growth.

Ultimately, the world needs such initiatives to nurture well-rounded individuals who are prepared to face the challenges of the future with confidence and creativity.

(The author is a senior journalist. The views expressed

# Bethlehem plans another somber Christmas under the shadow of war in Gaza

AP BETHLEHEM (WEST BANK)

The Nativity Store in Manger Square has sold handmade olive wood carvings and religious items to people visiting the traditional birthplace of Jesus since 1927. But as Bethlehem prepares to mark its second Christmas under the shadow of the war in Gaza, there are almost no tourists, leaving the Nativity Store and other businesses unsure of how much longer they can

For the second straight year, Bethlehem's Christmas celebrations will be somber and muted, in deference to ongoing war in Gaza. There will be no giant Christmas tree in Manger Square, no raucous scout marching bands, no public lights twinkling and very few public decorations or displays.

"Last year before Christmas, we had more hope, but now again we are close to Christmas and we don't have anything," said Rony Tabash, the third-generation owner of Nativity

Israel's war against Hamas has been raging for nearly 15 months, and there still is no end in sight. Repeated ceasefire efforts have

Since the war began, tourism to Israel and the Israeli-occupied West Bank has plummeted. And after Israel barred entry to most of the 150,000 Palestinians in the West Bank who had jobs in Israel, the Palestinian economy contracted by 25% in the past year.

The yearly Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem — shared among Armenian, Catholic and Orthodox denominations — are usually major boons for the city, where tourism accounts for 70% of its yearly income. But the streets are empty

Tabash said he continues to open the store every day, but often an entire week will go by without a sale. Tabash works with more than 25 local families who create handcarved religious items out of the region's storied olive wood. But with no buyers, work has dried up for these families.

Lots of room at the inn: The number of visitors to the city plunged from a pre-COVID high of around 2 million visitors per year in 2019 to fewer than 100,000 visitors in 2024, said Jiries Qumsiyeh, the spokesperson for the Palestinian

tourism ministry

According to the Christmas story, Mary was forced to give birth to Iesus in a stable because there was no room at the inn. Today, nearly all of Bethlehem's 5,500 hotel rooms are

The city's hotel occupancy rate plunged from around 80% in early 2023 to around 3% today, said Elias Al Aria, the head of Bethlehem Hoteliers Association. At his own hotel, the Bethlehem Hotel, he said he has laid off a staff of more than 120 people and retains just five employees.

The city hosts more than 100 stores and 450 workshops dealing with traditional Palestinian handicraft, Qumsiyeh said. But just a week before Christmas, when the city should be bursting with visitors, Manger Square was mostly empty save for a few locals selling coffee and tea. Only two of the eight stores in the main drag of the square were open for business.

Oumsiveh worries that when the war ends and tourism eventually rebounds, many of the families that have handed down traditional skills for generations will no longer be making the items that reflect

Palestinian heritage and culture. Many are leaving the region entirely. "We have witnessed a very high rate of emigration since the beginning of the aggression, especially among those working in the tourism

sector," said Qumsiyeh. A Christmas without joy: Almost 500 families have left Bethlehem in the past year, said Mayor Anton Salman. And those are just the families who moved abroad with official residency visas. Many others have moved abroad on temporary tourist visas and are working illegal ly, and it's unclear if they will return, Salman said.

Around half of the population in the

Bethlehem area, including nearby villages, works in either tourism or in jobs in Israel.

The unemployment rate in Bethlehem is roughly 50%, said Salman. Unemployment across the West Bank is around 30%, according to the Palestinian Economy Ministry.

Canceling Christmas festivities is one way to draw attention to the difficult situation in Bethlehem and across the Palestinian territories, said Salman. "This year we want to show the world that the Palestinian people are still suffering and they haven't the joy that everybody else in the world having," said Salman.

It is another blow to the Holy Land's dwindling population over the decade due to emigration and a low birthrate.

Christians are a small percentage of the population. There are about 182,000 in Israel, 50,000 in the West Bank and Jerusalem and 1,300 in Gaza, according to the US State

Finding the light in the night: Father Issa Thaljieh, the parish priest of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Church of the Nativity, said many families are struggling financially, leaving them unable to pay rent or school fees, much less buy Christmas presents or celebrate the holiday in other ways. The church's social services have tried to help, but the needs are great, he said.

Thaljieh said his Christmas message this year focused on encouraging Palestinians in Bethlehem to stay despite the challenges.

"A church without Christians is not a church," he said, as workers handpolished the ornate brass candelabras in the cavernous, empty church a week before the holiday. 'The light that was born when Jesus Christ was born here is the light that

moves beyond darkness, so we have to wait, we have to be patient, we have to pray a lot, and we have to stay with our roots because our roots are in Bethlehem," he said.

Some families are finding ways to bring back pockets of joy.

Bethlehem resident Nihal Bandak, 39, gave into her three children's requests to have a Christmas tree this year, after not having one last year. Decorating the tree is the favorite part of Christmas of her youngest daughter, 8-year-old Stephanie.

Mathew Bandak, 11 was thrilled his family brought back some of their traditions, but also torn.

"I was happy because we get to decorate and celebrate, but people are in Gaza who don't have anything to celebrate," he said.

Rony Tabash, the third-generation owner of Nativity Store, said he will continue to open the store, because it's part of his family's history.

'We are not feeling Christmas, but in the end, Christmas is in our hearts," he said, adding that the entire city was praying for a cease-fire and peace. "We have a big faith that always, when we see Christmas, it will give us the light in the night."

# Trump threatens to try take back Panama Canal

## Panama's president balks at the suggestion

**AP** PHOENIX

Donald Trump suggested Sunday that his new administration could try to regain control of the Panama Canal that the United States "foolishly" ceded to its Central American ally, contending that shippers are charged "ridiculous" fees to pass through the vital transportation channel linking the Atlantic and Pacific

Panama's conservative president José Raúl Mulino, who was elected in April on a probusiness platform, roundly rejected that notion as an affront to his country's sover

The Republican presidentelect's comment came during his first major rally since winning the White House on Nov. 5. He also basked in his return to power as a large audience of conservatives cheered along. It was a display of party unity at odds with a just-concluded budget fight on Capitol Hill, where some GOP lawmakers openly defied their leader's

Addressing supporters at Turning Point USA's AmericaFest in Arizona, Trump pledged that his "dream team Cabinet" would deliver a borders and quickly settle wars in the Middle East and Ukraine. "I can proudly proclaim that the Golden Age of America is upon us," Trump said. "There's a spirit that we have now that we didn't have just a short while ago.

His appearance capped a fourday pep rally that drew more than 20,000 activists and projected an image of Republican cohesion despite the past week's turbulence in Washington with Trump pulling strings from his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida as Congress worked to avoid a government shutdown heading into the holidays

House Republicans spiked a



bipartisan deal after Trump and Elon Musk, his billionaire ally, expressed their opposition on social media. Bûdget hawks flouted Trump's demand that they raise the nation's debt ceiling, which would have spared some new rounds of the same fight after he takes office on Jan. 20, with Republicans holding narrow control of the House and Senate. The final agreement did not address the issue and there was no shutdown. Trump, in his remarks in Phoenix, did not mention the congressional drama, though he did reference Musk's grow-"President Trump has ceded the presidency to Elon," Trump made clear, "No, no. That's

not happening." "He's not gonna be president," Trump said.

The president-elect opened the speech by saying that "we want to try to bring everybody together. We're going to try. We're going to really give it a Then he suggested Democrats have "lost their confidence" and are "befuddled" after the election but eventually will "come over to our side because we want to have them.

Atop a list of grievances some old, some new — was the Panama Canal

"We're being ripped off at the Panama Canal," he said, bemoaning that his country "foolishly gave it away."

The United States built the canal in the early 1900s as it looked for ways to facilitate the transit of commercial and military vessels between its coasts. Washington relinquished control of the waterway to Panama on Dec. 31, 1999, under a treaty signed in 1977 by President Immy Carter. The canal depends on reser-

voirs to operate its locks and was heavily affected by 2023 that forced it to substantially reduce the number of daily slots for crossing ships. With fewer ships using the canal each day, administrators also increased the fees that are charged all shippers for reserving a slot. With weather returning to normal in the later months of this year, transit on the canal has normalized. But price increases are still expected for next year.

Mulino, Panama's president, has been described as a conservative populist who aligns with Trump on many issues. Panama is a strong US ally and the canal is crucial for its economy, generating about onefifth of that government's annu-

Still, Trump said, that, once his second term is underway, "If the principles, both moral and legal, of this magnanimous gesture of giving are not fol-lowed, then we will demand that the Panama Canal be returned to the United States of America, in full, quickly and without question."

"I'm not going to stand for it," Trump said. "So to the officials of Panama, please be guided accordingly.

He did not explain how that would be possible.

ter Trum Mulino released a video declaring that "every square meter of the canal belongs to Panama and will continue to belong" to his country.

Without mentioning Trump by name, Mulino addressed Trump's complaints over rising fees for ships crossing the canal, saying they are set by experts who take into account operational costs, and supply and demand factors. "The tariffs are not set on a

whim" Mulino said. He noted that Panama has expanded the canal over the years to increase ship traffic "on its own initiative," and added that shipping fee increases help pay for

'Panamanians may have differ ent views on many issues" Mulino said. "But when it comes to our canal, and our sovereignty, we will all unite under our Panamanian flag." The canal aside, Trump's appearance at Turning Point's annual gathering affirmed the growing influence the group and its founder, Charlie Kirk, have had in the conservative movement. Kirk's group hired thousands of field organizers across presidential battlegrounds, helping Trump make key gains among infrequent voters and other groups of people that have trended more Democratic in recent decades, including younger voters, Black men and Latino men. "You had Turning Point's grass-

roots armies," Trump said. "It's not my victory, it's your victory." Trump on Sunday also announced several new members of his incoming adminis-

tration, most notably: Stephen Miran, who worked at the Treasury Department in Trump's first term, to lead the Council of Economic Advisers, an executive branch agency charged with providing objective economic advice to the president

Callista Gingrich to be the US Gingrich was US ambassador to the Holy See in Trump's first term. She is married to former House Speaker Newt Gingrich. Separately, Australian billionaire Anthony Pratt announced he was donating \$1.1 million to Trump's inaugural fund to complement the \$14 million that he said he already had given to the Make America Great Again Inc. super political action committee — making him one of the presidentelect's top donors.

Pratt is chairman of Pratt Industries, which uses recycled paper and boxes as a raw material in a process that produces new cardboard.

## Pak govt, Imran's party agree to continue talks to resolve contentious issues

The Pakistan government and the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party in their maiden meeting on Monday agreed to continue talks to address contentious issues, including the release of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan.

The long-anticipated talks between the committees representing the government and the PTI were chaired by the National Assembly (NA) Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, who had last week announced to facilitate the two sides in their effort to defuse the prevailing political tension. Those who attended from the

government side include Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, PM's political aide Rana Sanaullah, Senator Irfan Siddiqui, former premier Raja Naveed Qamar, lawmaker Farooq Sattar and Privatisation Minister Aleem Khan. PTI was represented by former

Parvez Ashraf, former minister

speaker Asad Qaiser, Sahibzada Hamid Raza, and Senator Raja Nasir Abbas.

Sadiq thanked the government's leadership and senior leaders of the opposition for holding the talks. He announced that the next session would be held on January 2 and PTI's team would present a charter of their demands in the next meeting.
"We discussed things about past and present and I hope

that if we work together for the country's betterment, it will strengthen the political stability, strengthen democracy and help in dealing with challenges faced by Pakistan," he said after the meeting. Senator Irfan Siddiqui read

out the communiqué regarding

the talks that both sides described the talks as a positive development and emphasised the importance of keeping the negotiations ongoing.

