

Dr. Manmohan Singh's centenary tribute lives on in Jamshedpur's Heart

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR
The city of Jamshedpur mourns the loss of Dr. Manmohan Singh, former Prime Minister of India, whose passing marks the end of an era of visionary leadership.



and sustainability, which he dedicated to the people of Jamshedpur. In his welcome address, B. Muthuraman, Managing Director of Tata Steel, expressed heartfelt gratitude for Dr. Singh's participation, calling it a "rare honor" for Tata Steel and a "moment of pride" for all.

Dr. Manmohan Singh's demise a great loss to India: Dr Ajoy

JAMSHEDPUR : Former MP and senior Congress leader Dr. Ajoy Kumar expressed profound sorrow over the passing of former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh at the age of 92, calling it a significant loss for the nation.



history. Dr. Manmohan Singh's demise leaves behind a legacy of economic reform, visionary leadership, and a deep commitment to India's progress.

MMCH's vigil for boys and girls ahead of NY bash

SWEETY VERMA : DALTON-GANJ
Medinirai Medical College Hospital is in for a makeover. Its principal Dr P N Mahto is against permissiveness. He wants boys and girls studying here to maintain a proper look in public instead of a boy or a girl in the street.

this newspaper said "Our medical college boys and girls used to ride bikes and come as late as 10 at night to the campus. This is now strictly prohibited."

sanctity of this institution be kept intact," warned Dr Mahto. On the faculty side too some stringent measures have been taken said the principal.



errants," asserted the principal. "How can it be tolerated that patients suffer in the government hospital while doctors mint money in their private clinics during the time they ought to be discharging their duties?" quipped the principal.

Strategy made for organizing 67th athletics meet in Lohardaga

VINOD PRASAD : LOHARDAGA
An important meeting of the Lohardaga District Athletics Association was held at Rai Saheb Baldev Sahu Shiv Prasad Sahu Smriti Bhawan under the chairmanship of District President cum former MP Dheeraj Prasad Sahu.

Tributes paid to Dr. Manmohan Singh in Bokaro

PNS : BOKARO
A two-minute silence was observed on Friday at the District Collectorate in honor of former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh.



Deputy Development Commissioner Girja Shankar Prasad, Additional Collector Md. Mumtaz Ansari, District Transport Officer Vandana Shejwalkar, District Supply Officer Shalini Khalkho, District Land Acquisition Officer Dwarika Baitha, District Panchayati Raj Officer Md. Saifque Alam, District Social Welfare Officer Dr. Suman Gupta, Assistant Public Relations Officer Avinash Kumar Singh, along with heads and staff of other departments, were present on the occasion.

Vedanta ESL launches Agarbatti Unit to empower women

PNS : BOKARO
Vedanta ESL, in partnership with the Drishtee Foundation, inaugurated an Agarbatti (incense stick) manufacturing unit in Madhuniya under its flagship Project Jivika.

Jharkhand Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee mourns death of Dr Singh

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR
Sardar Shailendra Singh, president of the Jharkhand State Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee, expressed profound grief over the demise of former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, remembering him as an honest and hardworking leader who served the nation with dedication for a decade.



was a period when the country's gold had to be mortgaged, but Dr. Manmohan Singh worked tirelessly to restore and strengthen the economy," he remarked. Emphasizing Dr. Singh's

also reminisced about Dr. Singh's visit to Jamshedpur in 2005 for a public meeting at Aam Bagan. During that visit, the former Prime Minister had extended a special invitation to him, then the head of the Central Gurudwara, for a personal meeting.

Government hospitals to hire specialist doctors by January 15

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR
A meeting of the District Grievance Redressal Committee under the Health Department was conducted at the Collectorate Auditorium under the chairmanship of District Magistrate-cum-Deputy Commissioner Ananya Mittal.

tals, nursing homes, and government health centers, including the Sub-Divisional Hospital Ghatshila and CHC Dumria, were discussed in detail. Specific attention was given to the challenges caused by uploading incorrect beneficiary documents under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme.



