



# Fin Min urges Governor to order inquiry into NPU's building take over issue

PNS : DALTONGANJ

State Finance Minister Radha Krishan Kishore has urged the Governor cum chancellor of the universities of the state Santosh Gangwar to order for a probe into the Nilamber Pitamber university in Daltonganj in regard to building taking over. The minister has sent a missive dated February 13 in this regard to the Governor. Raising a volley of questions about the taking over of the Academic Building, which has no water facility and its infra-

structure quality deems to be not in conformity with the standard, the minister has raised red flag. The minister has maintained in his missive that apart from the non-availability of the drinking water, the doors and windows appear to be of substandard quality. The finance minister had inspected the university only on January 11. Speaking to The Pioneer, Kishore said "There will be an in-depth inquiry into it. No one can get away. This university is the asset of Palamu and the state



and hence it's to be uncompromising of its quality of building and teaching." Sources said the Raj Bhavan has set up a three member probe team. The Academic Building was taken over by the university this January 28 three days ahead of the retirement of the then acting vice chancellor of the NPU Bal Kishun Munda who was the Divisional Commissioner of Palamu. Incharge registrar of the NPU S K Mishra said, "The then acting VC had approved for the tak-

ing over of the building. There was a committee setup for it under the order of the then acting VC." "The committee which is of the university compromises non-technical persons, abides by the order of the then acting vice chancellor who was too keen to taking over the Academic Bhavan," he said. Sources said there are noises about deficiencies in the newly taken over building, but no one remembers how deficient is the Kautilya Parshashnik Bhavan as well taken over years ago.

Further it's the Jharkhand state Building Construction Corporation limited that keeps pursuing the University for the taking over of the building and as such it's this corporation that it's to be made more accountable for passing over building still wanting in infrastructure facilities and conveniences. Sources said as a matter of fact the entire university complex appears to be in water scarcity zone which was never seen or taken note of from the first day of the foundation of this multi crore university.

## CMPDI inks an MoA with ALIMCO for distribution assistive devices to Divyangjan



PNS : RANCHI

CMPDI, RI-IV, Nagpur signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with ALIMCO on 13.02.2025 for Distribution of Aids & Assistive devices to the Divyangjan (PWDs) and senior citizens in Chandrapur district, Maharashtra under CSR. This multi year CSR project with a budget of

Rs.89 Lakhs, aims to benefit approximately 500-700 individuals. The MoA was signed by Rajesh Ralhan, Regional Director, CMPDI, RI-IV Nagpur and Sri K.D. Gote, Unit Head from ALIMCO. During this Project, Aids and Assistive devices like Tricycles, Wheel chairs, Battery Operated Motorised Tricycles, Crutches, Walking

sticks, Rolator, CP Chair, BTE Hearing Aid, Braille Cane, Braille Slate, Braille Kit, Sugmaya Cane for divyanjans and Walker, Sticks, Knee Brace, L.S. Belt, Artificial Denture, Spinal Support, Cervical Collar etc. will be distributed to the beneficiaries selected in consultation with District Administration by conducting Assessment camps in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra as per eligibility and extant guidelines of Government of India. CMPDI is committed to foster inclusive growth, empowerment of Divyangjan (PWDs) and senior citizens in and around its command areas. This CSR initiative focuses on reducing inequalities faced by socially and economically disadvantaged groups, integrating them into mainstream society thus creating an inclusive and equitable society where no one is left behind.

## 90-day Outreach and Legal Awareness Programme in Garhwa

PNS : GARHWA

A 90-day outreach and legal awareness programme was launched at Babu Dinesh Singh University in Garhwa. The programme was organised by the District Legal Services Authority, Garhwa, with support from the National Legal Services Authority and the Jharkhand State Legal Services Authority. The event was opened by the Principal District and Sessions Judge, Nalin Kumar, who is also the Chairman of the District Legal Services Authority. Dinesh Kumar, District and Additional Sessions Judge, was the guest of honour.

## 'Youth must play on real grounds instead of virtual platforms'



PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The 10th Knockout Cricket Tournament, organized by the Manift Sports Club, commenced at the DVC Ground in Manift. The event was inaugurated by social worker Shiv Shankar Singh, former independent candidate from Jamsheedpur East and patron of the organization 'Koshish - Ek Muskaan Lane Ki'. Singh marked the beginning of the tournament by taking a symbolic strike with the bat. Ratan Palsania, one of the organizers, informed that a total of 16 teams are participating in this tournament, with the final match scheduled for Sunday. Addressing the audience as the chief guest, Shiv Shankar Singh remarked, "The excitement

for cricket in Jamsheedpur is at its peak. This week will be filled with thrilling moments for sports enthusiasts." He took the opportunity to motivate the youth to step out of virtual playgrounds and engage in outdoor sports for better physical and mental fitness. Singh also congratulated the organizers, emphasizing that such tournaments not only promote competitive spirit but also contribute to the overall well-being of players. He highlighted the importance of physical activity, encouraging the youth to embrace the thrill of playing on real grounds. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from cricket lovers and was a celebration of sportsmanship and community spirit.

## Love for Jamshedpur brings Brazilians back to the city

PARVINDER BHATIA : JAMSHEDPUR

The charm of Jamshedpur, fondly known as the Steel City, continues to weave its magic, drawing people from across the globe back to its vibrant streets. This time, it has brought two Brazilians, Juliana Baeza and Renata Madeira, back to relive the fond memories they created over two decades ago. Their visit is not just a nostalgic trip down memory lane but also a testament to the city's warm hospitality and cultural vibrancy.