Both committees expressed goodwill, saying that Parliament is the appropriate forum for resolving issues, the handout said. PTI's Qaiser informed the members that several members of his committee could not attend due to

court proceedings. It was agreed that both sides stand united in the fight against terrorism. A tribute was also paid to the martyrs for their sacrifice. There was also a declaration of support for standing alongside the forces in the war against terrorism. The talks began amidst the

ongoing political tension between the government and PTI as the latter was demanding the release of all political

## Albanian prime minister says TikTok ban was not 'rushed reaction to single incident'

**AP** TIRANA (ALBANIA)

A lbania's prime minister ha Asaid that the ban on TikTok his government announced on Saturday was "not a rushed reaction to a single incident".

Prime Minister Edi Rama said Saturday the government will shut down TikTok for one year, accusing the popular video service of inciting violence and bullying, especially among children. Authorities have held 1,300

meetings with teachers and parents since the November stabbing death of a teenager by another teen after a quarrel that started on social media apps. Ninety per cent of them approve of the ban on TikTok.

but a carefully considered decision made in consultation with parent communities in schools across the country," said Rama on Sunday.

Following Tirana's decision, TikTok asked for "urgent clarity from the Albanian government" in the case of the stabbed teenager. The company said it had "found no evidence that the perpetrator or victim had TikTok accounts, and multiple reports have in fact confirmed videos leading up to this incident were being posted on another platform, not TikTok". "To claim that the killing of the teenage boy has no connection to TikTok because the conflict

"The ban on TikTok for one didn't originate on the platform year in Albania is not a rushed demonstrates a failure to grasp threat TikTok poses to children and youth today and the rationale behind our decision to take responsibility for addressing this threat," said Rama.

"Albania may be too small to demand that TikTok protect children and youth from the frightening pitfalls of its algorithm," he said, blaming TikTok for "the reproduction of the unending hell of the language of hatred, violence, bullying and so on?

Albanian children comprise the largest group of TikTok users in the country, according to domestic researchers. Many youngsters in Albania did not approve of the ban.

## Israeli airstrikes on Gaza kill at least 20 people

er prime minister visits military positions

**AP** JERUSALEM

Palestinian medics say Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip have killed at least 20 people. One of the strikes overnight and into Monday hit a tent camp in the Muwasi area, an Israel-declared humanitarian zone, killing eight people, including two children. That's according to the Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Younis, which received the bodies. Hospital records show another six killed in a strike on people securing an aid convoy and another two killed in a strike on a car in Muwasi. One person was killed in a

separate strike in the area. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the central city of Deir al-Balah said three bodies arrived after an airstrike on a school-turnedshelter in the built-up Nuseirat refugee camp. The Israeli military says it only strikes militants, accusing them of hiding among civilians. It said late Sunday that it had targeted a Hamas militant in the humanitarian zone. The war began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on Oct 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 hostage. Around 100 captives are still inside Gaza, at least a third of whom are believed to be dead. Israel's air and ground offensive has killed over 45,200 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The ministry says women and children make up more than half the dead but does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its tally. The military says it has killed over 17,000 militants, with out providing evidence. Lebanon's caretak-

in the country's south: Lebanon's caretaker prime minister has begun a tour of military positions in the country's south, almost a month after a ceasefire deal that ended the war between Israel and the Hezbollah group that battered the country. Najib Mikati on Monday was on his first visit to the southern frontlines, where Lebanese soldiers under the US-brokered deal are expected to gradually deploy, with Hezbollah militants and Israeli troops both expected to withdraw by the end of next month. Mikati's tour comes after the Lebanese government expressed its frustration over ongoing Israeli strikes and overflights in the country. "We have many tasks ahead of us, the most important being the enemy's (Israel's) withdrawal from all the lands it encroached on during its recent aggression," he said after meeting with army chief Joseph Aoun in a Lebanese military barracks in the southeastern town of Marjayoun. Then the army can carry out its tasks in full." The Lebanese military for years has relied on financial aid to stay functional, primarily from the United States and other Western countries. Lebanon's cash-strapped government is hoping that the war's end and ceasefire deal will bring about more funding to increase the military's capacity to deploy in the south, where Hezbollah's armed units were notably present. Though they were not active combatants, the Lebanese military said that dozens of its soldiers were killed in Israeli strikes on their premises or patrolling convoys in the south. The Israeli army acknowledged some of these attacks.

### Palestinian security forces man killed

AP JENIN (WEST BANK)

he Palestinian Authority says a second I member of its security forces has been killed in the West Bank town of Jenin during clashes with Palestinian militants.

Brig Gen Anwar Rajab, the spokesman for PA security forces, said 1st Sgt Mehran Qadoos was killed on Monday by "outlaws" in the volatile northern town, where the security forces launched a rare crackdown earlier this month. A member of security forces also was killed on Sunday.

An Associated Press reporter in Jenin heard heavy gunfire and explosions, apparently from a battle between the security forces and Palestinian militants. There was no sign of Israeli forces in the area. Militant groups had earlier called for a gen-

eral strike across the territory, accusing the security forces of trying to disarm them in support of Israel's half-century occupation of the territory. The Western-backed Palestinian Authority

is internationally recognized but deeply unpopular among Palestinians, in part because it cooperates with Israel on security matters. Israel accuses the authority of incitement and of failing to act against armed groups

## Biden gives life in prison to 37 of 40 federal death row inmates

**AP** WASHINGTON

**D**resident Joe Biden announced Monday that he is commuting the sentences of 37 of the 40 people on federal death row, converting their punishments to life imprison-ment mere weeks before President-elect Donald Trump, an outspoken proponent of expanding capital punishment, takes office.

The move spares the lives of people convicted in killings, including the slayings of police and military officers, people on federal land and those involved in deadly bank robberies or drug deals, as well as the killings of guards or prisoners in federal facilities.

It means just three federal inmates are still facing execution. They are Dylann Roof, who carried out the 2015 racist slayings of nine Black members of Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, 2013 Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev and Robert Bowers, who fatally shot 11 congregants at Pittsburgh's Tree of life

Synagogue in 2018, the deadliest antisemitic attack in US

'I've dedicated my career to reducing violent crime and ensuring a fair and effective justice system," Biden said in a statement. Today, I am commuting the

sentences of 37 of the 40 individuals on federal death row to life sentences without the possibility of parole. These commutations are consistent with the moratorium my administration has imposed on federal executions, in cases other than terrorism and hate-motivated mass murder.

The Biden administration in 2021 announced a moratorium on federal capital punishment to study the protocols used, which suspended executions during Biden's term. But Biden actually had promised to go further on the issue in the past, pledging to end federal executions without the caveats for terrorism and hate-motivated, mass killings.

While running for president in 2020, Biden's campaign website Indeed, Trump, who takes

said he would "work to pass legislation to eliminate the death penalty at the federal level, and incentivize states to follow the federal government's

Similar language didn't appear on Biden's reelection website before he left the presidential race in July. 'Make no mistake: I condemn

example.

these murderers, grieve for the victims of their despicable acts, and ache for all the families who have suffered unimaginable and irreparable loss, Biden's statement said. "But guided by my conscience and my experience as a public defender, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, vice president, and now president, I am more convinced than ever that we must stop the use of the death penalty at the federal level."

He took a political jab at Trump, saying, "In good conscience, I cannot stand back and let a new administration resume executions that I halt-

his 2024 campaign, Trump called for those "caught selling drugs to receive the death penalty for their heinous acts." He later promised to execute drug and human smugglers and even praised China's harsher treatment of drug peddlers. During his first term as president, Trump also advocated for the death penalty for drug dealers. There were 13 federal executions during Trump's first term,

office on Jan. 20, has spoken

frequently of expanding execu-

tions. In a speech announcing

more than under any president in modern history, and some may have happened fast enough to have contributed to the spread of the coronavirus at the federal death row facility in Indiana. Those were the first federal exe-

cutions since 2003. The final three occurred after Election Day in November 2020 but before Trump left office the following January, the first time federal prisoners were put to death by a lame-duck president since Grover Cleveland in 1889.

# at UN as conflicts persist

**AP** UNITED NATIONS

As the United Nations prepares to celebrate its 80th anniversary next year, India stressed that reform is "key" to the organisation's "relevance" in addressing current and future global challenges, as world leaders signed off on an ambitious pact in 2024 to transform global governance and drive sustainable action.

When world leaders descended at the UN Headquarters in September for the high-level 79th session of the General Assembly, they adopted by consensus the landmark 'Pact of the Future' - a document that covers themes from peace and security, sustainable development to climate change, digital cooperation, human rights, gender, youth and future generations, and transformation of

global governance. Underlining the need for reform, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, "We don't need a crystal ball to see that 21st Century challenges require problem-solving mechanisms that are more effective. networked and inclusive. We can't create a future fit for our grandchildren with systems built for our grandparents." India has been at the forefront of years-long efforts calling

for reform of the Security

Council, including expansion

in both its permanent and

non-permanent categories, say-

ing the 15-nation Council,

founded in 1945, is not fit for

purpose in the 21st Century and does not reflect contempo-rary geo-political realities. Delhi has underscored that it rightly deserves a permanent seat at the horse-shoe table.

A polarised Security Council has failed to deal with current peace and security challenges, with Council members sharply divided on conflicts such as the Ukraine war and the Israel-Hamas war.

Guterres noted that many of today's pressing issues were not foreseen when the UN's multilateral framework was created 80 years ago.

India's message to the international community was that reforms in global institutions are essential for global peace and development.

"Reform is the key to relevance... Global action must match global ambition,"Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in his address to the UN's Summit of the Future, where the Pact was adopted.

Modi's clarion call for change from the UNGA lectern came amid ongoing global conflicts, including the Ukraine war entering its third year, the Israel-Hamas war, and escalating global threats like terrorism, climate crises, economic inequality, and attacks on women's rights.

Amid these global challenges, India consistently advocated dialogue and diplomacy to arrive at solutions and resolve conflicts. When Modi met Ukraine's President Volodymyr

Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the Summit of the Future before wrapping up his threeday visit to the US, he reiterated India's willingness to play a constructive role in the quest for a peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri emphasised Modi's commitment to finding a way forward and contributing in any way possible to a resolution of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The Modi-Zelenskyy meeting

was the third in about as many months. Modi met the Ukrainian leader in Kviv in August, just weeks after he met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow in July. In June, Modi held a bilateral meeting with Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Italy. Modi held bilateral talks with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, expressing concern over the Gaza crisis and advocating a two-state solution for sustainable peace in the region.

Modi also met Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the 16th BRICS summit in Kazan, Russia in October amidst heightened tensions between Iran and Israel. Modi emphasized the need for dialogue and diplomacy to de-escalate tensions in the volatile region. Terrorism continued to pose a significant threat to peace and security globally in 2024.

External Affairs Minister S

Jaishankar's General Assembly address in September marked a strong stance, explicitly condemning Pakistan's "crossborder terrorism policy"for the first time in six years from the UNGA lectern while delivering the national statement at the high-level General Debate.

He asserted that terrorism is antithetical to everything that the world stands for. "When this polity instils such fanaticism among its people, its GDP can only be measured in terms of the radicalisation and its exports in the form of terrorism,"Jaishankar said.

"Pakistan's cross-border terrorism policy will never succeed. And it can have no expectation of impunity. On the contrary, actions will certainly have consequences. The issue to be resolved between us is now only the vacation of illegally occupied Indian territory by Pakistan. And of course the abandonment of Pakistan's longstanding attachment to terrorism," he said.

His statement echoed late External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj's 2018 address which criticised Pakistan's continued glorification of terrorism. "Pakistan's commitment to terrorism as an instrument of official policy has not abated one bit... Pakistan glorifies killers; it refuses to see the blood of innocents," Swaraj had said in her powerful takedown of Pakistan from the UNGA podium.