The Deputy Commissioner emphasized using Ayushman Bharat funds to secure the services of specialist doctors in government hospitals. He instructed the preparation of an action plan to hire at least two specialist doctors for each Sub-Divisional Hospital and Community Health Centre (CHC) by January 15.

Mittal issued strict directives to all Medical Officers In-Charge (MOICs). He emphasized that health sub-centers are crucial for providing primary healthcare in rural areas and instructed MOICs to ensure the presence of CHOs and ANMs.

Spring Fest at IIT Kharagpur on January 24-26

PNS : RANCHI
Spring Fest is the annual social and cultural fest of the Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur. With an online reach of over 2 million, SpringFest is one of Asia's largest cultural fest organized entirely by students.



Spring Fest extends a heartfelt gratitude to all the judges for their precious time. Fueled by the enthusiasm of participants and the dedicated organizing team, the atmosphere was charged with palpable excitement and enjoyment for the viewers.

Patna, Ranchi, Guwahati, Raipur. All interested students or cultural academies can participate in the eliminations, visit the website eliminations.springfest.in and get yourselves early registered for your desired event.

want to showcase their talent and mark a name in the history of Springfest can register themselves on wild-fire.springfest.in

needs. Star nights have always been an integral part of the Spring Fest charm. Artists like Shaan, Sundhil Chauhan, Vishal Shekhar, King, Nucleya, Farhan Akhtar, Amit Trivedi, Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy, Salim-Sulaiman, KK, Prateek Kuhad, Nikhil D'Souza, The RaghuDixitProject, Agnee, Indian Ocean, Pineapple Express, Parikrama, Euphoria, Pentagram, TheLocal Train, and many more monumental performances inclusive of a vibrant set of International shows like that of Dead by April, Monuments, Tesseract have happened at Spring Fest in the past years.

Advertisement for Union Bank of India Jharria Branch, featuring an E-Auction Sale Notice for immovable assets and details about the bank's services.

56 Cyber warriors to digitally safeguard devotees at Mahakumbh

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ MAHAKUMBHNAGAR

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



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

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

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

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

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

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



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

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

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

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

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

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



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

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

Panjab University organised condolence meet to pay homage to alumnus Manmohan

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

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



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

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

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

Manmohan was against corruption, says Anna Hazare

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

Gurugram Police Crime Branch arrests for killing youth over dispute

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

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

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





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PAPER WITH PASSION

A silent crusader

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

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



Singh's policies prioritised the devaluation of the rupee, moderation of taxes, privatisation of public sector enterprises and encouragement of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). These initiatives catalysed India's transition into a globally integrated economy and solidified his reputation as one of the nation's most accomplished economists.

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



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

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



K S TOMAR

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

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat's recent appeal for larger families, framed as a response to perceived demographic challenges, reveals a worldview rooted in traditionalism. This perspective clashes with the progressive social, cultural, and economic ethos of modern India. While presented as a solution to counter declining population trends, Bhagwat's remarks have ignited debates over their communal undertones, potential to deepen gender inequality, and disconnection from contemporary realities. Bhagwat's remarks are part of a larger discourse on demographic imbalances, often aimed at minority communities. This rhetoric fosters fear, undermines social harmony, and contradicts India's pluralistic traditions. Today's youth prioritise quality of life over larger families, influenced by rising living costs, career aspirations, and financial stability. Bhagwat's appeal appears disconnected from these realities, highlighting a gap between traditionalist agendas and contemporary Indian values. The RSS chief's observations clash with India's family planning efforts from the late 1960s and 1970s when the emphasis was on small families. Even former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, during her tenure, highlighted the dangers of unchecked population growth, stressing the need for planned families. Bhagwat's outdated stance ignores this historical context and the progress India has made in population stabilisation through education, healthcare, and women's empowerment. Bhagwat's proposal for families to have more children is based on the argument that declining fertility rates threaten the survival and dominance of certain communities. This narrative, often accompanied by alarmist rhetoric about population imbalances, underscores divisive politics. Although demographic trends warrant attention, his suggested solution disregards socio-economic realities and entrenches regressive norms. Interestingly, Andhra Pradesh



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has echoed similar sentiments, advocating for larger families in his state.