Juliana Baeza first visited Jamsheedpur during 2002-2003 as part of the Rotary Youth Exchange Programme. Reflecting on her time in the city, Juliana shared, "I have been missing the city and its people for so long that I decided to come back to spend some quality time here. The most vivid memories I have are of relishing 'Dosa' and 'Besan Laddu'. The first thing I did after arriving was to savor these delicacies once again." Now residing in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil, Juliana's affection for Jamsheedpur remains as fresh as it was two decades ago.

Mother of two kids, Juliana said that her love for India has increased over the years. She would love to send her kids to India as part of student exchange programme. Echoing Juliana's sentiments, Renata Madeira, who visited Jamsheedpur in 1998, expressed her joy at returning to a place that holds a special place in her heart. For Renata, the trip was not merely about revisiting old haunts but also about reconnecting with the people who made her time in the city unforgettable.

Their journey back to Jamsheedpur is a reflection of the impactful cultural exchange facilitated by the Rotary Youth Exchange Programme. District Counselor RYE PDG Ronald D'Costa explained, "Rotary International District 3250, covering Jharkhand and

Bihar, is a certified district for hosting and sending students aged 15-18 years for Long Term and Short Term Exchange Programs worldwide. This initiative fosters international understanding, promotes peace, and nurtures leadership skills among youth." The Rotary Youth Exchange Programme offers a unique opportunity for students to live abroad for a year, immersing themselves in new cultures, learning new languages, and forming lifelong friendships. With participation from over 100 countries, the programme aims to bridge cultural gaps and create global citizens.

"Our District 3250 started this programme under the guidance of the late PP Surender Sahni, hosting and sending students to and from countries like the US, Brazil, and Germany. Today, Juliana and Renata's visit is a beautiful example of how the programme continues to build bridges of friendship and understanding between nations," Ronald D'Costa added. The ongoing success of the programme is attributed to the leadership of District Governor 3250 Bipin Chachan, District Counselor RYE PDG Ronald D'Costa, and District Chair RYE PP Satnam Kaur Kapula. They continue to inspire young minds to explore the world, learn from diverse cultures, and build meaningful connections.

The return of Juliana and Renata to Jamsheedpur is a powerful reminder of the city's enduring charm and the transformative power of cultural exchange. As the Rotary Youth Exchange Programme continues to bring people closer, it invites young individuals aged 15 to 18 years to embark on this life-changing journey and experience the world beyond borders. Their visit not only celebrates old friendships but also strengthens the ties between India and Brazil, showcasing the universal language of love, culture, and shared memories.

## Tatanagar railway station joins elite list of 'Eat Right Stations'

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In a significant development, Tatanagar Railway Station, a key stop on the Howrah-Mumbai trunk route under the Chakradharpur Division of South Eastern Railway, has received the prestigious 'Eat Right Certification'. This recognition underscores the station's commitment to maintaining high standards of food safety and hygiene.



A two-member team from Chennai recently visited Tatanagar to evaluate its catering services. The inspection involved a detailed review of the station's restaurants and stalls, ensuring strict adherence to food safety norms. The team also assessed the Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) percentage of railway tap water, a critical parameter for water quality and safety.

The 'Eat Right' initiative primarily focuses on: Cleanliness and hygiene at food stalls. Special registration requirements for food vendors. Safety measures for the storage and handling of catering items.

The initiative has been beneficial for both passengers and food vendors. By adhering to stringent safety and hygiene standards, vendors enhance their credibility and attract more customers, leading to an overall improvement in business performance. This not only promotes healthier food consumption but also boosts passenger satisfaction.

Millions of Indians pass through railway stations every day, making them crucial hubs for food consumption. Recognizing the importance of safe and healthy food, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) launched the Eat Right Station initiative, which has been instrumental in ensuring access to nutritious and hygienic food at railway stations across the country. Till now, 150 railway stations nationwide have been certified as Eat Right Stations, a testimony to the initiative's success. The certification process involves rigorous audits of food vendors, comprehensive training of food handlers, and stringent hygiene and sanitation protocols. This holistic approach aims to provide travelers with safe and quality food, fostering a culture of food safety and health awareness.

## Bokaro Steel Plant Honors 31 employees



PNS : BOKARO

The Best Employee of the Month Award program was organized by the Knowledge and Development Department of Human Resources at Bokaro Steel Plant for the months of May to August 2024. A total of 31 employees were recognized for their exceptional contributions to their respective fields. The ceremony was graced by Executive Director (Works) C. R. Mahapatra,

Executive Director (HR) Rajashree Banerjee, along with department heads, senior officials, award recipients, and their family members. Encouraging the employees, C. R. Mahapatra acknowledged the significant role of both employees and their families in this success. He highlighted Bokaro Steel Plant's expansion plan to enhance production capacity to 8 million tons, expressing confidence that with innovation and increased profitability,

this goal will be achieved. Rajashree Banerjee, Executive Director (HR), extended congratulations to both employees and their families. She urged employees to embrace new challenges, find solutions, and maintain a steady pace of growth. Acknowledging the challenges in the global steel market, she emphasized that with collective efforts, Bokaro Steel Plant will overcome obstacles and reach new heights.

## GARHWA DISTRICT BAGS RS 3 CRORE FROM NITI AYOOG

NITYANAND DUBEY : GARHWA

Garhwa district in Jharkhand has been awarded Rs 3 crore by the NITI Aayog. The district topped the NITI Aayog's performance index for aspirational districts. This award recognises the district's outstanding performance in agriculture and water resources management.