## UN 2024: India calls for change | Internet rife with fake reviews; will AI make it worse?

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence tools that allow people to efficiently produce novel and detailed online reviews with almost no work has put merchants, service providers and consumers in uncharted territory, watchdog groups and researchers say.

Phony reviews have long plagued many popular consumer websites, such as Amazon and Yelp. They are typically traded on private social media groups between fake review brokers and businesses willing to pay. Sometimes, such reviews are initiated by businesses that offer customers incentives such as gift cards for positive feedback.

But AI-infused text generation tools, popularized by OpenAI's ChatGPT, enable fraudsters to produce reviews faster and in greater volume, according to tech industry experts.

The deceptive practice, which is illegal in the US, is carried out year-round but becomes a bigger problem for consumers during the holiday shopping season, when many people rely on reviews to help them purchase

Where are AI-generated reviews showing up?: Fake reviews are found across a wide range of industries, from e-commerce, lodging and restaurants, to services such as home repairs, med-

**kotak** Kotak Mahindra Bank

NOTICE

Locker Hired by PARVEEN KAUR

having address at 120, TAGORE

PARK DELHI-110009 with KOTAK

MAHINDRA BANK B-1

110009 remains un-operated and

All the 3 letters earlier sent to

PARVEEN KAUR calling upon her

to clear dues and to operate the

locker has returned unserved and

It is hereby informed that despite

this notice, if dues not cleared and

ocker is not operated by

PARVEEN KAUR within 90 days

from the date of this notice, break

open of the said locker will be

done on March 25, 2025 at

She is not contactable.

GUJRANWALA, NEW DELHI

the rent due for the last 4 years.

The Transparency Company, a tech company and watchdog group that uses software to detect

ical care and piano lessons.

fake reviews, said it started to see AI-generated reviews show up in large numbers in mid-2023 and they have multiplied ever since. For a report released this month, The Transparency Company analysed 73 million reviews in three sectors: home, legal and medical services. Nearly 14% of the reviews were likely fake, and the company expressed a "high degree of confidence" that 2.3 million reviews were partly or

entirely AI-generated. 'It's just a really, really good tool for these review scammers," said Maury Blackman, an investor and advisor to tech startups, who reviewed The Transparency Company's work and is set to lead the organisation starting Jan 1. In August, software company Double Verify said it was observing a "significant increase" in mobile phone and smart TV apps with reviews crafted by generative AI. The reviews often were used to deceive customers into installing apps that could hijack devices or run ads constantly, the company said.

The following month, the Federal Trade Commission sued the

kotak Kotak Mahindra Bank

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done on March 25,2025 at

around 12p.m.

and he is not contactable.

the rent due for the last 4 years.

company behind an AI writing tool and content generator called Rytr, accusing it of offering a service that could pollute the marketplace with fraudulent reviews. The FTC, which this year banned the sale or purchase of fake reviews, said some of Rytr's subscribers used the tool to produce hundreds and perhaps thousands of reviews for garage door repair companies, sellers of "replica" designer handbags and other

businesses.

It's likely on prominent online sites, too: Max Spero, CEO of AI detection company Pangram Labs, said the software his company uses has detected with almost certainty that some AIgenerated appraisals posted on Amazon bubbled up to the top of review search results because they were so detailed and appeared to be well thought-out. But determining what is fake or not can be challenging. External parties can fall short because they don't have "access to data signals that indicate patterns of abuse," Amazon has said.

Pangram Labs has done detection for some prominent online sites, which Spero declined to name due to non-disclosure agreements. He said he evaluated Amazon and Yelp indepen-

kotak

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It is hereby informed that despite

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locker is not operated by KUNAL

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the said locker will be done on

March 25, 2025 at around 12p.m.

he is not contactable.

GUJRANWALA, NEW DELHI

the rent due for the last 4 years.

Many of the AI-generated comments on Yelp appeared to be posted by individuals who were trying to publish enough reviews to earn an "Elite" badge, which is intended to let users know they should trust the content, Spero

The badge provides access to exclusive events with local business owners. Fraudsters also want it so their Yelp profiles can look more realistic, said Kay Dean, a former federal criminal investigator who runs a watchdog group called Fake Review Watch. To be sure, just because a review is AI-generated doesn't necessarily mean its fake. Some consumers might experiment with AI tools to generate content that reflects their genuine sentiments. Some non-native English speakers say they turn to AI to make sure they use accurate language in the reviews they write.

"It can help with reviews (and) make it more informative if it comes out of good intentions," said Michigan State University marketing professor Sherry He, who has researched fake reviews.

# ATHE PIONEER O

#### **CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Balbir Singh, son of Shri Jagat Singh, residing at Plot No. 31 B, Dilshad Garden, Near Flora Dale Public School, Delhi-110095,was previously known as Balbir Singh. However, I have now changed my name to Balbir Singh Jaswal. In the future, I shall be known and identified

> PD(1129)C YOGESH.

KANHAIYALAL VANI, R/O. J-75, JAHANGIRPURI DELHI, 110033, THAT, I. HAVE CHANGED MY SON'S NAME FROM PIYUSH YOGESH WANI TO PIYUSH

PERMANENTLY

I. Kumari Menka Kanwar, W/o- JC-473046Y Nb Sub Amar Singh Rajput, R/o-Vill-Seemla, Teh- Baswa, Dist-Dausa, Rajasthan - 303315, have changed my name from Kumari Menka Kanwar to Menka kanwar, vide affidavit dated 23/12/2024 before

PD(1131)C I, Sadashiv, Father of- JC-

857058X Sub(OPR) Arjun Bhoi, R/o- Vill+PO- Nanadi, Tal- Chikodi, Dist- Belagavi, Karnataka- 591244, have changed my name from Sadashiv to Sadashiv Bhuyi, vide affidavit dated 23/12/2024 before Notary

Public Delhi.

Notary Public Delhi.

I, Subhadra, Mother of JC-857058X Sub(OPR) Arjun Bhoi, R/o- Vill+PO- Nanadi, Tal- Chikodi, Dist- Belagavi, Karnataka- 591244, have changed my name from Subhadra to Subadra Sadashiva Bhuyi, vide affidavit dated 23/12/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1133)C I, Pratibha W/o- JC-857058X Sub(OPR) Arjun Bhoi, R/o-Vill+PO-Nanadi, Chikodi, Dist- Belagavi, Karnataka- 591244, have changed my name from

Pratibha to Pratibha Bhoi, vide affidavit dated 23/12/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

I, JC-857058X Sub (OPR)

Arjun Bhoi, R/o- Vill+PO-Nanadi, Tal- Chikodi, Dist-Belagavi, Karnataka- 591244, have changed my son's name from Preetam to Preetam Bhoi, vide affidavit dated 23/12/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1135)C I, SURENDER SINGH S/o Bhagot Singh R/o G-85 3rd

Floor, East Vino Nagar, Delhi- 110091, hereby declare that in my son School documents my name wrongly mention as Surender Sing Rawat. My correct Name is Surender

Magdeburg mourns Christmas market attack victims as fears swirl of deeper social divisions Nancy Faeser said Sunday that

China warns Philippines over mid-range missile deployment plan

**AP** ■ MAGDEBUG (GERMANY)

Mourners laid flowers near the scene of the deadly Christmas market attack on Monday as investigators puzzled over the motive of the suspect and fears swirled that the rampage could deepen divisions in German society. The Johanniskirche, a church a

short walk from the scene of the attack, has become a central place of mourning since the suspect drove a car into the busy market on Friday evening, killing five people and injuring 200. A carpet of flowers now covers the broad sidewalk in front of the church.

hina said a plan by the

Philippines to deploy

midrange missiles would be a

provocative move that stokes

regional tensions. The

Philippines top army official

told reporters in Manila earli-

er on Monday that the military

plans to acquire a mid-range

system to defend the country's

territory amid tensions with

China in the South China Sea.

"Yes, there are plans, there are

negotiations, because we see its

feasibility and adaptability," Lt

The US deployed its Typhon

mid-range missile system in the

Gen Roy Galido said.

Authorities have identified the suspect as a Saudi doctor who arrived in Germany in 2006 and had received permanent residency. They say he does not fit the usual profile of perpetrators of extremist attacks.

The man described himself as an ex-Muslim who was highly critical of Islam and in many posts on social media expressed support for the far-right. A picture has emerged of someone who had come to authorities' attention in the past for threatening behaviour and been the subject of tipoffs, but was not known to have committed any

German Interior Minister know and a lot is unexplained,

the potential use of the heavy

China opposes US military

assistance to the Philippines

and has been particularly

alarmed by the deployment of

the Typhon system. Under

President Joe Biden, the US has

strengthened an arc of military

alliances in the Indo-Pacific to

counter China, including in any

China's Foreign Ministry

spokesperson Mao Ning said

that deployment of the weapon

by the Philippines would inten-

sify geopolitical confrontation

**PUBLIC NOTICE** 

Re: Entire Second Floor without Roof Rights along with 25% undivided share on Lowe Ground Floor referred to as "said floor of Property Bearing No. F-700, built on Plo Nos. 8 & 9, area measuring 102 sq. yds. falling in Khasra No. 40/1, situated in the area of Village Shakarpur, in the abadi of Sri Nagar New Delhi-110034; hereinafter referred to at "eaid property".

ents/Purchaser, in any manner whatso

and an arms race.

said property

confrontation over Taiwan.

weaponry.

"the views and statements that the perpetrator expressed are being investigated, as are the tipoffs and proceedings with various authorities and the justice system." She said "the right conclusions" will then have to be drawn.

The country's vice chancellor voiced fears that the attack will fuel online misinformation ahead of a national election expected in late February. He urged people to "take time for the truth" and said: "Don't let yourselves be infected by hatred?

There is still a lot we don't

have been training jointly for "It is an extremely irresponsi- The army is working not only

ble choice for the history and

people of itself and the whole

of Southeast Asia, as well as for

the security of the region," she

The Philippines would not

necessarily buy the Typhon

Detector/Rancidity Tester.

told a daily briefing.

system, Galido said.

including the exact motive, Robert Habeck said in a video posted Sunday. "All the same, I fear that the distrust that was immediately propagated on the net against Muslims, foreigners and people with a history of immigration will entrench itself deeper in soci-

On Sunday night, police in the threatened crimes at a

port city of Bremerhaven said they detained a man who Christmas market there in a TikTok video. German news agency dpa reported that he had said he would stab any people of Arabic appearance there on Christmas Day.

with the United States but with

other friendly countries on a

long list of weapons platforms

that it plans to acquire, he said

The Philippines defence plan

includes protecting its exclusive

economic zone, which reaches

200 nautical miles (370 km).

**PUBLIC NOTICE** Change in Partnership Maruti Authorized Service Station
M/s. Wig Automobiles, Delhi

around 12p.m.