However, such approaches seem out of step with modern India's aspirations. India is not experiencing a population decline but rather a slowdown in growth.

According to the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has dropped to 2.0, below the replacement level of 2.1. This trend reflects advancements in education, healthcare, and women's autonomy. While policymakers globally view such developments as markers of progress, Bhagwat's remarks frame this demographic shift as a cultural and religious issue, perpetuating communal narratives that risk deepening societal divisions.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MANMOHAN SINGH PASSES AWAY

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

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

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

DIPLOMATIC CHALLENGE FOR INDIA

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

ICC fines Virat Kohli



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

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

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

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

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

Bal Govind | Noida

EMPOWERING RURAL ECONOMY

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

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

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

R K Jain | Barwani

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Homeschooling: Affordable and holistic education option

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

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

The choice is influenced not only by financial considerations but also by a commitment to nurture the child in a manner that aligns with their unique needs and the family's values. For many years, traditional educational institutions have been the cornerstone of childhood learning. However, nowadays, an ever-growing number of parents are questioning whether the significant expenses associated with private education, or even the costs of public schooling, truly justify the investment. The homeschooling movement presents a compelling argument: education can occur beyond the confines of traditional classrooms. The main factor driving this change is the expense involved. Education, particularly in private schools, often



presents a challenging list of costs: tuition, uniforms, transportation, extracurriculars, and supplies. Homeschooling greatly alleviates these financial burdens. Parents now have the opportunity to invest in essential resources such as top-notch educational materials, online courses, or tailored coaching—all designed to cater to their child's unique needs.

Moreover, homeschooling encourages families to tap into their creativity and resourcefulness. Libraries, free online resources, and community programmes provide abundant learning opportunities with minimal or no expense. In a time filled with numerous digital resources, parents have the ability to craft a curriculum that is both cost-effective and thorough. In addition to reducing expenses, there are numerous

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

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

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



RACHNA LAKHPATTI



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FIRST COLUMN

HUNGER FOR POWER

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



APS MALHOTRA

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



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

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

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

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

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

India must stand firm against Sheikh Hasina’s extradition



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

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



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

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



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

Awami League’s leaders and ministers in the party’s government. According to a report in The Daily Star carried under the headline, “No option but to succeed: Yunus” on August 18, 2024, Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus had said during a “Meet and Greet” session with foreign diplomats in Dhaka, “In their efforts to stay in power, the Sheikh Hasina dictatorship destroyed every institution of the country. Judiciary was broken. Democratic rights were suppressed through a brutal decade-and-a-half long crackdown. Elections were rigged blatantly. Generations of young people grew up without exercising their voting rights. Banks were robbed with full political patronisation. And the state coffers was plundered by abusing power.” Referring to a proposed Awami League rally on November 10, 2024, Muhammad Yunus’ press secretary, Shafiqul Alam, had written in a Facebook post on November 9, “The Awami League in its current form is a fascist party. There is no way this fascist party will be allowed to hold protests in Bangladesh. Anyone who would try to hold rally, gathering and processions by taking orders from the mass murderer and dictator Sheikh Hasina will face full force of the law enforcing agencies.” Leaders of the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement (ADSM), formed on July 1, 2024, to carry the students’ struggle forward, and Jatiya Nagarik Committee (National Citizens Committee), formed on 8 September, 2024, to consolidate the movement’s message and political goals, have spoken in a similar strident and denunciatory vein.