The NITI Aayog's Aspirational Districts Programme aims to improve development in lagging districts across India. The programme monitors districts in five key areas: education, health and nutrition, infrastructure, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion and skill development. Districts that perform well receive additional funding to help them develop further. Garhwa district showed

significant improvement in all five areas compared to February 2024. The district's progress in agriculture and water resources was particularly impressive. Garhwa climbed to second place in this sector in March 2024, after being ranked 26th in February 2024. Deputy Commissioner Shekhar Jamuar said, "This is a proud moment for Garhwa district. This award

shows the hard work of the district administration and the people's positive attitude towards development. We will use the prize money to improve the lives of people in the area." The Deputy Commissioner of Garhwa said that the district has been allocated ₹3 crore for the development of agricultural and water resources infrastructure in the Aspirational Block. The district adminis-

tration has already prepared a project proposal and submitted it to the NITI Aayog. The Deputy Commissioner also highlighted that the district had received ₹3 crore in 2023-24 under the Aspirational Districts Programme for basic infrastructure development. This funding is being used to construct changing rooms, toilets, and goalposts at various sports grounds built under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). The Deputy Commissioner congratulated the district administration team for their hard work and dedication, stating that the achievement is a testament to their commitment to transparency and development. The success has brought recognition to Garhwa district at the state and national level.

## IIM Bodh Gaya conducts a MDM for HPCL dealers



PNS : RANCHI

The Indian Institute of Management Bodh Gaya successfully conducted a three-day Management Development Programme (MDP) for dealers of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) in February, 2025. The programme, designed to enhance managerial and operational skills, was attended by 35 HPCL dealers

from different districts of Bihar and was organized in collaboration with the National Stock Exchange (NSE). Prof. Vinita S. Sahay, Director of IIM Bodh Gaya, emphasised the importance of responsible management and personal effectiveness. The programme aimed to equip participants with strategic thinking, financial acumen, team-building skills, and insights into Industry 4.0, customer-centricity, and

operational excellence. Sessions were led by esteemed faculty members. Dr. Samant Saurabh and Dr. Shashank Kumar, the programme coordinators, played a pivotal role in the seamless execution and successful delivery of this enriching programme. Industry experts Devrata Panda, Deputy General Manager, ARB Business, HPCL and Mr. Pankaj Vaswani, Chief General Manager, Patna Retail RO, HPCL also shared valuable insights on leadership, and emerging trends in lubricants and retailing. The event concluded with a valedictory ceremony, where participants were awarded certificates of completion. The programme underscored IIM Bodh Gaya's commitment to fostering professional growth and addressing the evolving needs of businesses and society.



# Government to keep inflation in check: Finance Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said the government will continue to take measures to check inflation and ensure that citizens are not burdened.



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Budget session of Parliament New Delhi

The House witnessed several instances of altercations between the Opposition and the treasury benches over issues like Budget allocations to Telangana, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala.

during a challenging time, with serious external challenges beyond estimates or forecasts and there has been reduction in sectoral allocations. Despite this, the government has tried to keep the assessment as accurate as possible, keeping India's interests paramount, she said.

close as possible, keeping India's interests as topmost... this immense uncertainty is still playing out and many Indian imports which are very critical for our economy to grow are also going to be left with uncertainty," she said.

are being managed by a group of ministers who are ensuring that timely import happens if there is a shortfall in supply," the minister said. The Reserve Bank of India is keeping a watch on volatility in the Indian rupee, she said.

continue. We shall make sure that price should not be a burden on the ordinary citizens," Sitharaman said.

The minister, who presented her record eighth Budget in a row, also said the Modi government's Budget numbers are always realistic and neither conservative nor overestimated. Sitharaman told the House that the first advance estimates from National Statistics Office (NSO) has projected India's economy will grow 6.4 per cent in real terms and 9.7 per cent in nominal terms. So for the Budget, "we have kept our goals" such that we are able to accelerate growth, secure inclusive development, invigorate private sector investments, she said.

# RS Chair asserts Parliament's jurisdiction on HC judge removal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhanekar reacts during the Budget session of Parliament, New Delhi

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhanekar on Thursday asserted that only Parliament has the jurisdiction to constitutionally remove a high court judge, saying a notice for removal of Justice Shekhar Yadav of Allahabad High Court is pending with him.

The jurisdiction for the stated subject matter constitutionally lies in exclusivity with the Chairman Rajya Sabha and in an eventuality with the Parliament and Hon'ble President," Dhanekar said. "Taking note of public domain information and inputs available, it is expedient that the Secretary General, Rajya Sabha shares this for information with the Secretary General, Supreme Court of India," he said.

The Supreme Court had sought a report from the chief justice of the Allahabad High Court on the remarks made by Justice Yadav and had later asked him to appear before senior judges of the court. Members of several opposition parties had moved the notice in Rajya Sabha on December 13, 2024 for impeachment of Justice Yadav over his alleged controversial remarks at a recent VHP event, sources said.

Chidambaram, Randeep Surjewala, Pramod Tiwari, Jai Ram Ramesh, Mukul Wasnik, Naseer Hussain, Raghav Chadha, Fauziah Khan, Sanjay Singh, AA Rahim, V Sivadasan and Renuka Chowdhury. The notice for the motion was moved under the Judges' (Inquiry) Act, 1968, and Article 218 of the Constitution, seeking initiation of proceedings for impeachment of Justice Yadav.