Region: C1, Mass Code: 8012 Location : Delhi. Constitution: Partnership, Old Partners: 1. Mr. Jatinder Nath Wig 2. Mr. Bhola Nath Wig

(Mass Code 8012) as below

3. Mr. Virender Nath Wig Mrs. Renu Bala 5. Mrs. Alka Wig Mrs. Prem Kumari. New Partners with Shareholding 1. Mr. Virender Nath Wig - 55% 2. Mrs. Alka Wig - 10%

3. Mrs. Pia Wig Kochhar -35% PUBLIC NOTICE

nformation is given to general public at large that Mohd tekhar & Md Zubair Alam who is/are purchasing th troperty No. 923 E/3, Gali No. 8 (part of Property No 23/8), area measuring 30 sq. yds., comprised c hasra No. 600/93, Govindpuri Kalkaji, New Delhi 110019 from Ali Hassan S/o Fida Hassan & Guddu Ali S/o Liyakat Hussain who was the owner opporety by virtue of Sale Deed dated 07.05.2006 (Doc. No. 8620) executed by Mr. Amar Singin S/o Late Million Dulli Ram Intend to mortgage the same against the financial assistance from Shubharn Housing Development Finance Company Limited. Original registered General Fower of Attorney dated 08.05.1997 (Document no. 6287), Agreement to Sell Notarized on dated 16.05.1997 & Willi of the subject property are not available with Seller i.e Ali Hassain S/o Fida Hassain & Guddu Ali S/o Liyakat Hussain. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any person(s) having any objection regarding ownership and/ or creating mortgage of the said property Is/are hereby requested to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days at below 10019 from Ali Hassan S/o Fida Hassan & Gudi riting to the undersigned within 07 days at belo

> NCR LAW ASSOCIATES Advocates & Consultants A-98, Sector-9, New Vijay Nagar, Ghaziabad, (U.P.)-201009, MOB- 9999826427, 9999721152

In order to clear extra rush of passengers. Northern Railway has decided to run the following Special Train as per details given below :-

Central-Hazrat Nizamuddin SF Reserved Special Express Train STATIONS A Train No. 04081 Train No. 04082 ARR. DEP. ARR. 19:20 ▼ Hazrat Nizamuddin 06:45 Thiruvananthapuram Central

Train No. 04082/04081 Hazrat Nizamuddin-Thiruvananthapuram

Days of Run: 04082 Ex Hazrat Nizamuddin on 28.12.2024 (Saturday) and 04081 Ex Thiruvananthapuram Central on 31.12.2024 (Tuesday) Stoppages: Kota Jn., Ratlam Jn., Vadodara Jn., Udhana Jn., Vasai

Road, Panvel, Roha, Chiplun, Ratnagiri, Kankavali, Thivim, Madgaon Jn., Karwar, Kumta, Mookambika Road Byndoor, Kundapura, Udupi, Mangalore Jn., Kasaragod, Kannur, Kozhikkode, Shoranur Jn. Thrisur, Aluva, Ernakulam Town, Kottayam, Tiruvalla, Chengannur, Kayankulam Jn., Kollam Jn. & Varkala Shivagiri stations Accommodation: 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC & General

For detailed information regarding stoppages and timings of above trains, please call RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit enquiry website: www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in RailMadad Helpline No. Download Railmadad App 139

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2

WORKS DEPARTMENT OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, EASTERN CIRCLE (R&B), BALASORE e-mail: - seec bls@rediffmail.com Government of Odisha "e" Procurement N

Roads Works 1No Roads Work

Bid Identification No.CCEEC- 10/ 2024-25 No:- 4725 Dt: 20.12.2024

Last Date / Time of receipt of bid in the portal: - Dt.18.01.2025 up to 05:00 PM Date of opening of bid : - Dt.19.01.2025 at 11:00 AM Name & address of the Office inviting bid: - Chief Construction Engineer, Eastern Circle (R&B),

procurement portal "http://tendersodisha.gov.in." All future corrigendum will be available on ONLINE mode only. OIPR-34026/11/0007/2425 Chief Construction Engineer Eastern Circle (R&B) Balaso

... A joint venture with Govt. of NCT of Delh NOTICE INVITING TENDER Date: 24.12.2024 E-tenders under two Bid System (Unpriced & Priced) are invited as per the following details: Estimated Cost of | Due Date & Time | Date & Time Tender Description Cost (₹) EMD (₹) of Submission of Opening

Cost of each Tender Document: ₹ 1,180/-

For details in respect of Equipment/BOM/Services, Qualifying requirements, Terms & conditions, purchase/submission of tender documents, corrigendum etc. please visit our website www.bsesdelhi.com --> BSES YAMUNA POWER LTD--> Tenders--> **Open Tenders** Head (Contracts & Materials)

Regd.Off: BSES Yamuna Power Ltd, Shakti Kiran Building, Karkardooma, Delhi-110032 | CIN: U40109DL2001PLC111525

**VOIGS** 

Tender details/documents http://www.uktenders.gov.in

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida G.B Nagar, (U.P.) Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com

dify Tester.
ments may be downloaded/uploaded from E-tender porta
Managing Director

Office of the Managing Director
Uttarakhand Co-Operative Dairy Federation Ltd.
Mangal Parao, Haldwani - 263139 (Nainital) Uttarakhand

ात्रांक : सी-काऽ/युक्तीक्षरीकृषका/निदेदा गुण नियन्त्रण/2024-25 <u>Re E-Tender Notice</u> दिगांकः 23/12/ E-Tender Notice No.: 23(1-9)/UCDF/2024-25, Date- 23.12.2024

E-tenders are invited by the undersigned, from only experienced, reputed and financia sound Authorized Manufacturers/Dealers for the supply, installation, testing a commissioning of various Milk and Milk products Testing equipments for laboratory of varior milk union and central dairy lab, lalkuan following items so as to reach this office on or befool 1.01.2025 up to 5.00 PM. The tenders will be opened on 02.01.2025 at 11.00 AM.

SIT&C of analytical balance, digital B.R. meter handy, electrical garbar machine R.M.value set, QPCR(RT-PCR), Digital Butyoro Refractometer, Laboratory Mill, FTI Based Milk Analyzer for liquid and semi solid dairy products, Real Time Self Life.

**E-TENDER NOTICE** E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors / firms for the

following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened / downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website www.noidaauthorityonline.in & https://etender.up.nic.in. Please ensure to see these website for any changes amendments & corrigendum etc

amenaments a corngendam etc.				
Sr. No.	Job Number	Name of Work	Amount (Lac)	Publishing Time
(1)	15/GM/PE (PH-II)/ET/ 2024-25	Cleaning of covered drains & culvert with super sucker machine in PH-II area, Noida.	Rs. 58.36	2 <sup>nd</sup> Time

The above tender can be uploaded From dated 23/12/2024 to 30/12/2024 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-Qualification shall be opened downloaded on dated 31/12/2024 at 11.00 AM.

नवीन ओखला औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण के अधिसूचित क्षेत्र में शासन से स्वीकृत मास्टर प्लान एवं उत्तर प्रदेश औद्योगिक क्षेत्र विकास अधिनियम, 1976 के विपरीत प्लॉटिंग या किसी भी प्रकार का अन्य निर्माण पूरी तरह अवैध है। जनसामान्य को आगाह किया जाता है कि इस प्रकार की अवैध कॉलोनियों एवं अवैध निर्मित भवनों में भूखण्डों / अपार्टमेंट / दुकान / गोडाऊन / फार्महाउस की खरीद-फरोख्त से पूर्णतः सचेत रहें तथा कॉलोनाईजर के लुभावने एवं भ्रामक विज्ञापनों से बचे। साथ ही नौएडा अधिसूचित क्षेत्र के हिण्डन एवं यम्ना नदियों के डूब क्षेत्र (Flood Plain Zone) में अनधिकृत / अवैध प्लॉट एवं फार्म हाऊसों के कारोबार में संलिप्त भूमाफियाओं के चंगूल में न फंसे।" **General Manager** 

(Public Health) Noida.

**CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA** 

Nature of work:-

Number of works

1No Roads Work

Amount put to Tender: - Rs. 7,83.58,667

Class of Contractor: - "A" Class & "Special" Class

Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal: - Dt.04.01.2025 at 10:00 AM

The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the

**BSES BSES Yamuna Power Limited, Delhi** 

CMC/BY/24-25/ IMPLEMENTATION OF OT SECURITY "REAL 6.75 16.01.2025 6.75 16.01.2025 RS/SkS/APT/51 15:00 Hrs 15:30 Hrs Lakh THREAT & VULNERABILITY MANAGEMENT Crore SYSTEM" IN BYPL

PD(1136)C

# vork; Tender No.: RT\_EL\_TRD\_18\_24

scheduled maintenance work for PS depot Dalkhola, Aluabari Road, Bagdogra and New Jalpaiguri under jurisdiction o Katihar division for two years (24 months) Tender Value: ₹2,26,98,084.43/-; Earnes Money: ₹2,63,500/-; Date & time of closing of tender at 15:00 hrs. and opening at 15:30 hrs.on16-01-2025 after closing. For complete information with the ender document of above e-tender wi be available upto 15:00 hrs. on 16-01-2025

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

Tender Notice No.: RT\_EL\_TRD\_18

the said floor is not mortgaged anywhere a there is no charge or dispute or any litigati pending regarding the said floor. pending regarding the said floor.

Any person including Bankis, Financia Institution's, relativels having any claim, right, title or any interest of any nature whatsoever into or upon the said floor is hereby called upon to make the same known, in writing, with documentary evidence, by Registered AD Post, to the undersigned at the address mentioned herein below within 07 days of publication of this notice and in the event of no response having been received to the notice the title of the seller in respect of the said floor shall be deemed to be clear of any charge or encumbrance of any nature whatsoever and any subsequent claim shall not bind our clients/Purchaser, in any manner whatsoever.

northern Philippines in April and troops from both countries PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform you, the public at large, that my clients Sh. Jitendra Singh (Aadhar card no 279814961719) S/o Sh. Padam Singh permanen (Yo H.No. 118, JAT Bast, Pidawali, Tehsil Bayana Kohra, Bharatpur, Rajasthan - 321401and Smt Beena Singh (Aadhar card no.511861863343 W/o Sh. Jitendra Singh, both presently temporarily residing in Gurugram, Haryana, do hereby disound their son namely Sh. Sanjeet Singh (Aadhar card no. 755579153505), forever from all their movable, and immovable no proverties/assets and movable and immovable properties/assets and they have no concern with any of his acts/labilities whatsoever. Now onwards my clients does not have any relation with their saids on namely Sh. Sanjeet Singh and his wife. Smt.Devika Arora. Any person having any claim against Sh. Sanjeet Singh or his wife may contact them directly and my client shall not be responsible for their acts/deeds and further shall not entertain any query regarding them. It is further informed that said Sh. Sanjeet Singh and his wife are no more residing with my clients at their House at Gurugram and my clients has severed all their relationship with them and wish to lead a peaceful life in their elderly ago. ovable and immovable properties/assets

#### Rahul Kadyan Advocate Ch. No. 278, Civil Wing, Tis Hazari Courts Delhi-110054 **SCHEDULED & NON** SCHEDULED MAINTENANCE WORK

lead a peaceful life in their elderly age

of Village Shakarpur, in the abadi of Sri Nagar. New Delhi-10034; hereinafter referred to as "said property"

Be it known to all that our clientess, Mrs. Nidhika Bathla (hereinafter called the "Purchaser") inlends to purchase the said floor of the said property from (1) Mrs. Meetu Arora and Mrs. Dimple Agrawal (hereinafter called the seller), In this connection, the seller have informed the purchaser that they are the joint owners of the said floor. The seller have informed the purchaser that they are the joint owners of the said floor. The seller have further informed the purchaser that a Sale Deed was executed by Mr. Virnal Pruthi, Mrs. Nedam Allas Neelam Khurana; and Mrs. Shashi Bala in their favour in respect Entire Vacant Roof of First Floor (un-built Second Floor) with roof rights of the said property. The said deed is registered as Document No. 2024/15/I/3089, Book No. 1, Vol No. 12878, pages 69-90, on 07.03.2024 (SRC)-VIA Pitampura). The seller built up the second and third floor on the vacant roof of first floor. The second floor is still owned by the saler whereas the Third floor with roof rights have already been sold by them. The seller have further informed that earlier Mr Vimal Pruthi owned the Ground floor with roof rights vide sale deed dated 31.05. 2010 registered as document no. 7612. Subsequently, they demolished the entire structure and reconstructed the above said property. Thus they became the joint owners of the said property and sold the vacant roof of first floor, as aforesaid, to the present seller. The seller have also informed the purchaser that the said floor is not mortgaged anywhere and there is no charge or dispute or any litigation 24-25; Dated: 19-12-2024; E-Tender a invited by the undersigned for the following 25: Name of Work: At Katihar Division PSI scheduled maintenance & No n website www.ireps.gov.in Sr. DEE/TRD, Katiha Shivkant Arora, Advocate M/s Intellective Law Offices A-74, LGF, Defence Colony, New Delhi -110024

# Sensex climbs 500 points Nissan, Honda announce plans to merge over 1 million. after five days of fall

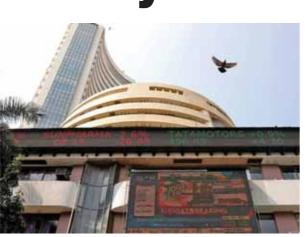
**PTI** ■ MUMBAI

Equity indices Nifty benchmark Sensex and rebounded sharply on Monday after five days of steep decline amid value buying at lower levels and a rally in global markets. Besides, hectic buying in blue-chip stocks ITC, HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries also helped in market recovery.