According to a report by Ashibul Islam Rifat in the Dhaka Tribune (23 October, 2024) appearing under the headline “Nahid: Awami League will never be allowed back into politics in our lifetime,” Md Nahid Islam, an ADSM leader who is now advisor, in charge of information and broadcasting and other ministries, said at a discussion, that the Awami League’s return to politics in the manner and ideology it previously adhered to would be tantamount to “a betrayal to the martyrs of the uprising. And certainly, as long as we are alive, we will not allow this to happen.” Leaders of political parties like the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (Jamaat) also denounced the Awami League. One can argue that the ICT, and any other court where Sheikh Hasina and other accused may be tried, will ignore such vituperations and pronounce its judgement on the basis of the evidence and arguments placed before it. A horse would guffaw on hearing this. The judiciary has been brought to heel through forced resignations and dismissals. The process began as early as August 10, 2024, when chief justice Obaidul Hassan of the Supreme Court and five judges of the appellate division, resigned as hundreds of students affiliated to the ADSM gathered on the court premises demanding that they quit, and threatened to besiege their residences if they did not. On October 16, the new chief justice, Syed Refaat Ahmed, sent 12 High Court judges, appointed during the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League rule, on leave following a demonstration in the court premises by adherents of the ADSM led by Hasnat Abdullah and Sarjis Alam. According to a report in Bangladesh’s The Business Standard on October 16 itself, announcing the plan, Hasnat

Abdullah, had written in a Facebook post on October 15, “In demand of the resignation of the fascist judges of the Awami League, we will besiege the High Court tomorrow (Wednesday) at 11am.” The ICT itself was reconstituted on October 15, 2024, with Justice Md Golam Mortuza Majumder from the High Court Division of Bangladesh Supreme Court as its new chairman, and Justice Md Shafiqul Alam Mahmud and retired District and Sessions Judge Md Mohitul Haque Enam Chowdhury as members of the panel.

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

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

Unlocking economic potential: Bridging the gender gap in public procurement

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

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



ELIZABETH A VAZQUEZ

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

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



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

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

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

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

Nearly 70 migrants killed as boat sinks en route to Spain

Bamako (AP): Nearly 70 migrants died when their boat sank as they tried to reach Spain earlier this month, Mali's Minister for Migrants Living Abroad said.

The migrants in this boat "numbered 80 at the start, with only 11 survivors," according to the Ministry. The Malian authorities have identified nine Malians among the survivors, and "25 young Malians have unfortunately been formally identified among the victims," the minister added.

China sanctions 7 companies over US military assistance to Taiwan

AP ■ BEIJING

The Chinese government placed sanctions on seven companies on Friday in response to recent US announcements of military sales and aid to Taiwan, the self-governing island that China claims as part of its territory.

The sanctions also come in response to the recent approval of the US government's annual defence spending bill, which a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement said "includes multiple negative sections on China."

limited impact, because American defence companies don't sell arms or other military goods to China. The US is the main supplier of weapons to Taiwan for its defence. The seven companies being sanctioned are Insitu Inc., Hudson Technologies Co., Saronic Technologies, Inc., Raytheon Canada, Raytheon Australia, Aerkomm Inc. and Oceanering International Inc., the Foreign Ministry statement said.

material and services and military education and training for Taiwan. Separately, the Defence Department announced that USD 295 million in military sales had been approved. The US defence bill boosts military spending to USD 895 billion and directs resources toward a more confrontational approach to China. It establishes a fund that can be used to send military resources to Taiwan in much the same way that the US has backed Ukraine. It also expands a ban on US military purchases of Chinese products ranging from drone technology to garlic for military commissaries.

spending. "US military spending has topped the world and keeps increasing every year," he said at a press conference. "This fully exposes the belligerent nature of the US and its obsession with hegemony and expansion." The Foreign Ministry statement said the US moves violate agreements between the two countries on Taiwan, interfere in China's domestic affairs and undermine the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

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SCHEDULE A (Details of the credit facility/ies availed by the Borrower) Table with columns: SI No, Loan No, Nature of Loan/Limit, Date of sanction, Amount.

SCHEDULE B (Details of security assets) Table with columns: SI No, DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY, NAME OF TITLE HOLDER, CERSAI DETAILS.