# Delhi HC seeks status on DFI forgery case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi High Court has directed the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) & Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) to submit Status Reports on why FIR was not filed against Drone Federation India (DFI) for forging DGCA documents with the signature of the Director General.



Delhi High Court on Wednesday expressed displeasure with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) and Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) while issuing notice on a public interest litigation (PIL) filed against the Drone Federation of India over allegations of forgery. The bench led by Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyay, also comprising Justice Tushar Rao Gedela, orally remarked that the DGCA should have filed a complaint and registered an FIR regarding the forgery.

ed that MCA suspected the authenticity of the provided No Objection Certificate (NOC) and subsequently sent a letter to DGCA. The concerned ministry stated that an inspection was initiated, which eventually led to an investigation. Senior Advocate PV Dinesh, representing petitioner RTI activist Tej Pratap Singh, stated that the Drone Federation of India (DFI) forged an NOC to bypass legal hurdles and rebrand the organisation.

issued to individuals associated with one, M/s Quiddich Innovation Labs (Respondent), to operate drones. Since the certified pilots had used these certifications for covering Indian Premier League held in Dubai, senior officer of Dubai Civil Aviation Authority (DCAA) had written to DGCA to verify the authenticity of these certifications, it said.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the first edition of the SOUL Leadership Conclave by the School of Ultimate Leadership here on February 21, officials said on Thursday.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the first edition of the SOUL Leadership Conclave by the School of Ultimate Leadership here on February 21, officials said on Thursday.

The two-day event at Bharat Manadpam will bring together leaders from across politics, sports, arts and media, public policy, business, the social sector and the spiritual world to talk about their personal leadership journeys, engaging in insightful conversations and sharing transformative experiences to inspire a new generation of thinkers.

India D Y Chandrachud, former Reserve Bank of India governor Shaktikanta Das, Spiritual Leader of the Brahma Kumaris BK Shivani, chess world champion D Gukesh, PIRAMAL Group chief Ajay PIRAMAL, and Bharti Enterprises Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal, among others.

# PM Modi to inaugurate SOUL Leadership Conclave

# President urges Government to embrace emerging technologies

President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday urged the government to embrace emerging technologies to improve governance and service delivery.

# President urges Government to embrace emerging technologies



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

It is essential for government departments to modernise their systems by making the best use of emerging technologies to cater to the ever-rising expectations of the public for efficiency in service delivery, President Droupadi Murmu said on Thursday.

Addressing a group of probationers from different government services, she asked them to keep abreast of advanced technologies, skills and strive to create more citizen-centric, efficient and transparent governance systems.

and Accounts) Service, Indian Railway Management Service (Accounts) and the Indian Postal Service had called on the president at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. There is an ever-rising expectation among the public for greater speed and efficiency in service delivery, along with increased transparency and accountability, the president said.

Speaking to the probationers from the Indian Civil Accounts Service, Indian Post and Telecommunication (Finance and Accounts) Service and the Indian Railway Management Service (Accounts), the president said a strong public financial management system was the foundation of good governance.

financial inclusion, particularly for rural and under-served populations. "You have the unique opportunity to make the postal department and services more customer-centric, innovative, digitised, inclusive and sustainable. You have to ensure that the postal network continues to serve as a big unifying factor in a vast and diverse nation as ours," the President said.

# UPSC introduces new online application module for 2025

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A new module of registration and online application form replacing the Detailed Application Form (DAF)-I and DAF-II has been introduced by the UPSC in civil services examination-2025, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said on Thursday.

Application Form (DAF)-I and DAF-II has been introduced by UPSC in CSE-2025," he said in a written reply to Rajya Sabha. Singh cited sections of the notified rules that make it mandatory for the applicant to submit requisite information and supporting documents towards various claims, such as date of birth, reservation category and educational qualification among others along with the online application form.

# India to procure 1,000 surveillance helicopters for high-altitude operations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The government has begun the process to procure nearly 1,000 surveillance helicopters with accessories capable of operating up to an altitude of 5,500 metres above sea level and both during day and night time, as a Request for Information (RFI) was issued.



and identify probable Indian vendors who are capable to supply surveillance copter (HAA) along with accessories". The first part of the RFI incorporates the intended use of the equipment and the operational requirement that should be met by the surveillance copter with accessories. The RFI also mentions the terrain conditions under which the "surveillance copters" will be employed primarily in high altitude (up to 5,500 metres), mountainous terrain in India.

commonly encountered weather conditions in all kinds of terrains in the country, the RFI says. "Surveillance Copter (High Altitude Area) is modular in design, thereby lending itself to future upgrades through simple modifications, not leading to design or structural change. It should also facilitate integration and installation, without impacting the performance of any system/sub-system," it added.

# Aditya Thackeray meets Rahul, Kejriwal on INDIA Bloc unity

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aditya Thackeray met Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal, days after their losses in the Delhi assembly polls, with a message to strengthen the fight for free and fair elections.

audit trail)," Aditya Thackeray said. After calling on Kejriwal, Aditya Thackeray described the meeting as a gesture of friendship. "Governments keep coming and going but relationships continue. We met Kejriwal as a gesture of friendship. However, our democracy is not free and fair. Elections are not free and fair," he told reporters after the meeting.