30-share benchmark Sensex jumped 498.58 points or 0.64 per cent to settle at 78,540.17. During the day, it soared 876.53 points or 1.12 per cent to 78,918.12

The NSE Nifty surged 165.95 points or 0.70 per cent to

From the 30 blue-chip stocks,



ITC, Tech Mahindra, HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries, IndusInd Bank, Titan, State Bank of India and ICICI Bank were the biggest gainers. settled in the positive New entrant Zomato, Maruti, territory while Shanghai

Nestle, HCL Tech, Bajaj Finserv and Tata Motors were among the laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul Tokyo, and Hong Kong

European markets were trading mostly lower. Wall Street ended higher on Friday. In the past five sessions last week, the BSE benchmark tanked 4,091.53 points or 4.98 per cent, and the Nifty slumped 1,180.8 points or 4.76 per cent.

institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,597.82 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.44 per cent to USD 73.26 a barrel 30-share

benchmark tumbled 1,176.46 points or 1.49 per cent to settle at 78,041.59 on Friday. The Nifty tanked 364.20 points or 1.52 per cent to 23,587.50.

Tapanese automakers Honda and Nissan have announced plans to join forces, forming third-largest automaker by sales as the industry undergoes dramatic changes in its transition away from fossil fuels.

The two companies said they had signed a memorandum of understanding on Monday and that smaller Nissan alliance member Mitsubishi Motors also had agreed to join the talks on integrating their businesses.

"We anticipate that if this integration comes to fruition, we will be able to deliver even greater value to a wider customer base," Nissan's CEO Makoto Uchida said in a statement.

Automakers in Japan have lagged behind their big rivals in electric vehicles and are trying to cut costs and make up for lost time.

News of a possible merger surfaced earlier this month, with unconfirmed reports

saving that the talks on closer collaboration partly were driven by aspirations of iPhone Taiwan maker Foxconn to tie up with Nissan, which has an alliance with Renault SA of France and Mitsubishi.

A merger could result in a behemoth worth more than \$50 billion based on the market capitalisation of all three automakers. Together, Honda and the Nissan alliance with Renault SA of France and smaller Mitsubishi automaker Motors Corp would gain

scale to compete with Toyota Motor Corp and with Germany's Volkswagen AG. Toyota has technology partnerships with Japan's Mazda Motor Corp. And Subaru Corp.

Even after a merger Toyota, which rolled out 11.5 million vehicles in 2023, would remain the leading Japanese automaker. If they join, the three smaller companies would make about 8 million vehicles. In 2023, Honda made 4 million and Nissan produced 3.4 million. Mitsubishi Motors made just

Mitsubishi announced in August that they would share components for electric vehicles like batteries and jointly research software for autonomous driving to adapt better to dramatic changes

centred electrification, following a preliminary agreement between Nissan and Honda set in March. Honda, Japan's second-largest automaker, is widely viewed

as the only likely Japanese partner able to effect a rescue of Nissan, which has struggled following a scandal that began with the arrest of its former chairman Carlos Ghosn in late 2018 on charges of fraud and misuse of company assets, allegations that he denies. He eventually was released on bail and fled to Lebanon.

Speaking Monday reporters in Tokyo via a video link, Ghosn derided the planned merger "desperate move".

Capital markets regulator Sebi will auction 28 properties of five companies, including Bishal Group and Sumangal Industries, on January 27, to recover money illegally collected from investors by these companies. The properties will be auctioned for a reserve price of Rs 28.66 crore. Ravi Kiran Realty India, Mangalam Agro Products , and Purusattam Infotech Industries are the other companies, whose properties will be auctioned. The properties that will go under the hammer include flats, residential property and

Odisha. These properties will be auctioned at a reserve price of Rs 28.66 crore, according to a notice issued by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on December 19.

The markets watchdog invited

flats, land parcels, plots, and

land with building structures located in West Bengal and

bids for the sale of properties in the recovery proceedings against the five firms, along

promoters/directors, it said. The move is part of Sebi's efforts to recover investors' Further, Adroit Technical Services has been appointed by the regulator to assist it in the sale of properties.

Of the 28 properties being put on the block, 17 are linked to Bishal Group, 6 to Mangalam Agro Products, 3 are related to Sumangal Industries, and 1 each to Purusattam Infotech Industries and Ravi Kiran Realty India.

Sebi said the auction will be conducted online on January 27, 2025, from 11 am to 1 pm. The regulator has asked the bidders to make their independent enquiries regarding the encumbrances, litigations, title of the properties put on auction and claims before submitting their

These entities had mobilised money from the investors without complying with the market regulations.

Going by Sebi's earlier orders, Mangalam Agro had raised Rs 11 crore from the illegal issuance of secured nonconvertible debentures (NCDs) to around 4,820 investors during 2011-2012, while Sumangal had collected Rs 85 crore from investors through illegal collective investment schemes (CIS).

Bishal Distillers had raised funds of Rs 4 crore, Bishal Agri-Bio Industries and Bishal Horticulture and Animal Projects mobilised Rs 3 crore and Rs 2.84 crore, respectively.

### Sebi to auction 28 properties | Claims ratio of non-life insurers dips to of five companies next month 82.52 per cent in FY24: Irdai report

Net incurred claims to net earned premium (claims ratio) of non-life insurance industry stood at 82.52 per cent during 2023-24 as against 82.95 per cent in the preceding fiscal year, as per the Irdai's annual report. According to the Annual Report 2023-24 of the

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai), during 2023-24, insurance non-life industry underwrote a total direct premium of Rs 2.90 lakh crore in India registering a growth of 12.76 per cent from previous year.

The contribution of public sector general insurers increased 8.88 per cent from Rs 82,891 crore in 2022-23 to Rs 90,252 crore in 2023-24. Private sector insurers including standalone health insurers, have underwritten Rs 1.88 lakh crore as against Rs 1.58 lakh crore in 2022-23. The aggregate profit of the



non-life insurance sector was Rs 10,119 crore as against a net loss of Rs 2,566 crore in 2022-23.

2023-24, During aggregate net incurred claims saw a 15.39 per cent increase to Rs 1.72 lakh crore from Rs 1.49 lakh crore

'The incurred claims ratio (net incurred claims to net earned premium) of the nonlife insurance industry was 82.52 per cent during 2023-24 as against 82.95 per cent of the previous year," the report

The incurred claims ratio for public sector insurers was 97.23 per cent for 2023-24 as against the previous year's incurred claims ratio of 99.02 per cent.

The incurred claims ratio for general private sector insurers, standalone health insurers and specialised insurers were at 76.49 per cent, 63.63 per cent, and 66.58 per cent, respectively, for 2023-24 as compared to the previous year's ratio of 75.13 per cent, 61.44 per cent and 73.71 per cent, respectively.

life insurance industry paid total benefits of Rs 5.77 lakh crore in 2023-24, constituting 70.22 per cent of the net

premium.
The benefits paid on account of surrenders/withdrawals increased 15.29 per cent to Rs 2.29 lakh crore in 2023-24 of which public sector life insurer accounted for 58.36 per cent.

During 2023-24, a total of 18 life insurance companies reported profits. Profits of the life insurance industry grew 10.79 per cent in 2023-24 with profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 47,407 crore as against Rs 42,788 crore in 2022-23.

Public sector life insurers reported an 11.75 per cent increase in profits while private sector life insurers reported a rise of 5.32 per cent in profit in 2023-24. Irdai said in 2023-24, the country's insurance penetration was at 3.7 per cent as compared to 4 per cent in 2022-23.

### Gold climbs ₹570 to ₹78,700 per 10 gm

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices recovered Rs 570 to Rs 78,700 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid value buying by stockists and investors following a firm global trend, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal ended at Rs 78,130 per 10 grams on

Friday. Silver surged Rs 1,850 to reclaim the Rs 90,000 per kgmark on increased offtake by industrial units and coin

The white metal finished at Rs 88,150 per kg in the

previous trading session. The price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity also jumped Rs 570 to Rs 78,300 per 10 grams on Monday. It closed at Rs 77,730 per 10 grams in the previous session on

Friday Value buying by stockists and jewellers for the ongoing wedding season supported the uptrend in both gold and silver prices, traders said.

In futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) on Monday, gold delivery slipped Rs 48, or 0.06 per cent, to Rs 76,372

per 10 grams. However, silver contracts for March delivery climbed Rs 637, or 0.72 per cent, to Rs 89,029 per kg on the

commodities exchange Comex gold futures fell USD 6.70 per ounce, or 0.25 per cent, to USD 2,638.40 per

ounce in the overseas markets.

"Gold and silver prices recovered from one-month and three-and-a-half month lows in a highly volatile session. The dollar index and the bond yields showed taking supported precious metal," Rahul Kalantri, VP

### India's data centre capacity to more than double | Dhanuka Agritech hosts Farmers' by FY27, on rising digitalisation: Crisil Ratings

**PTI** MUMBAI

India's data centre capacity is set to more than double to 2-2.3 GW by 2026-27, led by increasing digitalisation as organisations increase their investments in cloud storage, Crisil Ratings said in a report on Monday.

Further, the report stated that rising penetration Generative Art Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) will drive the demand over the medium-term.

To support the strong demand, the incremental capital expenditure would be supported by a higher proportion of debt funding, which will result in a moderate increase in debt levels, it said.



Data centres cater to the computing and storage infrastructure demand as enterprises rapidly shifting their businesses to digital platforms, including cloud, a trend that has accelerated post Covid-19 pandemic, it The other major factor is that increased accessibility of high-speed data has led to a surge in internet usage, including social media, overthe-top (OTT) platforms and digital payments, it added. Notably, mobile data traffic logged a compound annual

growth rate (CAGR) of 25 per cent over the last five fiscals, standing at 24 GB per month at end-fiscal 2024, and is expected to rise to 33-35 GB by FY26, the Crisil Ratings report said. In addition to the ongoing

demand, it said that the rapid advancement of GenAI, which requires higher computational power and low latency than traditional cloud computing functions, will also provide tailwind to the data centre demand in India. "To meet the growing data centre demand, an investment of Rs 55,000-65,000 crore is required over the next three fiscals, primarily towards land building, equipment and cooling

# Day programme to honour farmers

PNS NEW DELHI

To honour farmers of the country on the occasion of KisanDiwas, Dhanuka Agritech Limited successfully hosted a Farmers' Day program at the Dhanuka Agricultural Research and Technology Centre (DART) at Palwal.