Table with columns: SI No, LOAN NO, NATURE OF LOAN/LIMIT, LIABILITY WITH INTEREST AS ON DATE 19.12.2024, RATE OF INTEREST.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY Residential Immovable Property sale deed no 5497 dated 03.11.2004 measuring (151.25 Sq Yards) 5 Marla comprising in Khewat no 694/624, Khatali no 783 Kharsa no. 281 (0-5) situated at village kabri, Tehsil and District Panipat Haryana 132103

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Germany's president dissolves parliament; polls on Feb 23

AP ■ FRANKFURT

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier on Friday ordered parliament dissolved and set new elections for February 23 in the wake of the collapse of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition, saying it was the only way to give the country a stable government capable of tackling its problems.

Since the post-World War II constitution doesn't allow the Bundestag to dissolve itself, it was up to Steinmeier to decide whether to dissolve parliament and call an election. He had 21 February 23 in the wake of the collapse of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition, saying it was the only way to give the country a stable government capable of tackling its problems.

bidding for the top job — though his party is further back. If recent polls hold up, the likely next government would be led by Merz as chancellor in coalition with at least one other party. Key issues include immigration, how to get the sluggish economy going, and how best to aid Ukraine in its struggle against Russia.

Ukraine's military intelligence says North Korean troops suffering heavy losses

AP ■ KYIV

North Korean troops are suffering heavy losses in the fighting in Russia's Kursk region and facing logistical difficulties as a result of Ukrainian attacks, Ukraine's military intelligence has said. The intelligence agency, known under its acronym GUR, on Thursday said Ukrainian strikes near Novoivanovka inflicted heavy casualties on North Korean units. It said North Korean troops also faced supply issues and even shortages of drinking water.

almost 3-year war. The casualty disclosure came as the Biden administration was pressing to send as much military aid as possible to Ukraine before President-elect Donald Trump takes over in January. Ukrainian forces launched an incursion into the Kursk region in August, dealing a significant blow to Russia's prestige and forcing it to deploy some of its troops from eastern Ukraine, where they were pressing a slow-moving offensive.

said. It claimed to have intercepted 59 missiles and 54 drones and jammed 52 other drones. On Thursday, Russia attacked Ukraine with 31 exploding drones. Twenty were shot down and another 11 didn't reach their target due to jamming, the Ukrainian air force said.

Canadian ministers head to Palm Beach for talks with Trump administration

AP ■ TORONTO

Two top Canadian Cabinet ministers are visiting Palm Beach to talk border security and trade with the incoming Donald Trump administration as Trump threatens tariffs on all Canadian products.

der as part of a bid to avoid the sweeping tariffs. Comeau said LeBlanc and Joly "look forward to building on the discussions that took place when the Prime Minister met with President Trump at Mar-a-Lago last month, as well as the positive call the Ministers held with Mr Tom Homan earlier this month."