# Smooth traffic ensures seamless holy dip in Sangam for pilgrims

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR**  
Prayagraj's traffic remains smooth despite the massive Magh Purnima rush, as effective administrative arrangements ensure a hassle-free pilgrimage to the Sangam. According to the Fair police, traffic is moving smoothly on all major routes, including Malak Harhar (Lucknow), Mirzapur Road, Rewa Road, Sahson (Jaunpur), Phaphamau (Lucknow), Andawa (Varanasi route), and Kaushambi. In view of Mahakumbh, security forces and traffic police have been strategically deployed on all major routes to ensure devotees do not face any inconvenience. The Traffic department has urged devotees to adhere to the instructions issued by the administration and avoid unnecessary halts on any route. Chhattisgarh Governor, CM, cabinet take holy dip. On Thursday, a 166-member Chhattisgarh delegation, led by Governor Ramen Deka, CM



Thousands of devotees gathered to take holy dip at Sangam during ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, Prayagraj PTI

dip of faith. We are deeply thankful to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for inviting us to this divine event." Following the holy bath, CM shared his experience on social media, writing, "Today, I took a dip in the Triveni Sangam at Tirthraj Prayag, seeking the happiness, prosperity, and well-being of three crore people of Chhattisgarh. Mahakumbh is a grand festival of divinity and spiritual energy in Sanatan Dharma, where faith transforms into nectar and unites the soul with the divine." Chhattisgarh Assembly speaker Dr Raman Singh emphasized the privilege of participating in the Mahakumbh, saying, "It is a matter of great fortune for the leadership of our Chief Minister, we along with the Governor, ruling party MLAs, and even opposition MLAs have come together to take this sacred bath. Mahakumbh is a blessing for the peace, prosperity, and well-being of our state."

## Haryana cracks down on illegal mining, seizes 324 vehicles



Photo: File photo

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHANDIGARH**  
The Mines and Geology Department, Haryana has stepped up its efforts to combat illegal mining in the state, with district-level officials inspecting 3,950 locations across the state under a special drive, an official statement said on Thursday. The extensive effort from January till February 10 led to the seizure of 324 vehicles involved in illegal mining, it said. According to the statement, the department has set up a robust enforcement strategy including inspections, monitoring, and the use of cutting-edge technology, to conserve natural resources and stopping unauthorized mining activities. Additionally, drones and other advanced tools are being deployed to detect illegal mining operations, while vehicles associated with illicit activities are being seized, it said. The statement said that FIRs are being registered and heavy fines are being levied on violators. Acting swiftly on a complaint of illegal mining in Bhagwapur village of Yamunanagar district recently, the department conducted an inspection of the area. Investigations revealed that boulders, gravel, sand, and ordinary soil were illegally mined over approximately two acres of land. A fine of Rs 65,37,732 was imposed, and an FIR was registered on February 11, the statement added. As per the guidelines of the mining department, regular inspections are ongoing in every district of Haryana. Notably, in Yamunanagar district, 123 vehicles have been seized, and 116 FIRs have been registered for illegal mining activities during the months of January and February (till February 10). "The department remains committed to fully eradicating illegal mining to ensure the responsible exploitation of the state's natural resources and prevent revenue loss," it said.

## Change of Odisha government in 2024 was a declaration of faith: Odisha Governor

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
Odisha Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati on Thursday said the people of the state opted for a change of government in 2024 general elections and it was not just a political decision, but a "declaration of faith". The people changed the nearly two-and-half decade long government in the state with a vision for the future and hope of a transformation in their lives, he said. The governor said this while addressing the Budget Session of Odisha Assembly which commenced on Thursday. He said the state, despite its glorious past and abundant human resources, struggled to fulfil its immense potential. "The state's promises often remained unrealised. The people of Odisha, with hope in their hearts and a vision for the future, opted for change over continuity in the 2024 general elections," the governor said. Noting that they were tired of waiting for a transformation that never seemed to come, the governor said: "They (people) embraced the promise of my government that they would listen, understand and act. Their vote was not just a political decision, it was a declaration of faith." The people entrusted his government with the hope of the poor, aspirations of youths, dreams of farmers and aims of women believing that change would usher in a new era, an era of unmatched prosperity, he said. Kambhampati said that with the mandate of the people and a determined vision for the future, the new government shouldered the onerous responsibility of taking the state forward in the path of prosperity. He said it is just eight months of assuming responsibility and during such a short span of time, the new government has taken various landmark decisions, launched numerous schemes and hosted several programmes in the interest of the people. "The government implemented its flagship scheme 'Subhadra' which is poised to benefit about a crore of women of the state, rolled out the 'Samrudha Krushak Yojana' to provide input assistance of Rs 800 per quintal of paddy over and above the MSP, opened the 'Ratna Bhandar' of Shree Jagannath Temple honouring the demands of devotees and took up many initiatives to revive Odia Asmita (pride). The governor also highlighted the state government hosting the DG/IGP conference, 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, visit of Singapore President and Utkarsh Odisha-Make in Odisha conclave. He said the state government has received three lakh suggestions for 'Vision 2036' which aspires to build a developed Odisha targeting a 500 USD billion economy by 2036. Starting his speech by chanting 'Jai Jagannath', the governor said poor, youth, women empowerment are the main pillars of the state government. He said the state has implemented the National Education Policy, Ayushman Bharat in the health sector, Kamadhenu scheme for dairy farmers and others. Stating that 1.5 lakh government jobs to be filled in five years duration, the governor said as many as 65,000 posts to be filled in two years. More than 24,000 posts have been filled in 2024-25. The governor also said the state government will empower 25 lakh women as 'Lakshmi Didi' by 2027. He said the state government has proposed a new scheme 'Swachha Odisha' to enhance solid, liquid and wastewater management in cities. The state has also launched a new scheme 'Urban Mobility' to ensure seamless transportation in urban areas, and secured approval for development of Hirakud and Satkosia projects to elevate them to a global standard tourist destination, he said. "My government remains committed to a people first approach in delivering essential services, creating livelihood opportunities and developing infrastructures," the governor said.