The eventaimed to provide insights into modern farming techniques to facilitate knowledge sharing and to discuss the future of Indian agriculture with leading

scientists. event showcased The Dhanuka's unwavering and continuous commitment to empowering farmers and promoting sustainable practices.



included demonstrations and training sessions focused specifically on Rabi crops such as wheat, vegetables, and mustard. Farmers had the unique opportunity to learn advanced techniques and engage with experts in the agriculture field.

Speaking on the occasion, Vipul Goyal, Minister for Revenue & Disaster Management, Urban Local Bodies & Civil Aviation,

behaviour have been profound,

personalisation emerging as

ecosystem continues to thrive,

with digital-first and premium

resilience and growth. The

direct-to-consumer

sustainability

demonstrating

with

premiumisation

kev trends.

'The

brands

inaugurated the program. The Guest of Honour Dr. P.K Singh Agricultue Commissioner, Deptt. Of Agri & Farmers' Welfare, Govt. of Indiawas elated to see the huge gathering of farmers and their willingness to learn new techniques. Their presence highlighted the significance of initiatives like these in supporting the agricultural community by making farmers aware of new and advanced farming practices.

Cabinet Minister, Haryana

This program practical encouraged solutions that contribute to the growth and sustainability in agriculture, ultimately benefiting farmers and the broader farming ecosystem.

profit Commodities, Equities Ltd, said.

### FMCG industry expects consumption revival in 2025

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The FMCG industry hopes I for revival consumption growth in 2025 with some 'green shoots' already visible, after having a challenging year amid escalating input costs and a double-digit rise in food inflation, which ultimately slowed down the pace of the urban market growth in the second half of 2024.

Soaring prices of commodities such as palm oil, coffee, cocoa and wheat forced FMCG players to go for a hike of 3 to 5 per cent or resort to shrinkflation by reducing pack sizes and grammage to retain attractive price points, fearing a volume loss.

The makers also expect a shot in the arm in the upcoming annual budget, which would help the stressed middleincome group and stimulate consumption, besides a good monsoon and continued rejuvenation of the rural

A resurgence of high food Dabur India CEO Mohit customer is ready to pay extra

inflation once again in 2024 disrupted consumption patterns, particularly among mass-segment consumers, said Emami Vice Chairman & MD Harsha V Agarwal, adding elevated food inflation continues to pose a significant challenge.

"Consumption among the lower-middle and middle-class segments has remained subdued, with approximately 75 per cent of average retail spending directed towards food and grocery, leaving only 25 per cent for discretionary purchases," he said.

Agarwal, who is also the President of industry body FICCI, said 'positive signs' are emerging on the consumption front as food inflation has begun to ease. "A revival in consumption

growth looks promising, supported by a good crop and increased government spending on large-scale infrastructure projects and rural schemes in the December quarter," he said.

urban demand were the key concerns during 2024. "While rural demand has been growing quarter on quarter, we expect a recovery in urban

Malhotra also said that rising

food inflation and a squeeze in

demand as the new year progresses. Premiumisation is expected to continue, and this will help improve value growth in 2025," he said. Moreover, the FMCG makers also expect the trends of

premiumisation, where a

for better quality products, particularly in urban India along with a high growth coming from quick commerce channels, which transformed the grocery "Consumers are willing to pay

a premium for products that offer better quality, unique features, or enhanced experiences. Premiumisation is expected to continue, and this will help improve value growth in 2025," said Malhotra.

Tata Consumer Products Ltd (TCPL) MD and CEO Sunil D'Souza said he is 'optimistic' about 2025 and maintains a sharp focus on driving profitable growth and building future-ready capabilities. "In India, consumer trends

such as premiumisation, health & wellness and convenience are expected to gather pace. Quick commerce has seen exponential growth, but physical distribution continues to stay extremely relevant at the same time," said D'Souza. Gen Z and millennials are expected to contribute to an share increasing consumption, by estimates, 76 per cent of consumption by 2030.

'This presents an opportunity for cooking aids, packaged food, healthier and guilt-free snacking and mini-meal options, all of which we have added to our portfolio in the last few years. It will also require shorter innovation cycles," he said. Marico MD & CEO Saugata

channels are undergoing a tremendous transformation with the consumer shifts that the industry is witnessing. The medium-term growth outlook for the industry is very much intact," he said. Gupta

expects consumption to steadily grow and urban consumption to revive in a couple of quarters. "Innovation, affordability, and availability will be key drivers of growth going forward," he Godrej Consumer Products

Ltd (GCPL) CFO Aasif Malbari said: "Despite these challenges, we committed to navigating nearheadwinds investing strategically for long-Gupta said shifts in consumer

### Tata Power Club hosts National Urja Mela

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

eflecting the spirit of **K**National Energy Conservation Day, Tata Power on Saturday hosted the National Urja Mela 2024 at New Delhi, bringing together 1000 + students and teachers comprising 150 schools from 10 states across India to champion innovation and sustainability, while fostering the next generation of leaders to drive energy conservation efforts.

This annual event is a flagship initiative under Tata Power's award-winning Club Enerji program, highlighted the pivotal role of youth in creating a sustainable future in line with the company's 'Sustainable is Attainable' movement.

The event featured an exciting array of activities, including competitions, workshops, and cultural performances designed to inspire students to become eco-conscious leaders. Mr. Himal Tewari, CHRO,



Tata Power, "Sustainability begins with awareness, and the National Urja Mela reflects our commitment to nurturing innovation and responsibility in young minds. This initiative emphasizes the

critical importance of energy conservation environmental protection, empowering youth from across the country to drive a greener, more sustainable future. In collaboration with Tata Power, they will shape the new energy landscape, advancing a future centered on sustainability and the goal of achieving carbon

# Real Madrid's 4-2 win over Sevilla in the Spanish league

ylian Mbappé added to his scoring streak with a superb strike in Real Madrid's 4-2 win over Sevilla in the Spanish league to finish the theory on a positive pote after year on a positive note after hitting what he called "rock bottom" in early December. Mbappé sent a right-footed shot

into the upper corner 10 minutes into the match for his fourth goal in as many games with Madrid in all competitions. It was Mbappé's sixth goal in his last eight matches with Madrid.

He struggled early on with his new club, and Mbappé said his lowest point came when he missed a penalty kick in the team's 2-1 league loss at Athletic Bilbao on Dec. 4.

"I know I have a lot more to give," Mbappé said Sunday. "The last few games I've played better, I took a lot of positives from the Bilbao game, when I hit rock bottom?

The France star said that made him realize "I have to give my all for this jersey and play with personality.

Mbappé said he feels his period of adjustment with the club is finally

"I think we now know each other better," he said. "I've joined the team and that changed a lot of things. The settling-in period is over, as the coach says. I feel very comfortable in the team and I play better with the others on the field. The team is playing much

Federico Valverde, Rodrygo and Brahim Díaz also scored in the

Brahim Diaz also scored in the comfortable home victory that allowed Madrid to finish the year one point behind Spanish league leader Atletico Madrid.

Atletico rallied to shock Barcelona 2-1 Saturday with a stoppage-time goal by Alexander Sorloth. Third-place Barcelona is two points behind Madrid, having played an extra game. played an extra game.

Valverde scored in the 20th and Rodrygo in the 34th before Sevilla got on the board with Isaac Romero in the 35th. Díaz extended Madrid's lead in the 53rd and Dodi Lukebakio got the visitors' other goal in the 85th at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. "It was a well-played game, with



many scoring situations, a good end to the year," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "That was

what we wanted, to be near the top and get some good rest for 2025."

Madrid next faces Valencia on Jan. 3 in a match postponed because of the deadly floods that hit Valencia in October. Sevilla, sitting in 14th place, had won two of its last two games in all competitions.

Navas' farewell</hl2>It was the Navas' farewell</hl>
/hl2>It was the last game for Sevilla and Spain great Jesús Navas, who is officially retiring at the end of the year. The defender was honored by Sevilla and Madrid players and fans at the Santiago Bernabeu.
Players from both teams made a language of the last game of the last game

the Santiago Bernabeu.
Players from both teams made a guard of honor for Navas before the match, lining up as he entered the field, and Madrid's veteran midfielder Luka Modric handed him a jersey of the club signed by players. Fans gave Navas a players. Fans gave Navas a standing ovation during the

Substitute Navas came on midway through the second half.

"What happened today was spectacular," the 39-year-old Navas said after the match, unable to hold back tears. "I had never seen anything like it in my life on a rival field. It was crazy. In those last few minutes I couldn't see anything. I was looking at the ground recalling all the moments I've went through and the joy I've been able to give to Sevilla and

Navas helped Sevilla win four Navas helped Sevilla win four Europa League titles and Spain clinch the 2010 World Cup and the 2012 and 2024 European Championships. He was with Manchester City when it won the 2014 Premier League.

"Navas really deserved it."

"Navas really deserves it," Ancelotti said. "Navas is an example for everyone." Valencia draws late

Second-to-last Valencia salvaged a 2-2 home draw with Alaves, thanks to a goal by Dani Gómez eight minutes into second-half stoppage time after the visitors had taken the lead with Joan Jordán in the 88th.

The setback drew more protests from Valencia fans who have been unhappy with the administration of team owner Peter Lim. Other results

Thierno Barry scored a hat trick and Gerard Moreno and Pau Cabanes added one goal each as fifth-place Villarreal won 5-2 at Leganes, while Las Palmas won 1-0 against 18th-place Espanyol. Ninth-place Real Betis was held by 12th-place Rayo Vallecano to a 1-1 draw at home.



### Manu Bhaker missing from Khel Ratna nominees; Sports Ministry says no final list yet

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid reports that double Olympic-medallist Manu Bhaker has been shockingly ignored for this year's Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna award, a top sports ministry source has asserted that the names are yet to be finalised and she is likely to be there when the list is unveiled in a week's time. In August, Bhaker became

independent India's first athlete to win two medals in a single edition of the Olympics with her bronze-winning show in the 10m air pistol individual and 10m air pistol mixed team events. Reports of her omission from the national honours evoked shock with her family insisting that application was submitted.

"There is no final list of nominees at this point. Sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya decide on recommendations in a day or two and her name, in all likelihood, will be there in the final list," a ministry source

selection The award committee is a 12-member panel headed by retired Supreme Court judge Justice V Ramasubramam. It includes former athletes like women's hockey captain Rani Rampal among others.

The ministry norms allow athletes to self-nominate instead of relying other federations and institutions for it. The

committee however, allowed to consider names which may not be among the applicants.

While the ministry claimed that Bhaker did not apply for the award, her father Ram Kishan Bhaker, a chief engineer in Merchant Navy,

said the youngster had followed the due process.
"There is no worth of playing Olympic sports in India because despite winning two medals in an Olympics, Manuhas been ignored for the Khel has been ignored for the Khel Ratna award. There is no point in playing and winning rewards for your country and in turn beg for recognition," Ram Kishan told PTI. "She had been applying for all

awards, say Khel Ratna, Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan for the last 2-3 years continuously and I have proof of that. This time too, I am confident she would have applied but I can't show anything as I am at sea right

"But even if she hasn't, the committee should consider her looking at achievements," he asserted. He blamed bureaucracy for the mess-up.

"We form a committee but it is the bureaucrats who call the shots. This is not how sports function," he said.

It is learnt that the committee has recommended India hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh, who led the country to a second consecutive Olympic bronze medal, for the Khel

## Olympian PV Sindhu marries entrepreneur Venkat Datta Sai

Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu embarked on a new journey in life as she tied the knot with entrepreneur Venkata Datta Sai in a private ceremony here.