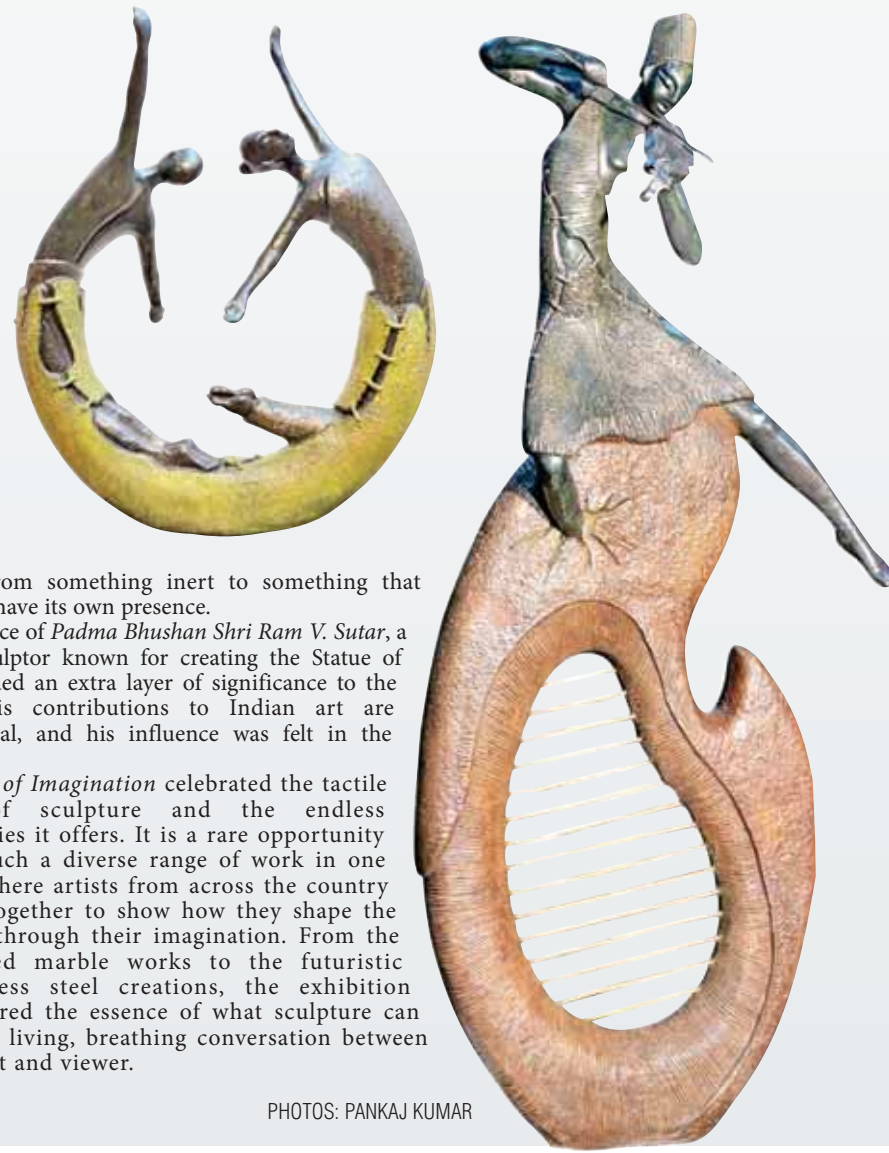
The Trump transition team did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment. Trump keeps calling embattled Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau the governor of the 51st state and has threatened to impose sweeping tariffs if Canada does not stem what he calls a flow of migrants and drugs in the United States — even though far fewer of each cross into the US from Canada than from Mexico, which Trump has also threatened. Canada has a billion-dollar plan to increase security at the border. LeBlanc last week he discussed parts of the plan with American officials and is optimistic, but said they have a lot of work ahead.



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

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

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



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

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR



WHERE DRAMA MEETS REALITY

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

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

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

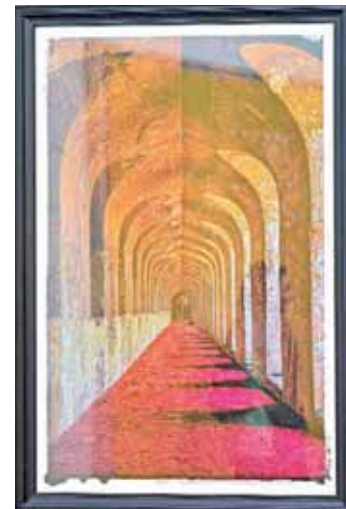
impeccable timing and depth, making the satire both enjoyable and insightful. The final day was just as memorable. **Trishna** beautifully weaved themes of reincarnation and devotion, while **Marnoprant** and **Digdarshak** explored grief and the mentor-disciple relationship with deep emotional resonance.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

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

The Power of Her Canvas

By **TEAM VIVA**

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



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

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR



Empowering Women through Skill Development

By **ABHI SINGHAL**

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

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



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