## Centre dispatches teams to tackle bird flu outbreak in Andhra Pradesh

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ AMARAVATI**  
Andhra Pradesh Animal Husbandry Minister K Atchannaidu said on Thursday that the Central Government has dispatched teams to assess the Avian Influenza situation in the state following the outbreak of the viral disease in three districts. Over the past 45 days as many as 5.4 Lakh chickens have died in the southern state due to the disease, prompting the Animal Husbandry Department to begin culling birds and creating restricted zones in the affected areas. Badampudi village in Eluru district reported the death of 2.2 Lakh chickens, Velpuru in West Godavari district recorded 2.5 Lakh deaths, Kanuru Agraharam in East Godavari district reported 65,000 deaths and



Photo: File photo

Gampalagudem in NTR district saw 7,000 deaths. "The Chief Minister spoke in detail with senior scientists in Bhopal and the Central Government secretary. Following this, the Central Government secretary dispatched teams to Andhra Pradesh," Atchannaidu said at a press conference at the secretariat. The minister also noted that a senior official from the Centre will visit Andhra Pradesh on February 14. In addition to declaring the affected poultry farms as bio-secure zones, the senior TDP leader stated that officials have been deputed to these areas to ensure the strict implementation of containment measures. He added that the culling of chickens has been completed at three affected poultry farms and will be completed at the remaining two farms today. According to the minister, officials are monitoring the situation on an hourly basis. Reiterating that there is no harm in consuming boiled eggs and cooked chicken, Atchannaidu assured people that they can eat them without fear. He urged restraint against unnecessary rumour-mongering about the disease on social media and mainstream media.

## Will not allow fudging voters list: TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee

**SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA**  
The Trinamool Congress continued to attack the BJP Government for manipulating elections and warned of adequate counter measures against all efforts to tamper with electoral rolls ahead of next year's Bengal Assembly elections. Questioning the "doubtful appearance or disappearance of names" in and from the electoral rolls in Delhi Assembly seat "which might have been a cause for Aam Aadmi Party's defeat" TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Thursday said that in "Bengal all such moves would be thwarted." "More than 4 Lakh doubtful new names were added in the electoral rolls in the eight months - from June to



Photo: File photo

election process was not genuine ... and the failure of AAP is that they could not handle it ... but in Bengal such things will not be allowed to take place." In Kolkata senior TMC leader and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sobhandeb Chatterjee warned the BJP against trying to make a mess of the electoral rolls.

"They have used this formula in a number of States ... now they are trying to do it in Bengal by allowing online registration of names in the voters' list but we will not allow these names to be finalized until there is a physical verification with relevant credentials ... we are taking this up with utmost priority," Chatterjee said. Earlier Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee too had slammed the BJP for winning elections by fudging electoral rolls. "How will you explain the ghost voters that swell the voters' lists causing you to win elections ... from where 40 Lakh voters came in Maharashtra," Banerjee on Wednesday said alleging that the BJP has been "taking the help of the Election Commission." Alleging that the voters' lists were manipulated in Haryana and Maharashtra Banerjee said that the Election Commission was made to look the other way. "And if anyone will protest you will send ED and CBI to frighten them ... and here I have reports that the voters' lists are being fudged thousands of names are being added from Bihar we have alerted our people and the administration ... we will thwart all your attempts and once again you will be defeated here," Banerjee said. The TMC leadership's strong comments not with standing the Opposition came out with a sharp reply saying "fear is gradually settling in their hearts ... the Chief Minister and other TMC leaders are afraid of losing elections in 2026."

## Accused arrested for ₹20,000 reward in ₹2 Crore ganja seizure case

**STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM**  
An accused was arrested from Mathura for allegedly carrying a reward of ₹20,000 in connection with a drug peddling case, police said. The police on August 8, had recovered with more than a tonne of ganja valued at about ₹2 Crore from the suspect hideout from a locked house in Gurugram's Pataudi area. The alleged drug was being transported from Odisha, police said on Thursday. The arrested accused was identified as Deshraj, a resident of Kuni Daultabad village here in Gurugram. During police interrogation, it was found that the recovered ganja was brought by the accused in a truck from Orissa and was hidden in his closed house. "The estimated cost of the ganja was found to be ₹2 Crore. The ganja was sold in small packets to the customers. Gurugram Police had dealt a tough blow to the smugglers of ganja by seizing such a huge consignment of illegal ganja. Before this drug could be supplied to various places, Gurugram Police had taken major action against the smugglers and recovered