The 29-year-old shuttler from Hyderabad, who won a bronze at the 2016 Rio Olympics and a silver at the Tokyo Olympics three years ago, married Datta, an executive director at Posidex Technologies, on Sunday in a traditional ceremony traditional ceremony attended by close family and friends. Union Minister of Culture

and Tourism, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, shared the first photograph of the wedding on 'X' on Monday.

"Pleased to have attended the

total of 21 men's teams

Atotal of 21 mens and 20 women outfits will

compete in next month's Kho

Kho World Cup with the

increasing the number of

participating teams due to an

India will host the inaugural

edition of the event at the IGI

Stadium from January 13 to

19. Initially, 16 men's and 16

Teams from six continents --

Asia, Africa, North America,

South America, Europe, and

Oceania -- will feature in the

much-anticipated

"We are keeping the facilities

with the foreign delegates in

mind. We have devised meals

and diet plan for our guests as

per their dietary requirements

and we are also providing

scheduled to participate.

teams

overwhelming interest.

governing

PTI NEW DELHI

sport's

women's

tournament.



Kho Kho World Cup to feature 21 men's and 20 women's teams

Champion Badminton Olympian PV Sindhu with Venkatta Datta Sai in Udaipur last evening and conveyed my wishes &

entire logistics, stay, and

transport facilities for them,

so that they do not face any

issues during their stay here,

KKFI President Sudhanshu

provisions for all countries to

stay till the end of the

tournament, irrespective of

The opening ceremony will

have also made

Mittal said in a release.

the results.

wedding ceremony of our blessings to the couple for their new life Shekhawat tweeted.

The celebrations commenced with a lively Sangeet ceremony on December 20,

take place on January 13,

followed by the first match of

the tournament between

The league stage will run

from January 14 to 16, with

the quarterfinals and semifinals scheduled for

January 17 and 18. The final

Participating nations in Kho

will be held on January 19.

Kho World Cup 2025:

India and Pakistan.

featuring music and dance as the two families came together. This was followed by traditional rituals such as Haldi, Pellikuthuru, Mehendi, and other customs

on December 21.
Sindhu's wedding news came close on the heels of her victory at the Syed Modi International in Lucknow earlier this month, ending a

earlier this month, ending a long title drought.
With five medals, including a gold, at the BWF World Championships, and two Olympic medals, Sindhu is widely regarded as one of India's greatest athletes.
The couple has invited some of the top celebrities of the country for the wedding reception, including the likes

reception, including the likes Sachin Tendulkar and Prime Minister Narendra

Kenya, South

Bangladesh,

Men's: Bangladesh, Bhutan,

India (host), Iran, Malaysia,

Nepal, Pakistan, South Korea,

Bhutan, India (host), Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia,

Nepal, Pakistan, South Korea,

Men's: England, Germany, Netherlands, Poland

Women's: England, Germany, Netherlands, Poland

Men's: Argentina, Brazil, Peru

Africa

Women's:

Sri Lanka

Women's:

Sri Lanka

North America:

Men's: United

South America:

Women's: Peru

Men's: Australia

Europe:

America

Oceania:

Africa, Uganda



## **US Open doubles champion** Max Purcell suspended for anti-doping breach

**AP** MELBOURNE

Two-time Grand Slam winning doubles player Max Purcell has entered a voluntary provisional suspension under tennis' anti-

doping rules. The International Tennis Integrity Agency announced the sanction in a statement on Monday after the 26-year-old violating Article 2.2 of the Tennis Anti-Doping Program "relating to the use of a Prohibited Method". The ITIA said the suspension

came into effect on 12 Dec., and time served under provisional suspension will be credited against any future sanction. The length of time of the voluntary suspension was not specified by the ITIA. "During the provisional suspension, Purcell is prohibited from playing in, coaching at, or attending any tennis event authorized or sanctioned by the members of the ITIA (ATP, ITF, WTA, Tennis Australia, Fédération Française de Tennis, Wimbledon and USTA) or any national association," the ITIA statement read.

Purcell, with compatriot Jordan Thompson, won the

U.S. Open in September and won Wimbledon with another Australian, Matthew Ebden, in 2022. He is currently ranked No. 12 in doubles.

He also finished as a runner-up in the Australian Open doubles final twice, in 2020 and 2022.

Purcell, ranked No. 105 in singles, was not listed on the Australian Open entry lists released earlier this month and did not receive a wildcard or feature on the qualifying entries.

The ITIA did not say whether Purcell's absence from the draw of the tournament starting Jan. 12. Was due to

the sanction. The latest doping violation in tennis comes just weeks after five-time Grand Slam champion accepted a one-month suspension after testing positive for the banned

substance trimetazidine. Top-ranked men's player Jannik Sinner, winner of two Grand Slams this year, was exonerated by the ITIA after twice testing positive for a trace amount of an anabolic steroid in March with the World Anti-Doping Agency

appealing the ruling.

# Coaching crisis, heartbreaks and Olympic setbacks mark a disastrous year for Indian boxing

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian boxing endured a Lturbulent year marred by coaching turmoil, crushing defeats, and a medal-less Paris Olympics campaign, all of it made worse by the federation's national negligence that brought unprecedented embarrassment to the country.

There were very few positives to count in a year when, after a widely successful 2023, expectations were sky high. Yet no boxer was able to add

to the three bronze medals -Vijender Singh (2008), M C Mary Kom (2012) and Lovlina Borgohain (2021) -that India had secured in the previous editions of the

Olympics. Nishant Dev, unlucky to miss out on an Olympic medal, was India's top performer but the likes of world champions Nikhat Zareen and Lovlina disappointed despite widely

held belief that fortunes of which women's boxing were upward following an trajectory

Outside the ring, the Boxing Federation of India's (BFI) negligence cost India an Olympic quota even as administrators globally scrambled to retain the sport on the Olympic roster.

Controversy and coaching The dismal performance at

the first World Qualifying Tournament, where all nine boxers failed to secure a spot at the Paris Games, prompted High Performance Director Bernard Dunne to resign from his position while still in Italy, less than four months before the Olympics.

It wasn't just the defeats that were troubling, but the manner in which the boxers that was truly disheartening. Frequent knockouts and RSC outclassed defeats pointed to inherent technical flaws such a lapse by the

had not With addressed. exception of Nishant, there was hardly any name in Indian boxing who could be spoken about as a success

Adding to the woes, the country soon lost the 57kg Olympic women's quota, won by Parveen Hooda at the Asian Games last year, after the boxer was handed 22-month suspension by the World Anti-Doping for Agency whereabouts failures within a

World The Championship bronze-medallist failed to submit her whereabouts for the period between April 2022 and March 2023, as mandated by WADA regulations.

The BFI was also to blame for this unprecedented embarrassment given that federation is duly notified of



There were The federation ought to have intervened to ensure that the athlete submitted required details on time.

As a result, India had to fight afresh for qualification in the women's 57kg category, the spot ultimately going to Jaismine Lamboria in the final Olympic Qualifiers. three quotas won by Nikhat

wholesale changes for this event with former Asian Games goldmedallist Amit Panghal replacing Deepak Bhoria in

the 51kg category. Eventually Panghal and Nishant made the cut for the quadrennial spectacle along with Jaismine, adding to the

Zareen (50kg), Preeti Pawar (54kg) and Lovlina (75kg) last year. In all, six boxers qualified for

Paris, a decline from the five men and four woman who represented India in the 2021 Tokyo Games. Barren Olympics, Nishant's

heartbreak Heading into the big event on

the back of two consecutive World Championship titles, Zareen was hailed as one of India's strongest medal contenders.

However, in the fiercely competitive 50kg category, the Telangana boxer was completely outclassed by China's Wu Yu in a brutally one-sided bout.

Zareen, unable to match the relentless pace of her opponent, later said that she had "not eaten for the last two days to maintain weight" and felt weak.

A win away from a second consecutive Olympic medal, Lovlina too went down to a Chinese boxer. The Tokyo Games bronze couldn't get past familiar foe

For Panghal, who was handed a fairly easy draw, it was deja vu as he made yet another pre-quarterfinal exit from the Olympics

Li Oian

The most heartbreaking loss, however, was endured by Nishant. The 23-year-old was defeated 1-4 by Mexico's Marco Verde Alvarez in the 71kg quarterfinal, despite appearing to dominate the bout.

This outcome reignited the fierce debate and outrage over judging.

The devastating result denied Nishant, the 2023 world championship bronzemedallist, a podium finish in his debut games as the Indian boxing contingent returned empty-handed from Paris.

The sport has been dormant ever since. The boxers haven't competed in any tournament with the BFI deciding against sending a team for the Asian Championships

India joins World Boxing the International Olympic Committee (IOC) threatening to leave boxing

out of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics if national federations continued to align themselves with the suspended International Boxing Association (IBA), India joined the breakaway World Boxing (WB).

However, the Asian Boxing Confederation (ASBC) voted against leaving the IBA to join the rival association. But BFI reaffirmed its support in WB, which also

has the backing of the IOC, by successfully bidding for the hosting rights of the World Boxing Cup Finals next year.

The sport's future though shrouded remains uncertainty and it remains to be seen whether it can manage to hold its place in the Olympics.

# Shami not fully fit yet, ruled out of remaining two Tests in Australia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

ndia pacer Mohammed Shami has been ruled out of the last two Tests against Australia as he is yet to regain full fitness, the BCCI said on Monday.

Shami, who last played for India in the ODI World Cup final in November, 2023, made a comeback from his right heel surgery during Bengal's Ranji Trophy match against Madhya Pradesh last

With calls for his selection growing, Shami played all nine games for Bengal in the subsequent Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy. He is also part of Bengal's squad for the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy but did not play the opening game on Saturday against Delhi.

His fitness has been a subject of intense debate and

speculation, so much so that India skipper Rohit Sharma had asked the physios at the National Cricket Academy to provide clarity on the matter following the Brisbane Test.

the pioneer

Shami had developed swelling in his knees while playing the SMAT, and the clarification in that regard finally came on "Based on the current medical

assessment, the BCCI Medical Team has determined that his knee requires more time for controlled exposure to bowling loads. Consequently, he has not been deemed fit for consideration for the remaining two Tests of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy," said the BCCI in a release.

"Shami will continue to undergo targeted strength and conditioning work under the guidance of the medical staff at BCCI's Centre of Excellence



and build his bowling loads needed to meet the demands of the longest format of the game. His participation in the Vijay Hazare Trophy will depend on the progress of his

The medical team said the veteran fast bowler has fully recovered from the heel injury that kept him out of action after the ODI World

Cup. "The BCCI Medical Team at "The BCCI Medical Team of the Centre of Excellence has been working closely with fast bowler Mohammed Shami on his recovery and rehabilitation after his right heel surgery. Shami has completely recovered from this heel problem.

However, his left knee has exhibited minor swelling due to increased joint loading from his bowling workload.

expected lines, owing to the increased bowling after a prolonged period," the BCCI said.

Shami bowled 43 overs in his comeback game in the Ranji

Following that, he played in all nine games of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (SMAT), where he also "engaged in additional bowling sessions on the sidelines to build his on the sidelines to build his bowling volume in order to get ready for the Test matches."

The 34-year-old has taken 229 wickets in 64 Tests, 195 scalps in 101 ODIs and 24 wickets in 23 T20 Internationals.

With India relying heavily on Jasprit Bumrah in Australia, Shami's presence in the bowling attack would have provided a much needed



### Strike rotation and solid defence key to face Bumrah, says Simon Katich

**PTI** ■ MELBOURNE

Former cricketer Simon Katich has advised batters concentrate on rotating the strike and maintaining a solid defence to succeed against the peerless Indian pacer Jasprit Bumrah.

Katich noted that since Bumrah rarely bowls loose deliveries, the Australians must be strategically good in their approach.