## Criminal with ₹10,000 bounty arrested at India-Nepal border

**STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM**  
A criminal with a bounty of ₹10,000 was arrested from the India-Nepal border, who was absconding after out of jail on parole on Wednesday, police said. The accused was identified as Surrender alias Choti, a resident of the village Bans Aliyar district Gurugram. According to the police, on September 9, a complaint was received at Police Station Sector-7 IMT Manesar, Gurugram from District Jail Gurugram that an inmate Surrender, who was serving a life sentence on murder charges District Jail Gurugram was sent on parole for four weeks on 14.08.2024 and was asked to surrender in District Jail Gurugram on 12.09.2024. The prisoner did not surrender in the jail even after the expiry of parole. On this complaint, a case was registered under the Haryana Good Conduct Prisoners (Temporary Release) Act at Police Station Sector-7 IMT Manesar, Gurugram. During swift action, the police team led by Sub-Inspector Lalit, Incharge Crime Branch Manesar, Gurugram, nabbed the absconding accused from the India-Nepal border on Wednesday. According to the jail records, about 80 charges were registered against the criminal under burglary, attempt to murder, murder and the criminal and he was sentenced to life imprisonment for killing his wife. "The accused was residing in Nepal to avoid police action. Further action is being taken by the police team as per the rules in the matter. The case is under investigation," Sandeep Kumar, spokesperson of the district police said. Apart from this, the Gurugram police have also arrested 6 people from different locations here in the city for possession of illegal liquor.

## Captain Karamjit Singh Bakshi cremated with honors



Bereaved family members of martyr Captain Karamjit Singh Bakshi are seen as his mortal remains are being brought to his home, Hazaribagh, Jharkhand PTI

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ HAZARIBAG/JHARKHAND**  
The mortal remains of Captain Karamjit Singh Bakshi, an army man who was killed in Jammu and Kashmir, were consigned to flames in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh on Thursday. The 27-year-old army man who belonged to Punjab Regimental Centre was among two defence personnel killed after suspected terrorists set off an improvised explosive device (IED) near the Line of Control (LoC) in Akhnoor sector on Tuesday. The air was thick with grief as the body of the man was cremated at the burning ghat in Khirgaon here in the presence of his teary-eyed parents and other people. Bakshi's fiancée, an Army doctor stationed in Jammu, whom he was supposed to marry in April, also stood silently among the crowd. Earlier, Captain Bakshi's body was received by his family. His parents, Sardar Ajinder Singh Bakshi and Neelu Bakshi stood still as they watched their only son embark on his final journey wrapped in a tricolour. The streets were lined with mourners, many of whom knew Captain Bakshi since his childhood. The town that had celebrated Karamjit's engagement a few days ago. His uncle Sardar Amarjit Singh Bakshi told PTI, "Karamjit was like Kohinoor for family and friends. A very charming youth who was always there for people. He had come to Hazaribagh for a week and left on January 24 for Akhnoor where he was posted." The uncle said the deceased was due to be married in Jammu on April 5. "When we were expecting a celebration, we received such a setback," his other uncle Sardar Devinder Singh said. The Army Captain is survived by his mother, father and sister. Jharkhand Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Finance Minister Radha Krishna Kishore and a large number of Army and Civil officials paid tributes to the fallen soldier at the Birsu Munda Airport on Wednesday. Chief Minister Hemant Soren condoled the death of Bakshi and an army jawan in the IED blast.

## Arunachal's Tawang district faces power, communication disruptions amidst heavy snowfall

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ITANAGAR**  
Tawang district in Arunachal Pradesh has been experiencing heavy snowfall since Tuesday evening, throwing life out of gear in the border district. The entire district has been covered under a thick blanket of snow, district officials said. While snowfall is not uncommon in the region, the prolonged and heavy nature of this spell has led to disruptions in essential services, including electricity, water supply, and communication. Uprooted trees and the accumulation of thick snow on power and communication lines have caused service disruptions in some areas. Although most shops

remained open, footfall is low as residents step out only to purchase daily necessities. Attendance in educational institutions has significantly reduced, as vehicles are not plying. Various departments, including power, public health engineering, Border Roads Organisation, PWD, and rural works department are working

tirelessly to restore and maintain essential services, officials added. Police and army personnel are actively assisting stranded tourists and commuters at Sela and Jaswant Garh areas. According to the latest weather forecasts, snowfall is likely to persist for the next few days. "If the situation continues, further disruptions to normal life may occur. However, as of now, no reports of significant damage or accidents due to snowfall have been received," the officials informed. The district administration has advised citizens of the border district to take necessary precautions, avoid unnecessary travel, and stay updated with official advisories.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Revamping the tax regime

Nirmala Sitharaman introduces the Income Tax Bill 2025 in Parliament, aiming to replace the 1961 Act with a more taxpayer-friendly framework

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman introduced the Income Tax Bill 2025 in Parliament on Thursday. This new bill aims to replace the Income Tax Act, 1961, which has become cumbersome due to numerous amendments over the last six decades. The bill focuses on simplification, clarity and ease of compliance for taxpayers while retaining the fundamental structure of the tax system. The bill consists of 536 sections, 23 chapters and 16 schedules within 622 pages, making it significantly more concise than the 880-page 1961 Act. One of the major changes is the replacement of the term 'previous year' and 'assessment year' with 'tax year,' eliminating confusion regarding tax filing timelines. To further enhance clarity, ambiguous terms such as 'notwithstanding' have been replaced with 'irrespective.' The new bill also introduces tables and formulae for key calculations, such as TDS, presumptive taxation, salary taxation and deductions for bad debts. Complex explanations and provisos have been omitted, making the law more comprehensible and user-friendly.