"I know all the talk is around having more positive intent, and I think that's all well and something they have to be mindful of. But against someone like Bumrah intent is not about just blazing him for fours, because he doesn't bowl many bad balls," Katich told SEN 1116.

"So a lot of that intent has to be about rotating strike and being able to defend really well, because you're not gonna be able to play with any intent if you aren't there after the tenth over. That's the challenge for all of these guys," Katich added.

To illustrate his point, Katich made a reference to Australia's second innings in the third Test at Brisbane. where the hosts attempted an aggressive approach but ultimately lost their wickets. "We saw it in the second Brisbane. innings in Australians came out with

really positive intent, trying to score more quickly and look what happened, 7/80 in no time.

"It's not easy to do against the red ball that moves around off the seam in a wearing wicket which the Gabba was starting to become with cracks.

"The top order has to be very careful and mindful of how they go about it. You're not going to score many runs if you're trying to take him on off the length, because he is so good," he added.

For the remaining two Tests, their trust in teenage sensation Sam Konstas, replacing opener Nathan McSweeney, who was given a maiden call-up ahead of the

"I know the young kid's (Konstas) got a lot of potential, and a lot of ability, but it'll be a challenge because not many guys around the world have been able to do that to that quality of bowling," Katich said. Marsh should make way for

Webster Katich also felt Mitchell Marsh's inability to bowl the expected volume of overs suggests he isn't "100%" fit and should be replaced by uncapped rookie Beau Webster for the Boxing Day

Test against India. Marsh has been dealing with recurring back stiffness

since the white-ball tour of the UK in September. During the Perth Test, he bowled 17 overs in total, taking two wickets on the opening day but later pulled

up sore In Adelaide, he bowled four overs while in Brisbane he rolled his arm for two overs. 'I've been saying for a couple Tests, Mitch Marsh has not been able to bowl the volume of overs that everyone expected of him. Given the conditions and given he is a wicket taker," Katich said on

'SEN Breakfast'. bowled well on day one. Took some key wickets and then struggled to back up. I mean obviously the Aussie hierarchy know better then we do around where his

fitness is at. "But for him to bowl two overs the other day after Josh Hazlewood went down, that to me indicates something's not 100% right with him." After Marsh had pulled up sore, 30-year-old Tasmania

all-rounder Webster was added to Australia's squad. "At the end of the day, Beau Webster deserves to be in that squad," Katich said. "He's done very well for

Tassie in the last few years, he's a genuine all-rounder given what his role is for Tassie and he plays that dual role with bat and ball," Katich added.

## Momentum on their side, India eye series win against West Indies

Coming off one of their biggest wins in terms of runs, fancied India will look to guard against complacency when they take on a beleaguered West Indies side with an aim to bag the threematch series in the second Women's ODI here on Tuesday. India will be entering the game

on the back of a massive 211run victory over the visitors in the series opener in which the Harmanpreet Kaur-led team ticked almost all the boxes. Every match the teams play in

the coming months will be significant as the ICC World Cup is scheduled to be held in the country next year.

India, who have never won a women's World Cup, are desperate to end their ICC title drought at home and they are aware that a strong build-up is extremely important for them to head into the mega event as one of the contenders alongside the 'usual suspects', Australia and England.

Though India have not begun their preparations for the big tournament in earnest, having suffered a 0-3 whitewash in Australia, they bounced back in style, albeit against a much weaker opposition in the West



series and the one against Australia, India registered a 2-1 victory in a T20I rubber against the team from the Caribbean islands, which was their their first home series win in the shortest format in over five years, but their failure to qualify for the semi-final of the last T20 World Cup has left a lot to be desired.

The team has been on a experimentation spree since the debacle in the UAE and has handed international debuts to as many as seven players, including Titas Sadhu, Priya Mishra and Pratika

Playing in her first ever international match, Delhi's Pratika impressed with a 40-run knock off 69 balls during a partnership with vice-captain Smriti Mandhana.

The lone worry for India before the series opener was the fitness of Kaur, who missed the last two T20Is with a knee niggle, but with her clean hitting and running between the wickets, the skipper has laid all concerns to

Mandhana, who led India in Kaur's absence and struck three fifties in a row in the T20Is, was again in her element in the first ODI and made a classy 91 off 102 balls while laying the foundation for an imposing total.

The left-handed opener will be keen to continue in the same vein in the remaining one-

Play of the Match in the first ODI, Renuka Singh will be high on confidence having returned a five-for and she will once again look to inflict maximum damage on the Windies with the new ball.

As far as the West Indies are concerned, they will have to lift their game several notches and the likes of Hayley Matthews, Deandra Dottin, Shemaine Campbelle and Afy Fletcher, the squad's senior players with years of experience, will need to lead from the front. Teams (from):

Ieams (from):
India: Harmanpreet Kaur (captain), Smriti Mandhana (vice captain), Pratika Rawal, Jemimah Rodrigues, Harleen Deol, Richa Ghosh (WK), Uma Chetry (WK), Tejal Hasabnis, Deepti Sharma, Minnu Mani, Priya Mishra, Tanuja Kanwer Titas Sadhu Tanuja Kanwer, Titas Sadhu, Saima Thakor, Renuka Singh Thakur.

West Indies: Hayley Matthews (captain), Shemaine Campbelle (vice captain), Aaliyah Alleyne, Shamilia Connell, Nerissa Crafton, Deandra Dottin, Afy Fletcher, Shabika Gajnabi, Chinelle Henry, Zaida James, Qiana Joseph, Mandy Mangru, Ashmini Munisar, Karishma Ramharack,

### **Indians unhappy** with 'used' practice pitches

The Indian team has expressed dissatisfaction

**PTI** ■ MELBOURNE

with the practice pitches ahead of the fourth Test against Australia here, blaming their variable bounce for the hit that Rohit Sharma took on his knee but MCG curator Matt Page has defended the tracks by saying that "standard protocol" has been followed. Rohit developed swelling on his left knee as he tried to play a throwdown from support staff member Dayanand Garani and didn't take further part in the nets on Sunday. The side opted not to practice

on Monday. It was learnt the skipper needed icing at night and the team think-tank held the used uneven bounce responsible for the injury

The Indian team had sent its training schedule two months ago but the MCG curator stuck to the standard operating procedure of giving a new practice track only three days prior to the Test match, which begins on December 26 in this case.

"So for us, three days out, we prepare pitches for here. If teams come and play before that, they get what pitches we've had," Page told reporters about why India didn't get a pitch that would resemble the

'So today, we're on fresh pitches. If we needed to play this morning, they would have been on those fresh pitches. Stock standard procedure for us, three days out. We do our pitches that we're going to have for our Test match," Page defended the move.

When asked if he has had the Indian schedule and BCCI had correspondence with Cricket Australia, he responded in affirmative.

Yes, they gave us schedule. has There correspondence between CA and Indian board and the extent of those conversations, I don't know," Page informed.

the bounce of Perth or the seam movement of Gabba but it will still be pace-friendly with 6mm of grass covering.

## Tanush Kotian replaces recently retired Ashwin in India's squad

**PTI** ■ MELBOURNE

Mumbai off-spinner Tanush Kotian is set to join the India squad in Australia as a replacement for the recently retired Ravichandran Ashwin. It is understood that the 26 year old Kotian, who was part of India A's tour of Australia, has also been added as a cover for Washington Sundar.

"Kotian has been added as a safety net and also to keep the squad number intact for the last two games. He only comes into the picture if either among Washy or Jaddu (Ravindra Jadeja) gets injured," a senior BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Kotian, who is currently in Ahmedabad for Vijay Hazare Trophy, is expected to leave Mumbai on Tuesday and will reach



Melbourne before the start of Boxing Day Test.

The bowling all-rounder picked two wickets and scored an unbeaten 39 for Mumbai in their Vijay Hazare Trophy match against Hyderabad on Monday.

Kotian has fond memories of the Melbourne Cricket Ground where he scored 44 batting at No. 8 for India A and looked the part.

He already has 101 wickets to his name and 1525 runs with two centuries in 33 first-class games. Originally, Axar Patel was supposed to be

summoned to Australia but as per sources, the left arm spinner had sought a break after first two matches of Vijay Hazare Trophy due to a family commitment. Kotian has been added to the squad

following Ashwin's surprise retirement from international cricket following the draw Test in Brisbane. The 38-year-old ended his glorious career as the second highest wicket taker for India behind Anil Kumble.

Pitch will help fast bowlers The iconic MCG won't have

### The ability to take 20 wickets is not that good in Indian team: Cheteshwar Pujara

**PTI** MELBOURNE

The Indian team in Australia lacks a bowling attack that is good enough to take 20 wickets in a Test, Cheteshwar Pujara said on Monday and called it the side's biggest concerns heading into the last two matches of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

The five-match series is currently levelled at 1-1 with everything to play for in the Tests in Melbourne and Sydney.

The visitors have been relying heavily on pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah to get them wickets and while he has been a great success with both the red and pink ball, the peerless

fast bowler has not received enough support from the other end, something that has plagued India besides their top-order batting woes.

"My biggest question and the reason for a little bit of concern is that the Indian bowling is looking a little weak," Pujara told Star Sports. Batting is a little better, like

the top five didn't do well, but the middle order and lower middle order, Ravindra Jadeja, Nitish (Reddy), and even tailenders, Bumrah and Akash Deep contributed with the bat.

"Now, there is a weakness in the bowling, so what will you feed the team? That is the can't drop Nitish, you can't drop Jadeja, so what will be the team combination? Pujara felt that Nitish Reddv

and Ravindra Jadeja are not able to do the job of being the side's fourth and fifth bowler. "Ashwin has retirement, so two spinners, I don't think they will play in Melbourne. So, how will you strengthen the bowling? Because the three seamers are good, but their supporting role, fourth and fifth seamer, Nitesh Kumar is the fourth seamer and Ravindra Jadeja is the fifth bowler. If you add both of

not that good. "We will have to think about biggest question, because you that, because if you want to

Bangalore & Chennai. Central: Khajuraho. Lucknow Office: 4th Floor, Sahara Shopping Centre, Faizabad Road, Lucknow-226 016. Telephones: 0522-2346443, 2346444, 2346445.

them together, the bowling is



win a Test match, then you is not that good, have to take 20 wickets, and supporting role of the other

the ability to take 20 wickets bowlers is not good, so we

will have to improve that as soon as possible, and how that will be, I don't know, but that is a big question."

With the exception of opener KL Rahul, the top-order batting has also been a big letdown so for in the control of the control letdown so far in the series, and Pujara said it has got to do a lot with their inability to see off Mitchell Starc's initial spells with the new ball.

He has been the best bowler for them in this series. And the way Mitchell Starc has played in the last 1-1.5 years, he has brought a lot of improvement. And he has a lot of ability.
"If I talk about my personal

experience, when he used to play in the last series in 2018 or 2021, I used to feel that if he plays against me, I will get

"And now, it feels like he will take wickets. So what is the difference? The difference is that his line length, his accuracy has increased a lot. He is bowling very less loose deliveries. He is playing on the stump. Every ball is hitting on the good length spot. He is getting swing."

Starc has so far taken 14 wickets in the series, the most by an Australian bowler and only behind Bumrah across two teams.

Pujara observed, change he has brought in his game has made him a different player. And he is looking more dangerous than Cummins and Hazlewood. So we will have to take care of his game, especially from the new games.

"In the first five overs, his first spell, he has taken the most wickets there. So if there is a good batting in the first five overs, bring him for the second or third spell. Because he gets tired. So the batting of the top order so far, our top order has never played in the third or fourth

"The ones who have played are the lower middle order and the tail enders. And there we saw that when Bumrah and Akash were batting, when Mitchell Starc was bowling, he was not that effective. So they will have to play their new game well."

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