A formal Taxpayer's Charter has been included, outlining rights and responsibilities to promote transparency and fairness in tax administration. All TDS-related provisions have been consolidated under a single clause using simple tabular formats, reducing complexity and improving compliance. Additionally, the bill integrates key court rulings from the last 60 years, providing more legal certainty and reducing disputes. The tax treatment for employee stock options has been refined, offering a more transparent taxation structure to ensure fair and predictable tax treatment for employees receiving stock options. To make tax exemptions clearer,

income that does not form part of total income has now been moved to dedicated schedules instead of being scattered throughout the Act. These changes are expected to bring multiple benefits, such as simpler compliance, a clear taxation structure, reduced litigation, an easier TDS framework and greater predictability for employees with stock options. Despite these advantages, the bill faces certain challenges. Taxpayers and businesses will need time to adapt to the new terminologies and provisions. The removal of 'previous year' and 'assessment year' may cause temporary confusion during the transition. Additionally, the introduction of tables and streamlined TDS clauses will require updates in income tax return (ITR) forms, software utilities and reporting systems. The Income Tax Bill 2025 marks a significant step toward a more transparent, efficient and taxpayer-friendly system. While it does not introduce new taxes, its simplification of language, removal of redundancies, and integration of judicial precedents will reduce compliance costs and tax disputes. If successfully implemented, this bill could enhance tax administration efficiency and encourage better voluntary compliance among taxpayers. After deliberation by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance, it is expected to come into effect from April 1, 2026. How it will actually work will only be clear then.

### PICTALK



Farmer carries rose flowers during the Valentine's Week, in Agartala

# Russia combines diplomatic strategy with military tactics



NISHAKANT OJHA

### Russia's military philosophy extends beyond traditional warfare, incorporating hybrid tactics that blend Eastern endurance with Western innovation

Russia's military strategy has long been shaped by its geopolitical position, straddling both Europe and Asia. This dual identity has led to a warfare doctrine that merges Western technological advancement with Eastern strategic depth and endurance. The ongoing evolution of Russian military tactics provides valuable insight into its approach to global conflicts, shaped by a fusion of European and Asian influences. From the European side, Russia has historically adopted a professionalised military structure similar to Western armies, particularly during the Imperial era and through Soviet reforms. Its command structures have evolved to centralise authority while enabling flexibility on the battlefield. The modernisation of weaponry has also followed Western advancements, integrating precision-strike capabilities and network-centric warfare. Drawing lessons from NATO conflicts, Russia has enhanced its rapid manoeuvre warfare strategies, incorporating elements of German Blitzkrieg and modern NATO doctrines, which were evident in its campaigns in Georgia and Ukraine.



Iran's and China's use of regional proxy forces.

Russia's military doctrine extends its influence over neighboring states, shaping their security and geopolitical dynamics. Ukraine has been the epicenter of Russia's hybrid warfare, where cyberattacks, military incursions, and disinformation campaigns have been employed to destabilise the country. Belarus remains a critical ally, hosting Russian forces and acting as a logistical facilitator for military operations. The Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—are under constant Russian influence, facing frequent cyber intrusions and political destabilisation efforts, despite their NATO membership. In Central Asia, Russia maintains a military and economic presence in former Soviet republics like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, ensuring their alignment within its sphere of influence. Similarly, in the Caucasus, Russia has engaged in military conflicts, as seen in Georgia, and continues to exert influence in Armenia and Azerbaijan through peace-keeping operations and strategic alliances. Beyond its immediate borders, Russia balances relationships with China and India, maintaining military cooperation with the former while supplying arms to the latter, ensuring its strategic autonomy amid shifting glob-



DRAWING LESSONS FROM NATO CONFLICTS, RUSSIA HAS ENHANCED ITS RAPID MANOEUVRE WARFARE STRATEGIES, INCORPORATING ELEMENTS OF GERMAN BLITZKRIEG AND MODERN NATO DOCTRINES, WHICH WERE EVIDENT IN ITS CAMPAIGNS IN GEORGIA AND UKRAINE

al alliances. The geopolitical strategy of the United States in the Russia-Ukraine war has been pivotal in countering Russian aggression through military, economic, and diplomatic means. One of the most significant aspects of US involvement has been its military support for Ukraine. The US has supplied Ukraine with advanced weaponry, including Javelin anti-tank missiles, HIMARS rocket systems, and Patriot air defence systems, significantly enhancing its defensive and offensive capabilities. Another key aspect of the economic strategy has been reducing Europe's dependence on Russian oil and gas. The US has increased its liquefied natural gas exports to Europe and supported alternative energy sources to mitigate Russia's ability to use energy as a political weapon. Additionally, billions of dollars in direct economic aid have been provided to Ukraine to stabilize its economy and sustain its military operations. India, as a key global player, has maintained a delicate balancing act in the Russia-Ukraine war due to its historical ties with Russia and its growing partnerships with the West. Economically, India has continued its energy cooperation with Russia, increasing imports of Russian oil at discounted prices to mitigate global energy inflation. At the same time, India is expanding

its trade partnerships with Western nations to ensure diversification and avoid over-reliance on any single economic partner. In the geopolitical sphere, India has positioned itself as a neutral entity, abstaining from several UN votes condemning Russia and advocating diplomatic dialogue over sanctions. India's military procurement strategy reflects this balance, as it continues to acquire Russian military hardware such as S-400 missile systems while simultaneously strengthening defense ties with the US and France to modernise its armed forces. The broader Indo-Pacific security landscape remains a key concern for India, as it remains wary of deepening Russia-China military ties. Given China's aggressive posturing in the region, India has increased its engagement with Western powers, particularly through the QUAD alliance with the US, Japan and Australia, to counter-balance Chinese influence. Russia's military philosophy extends beyond traditional warfare, incorporating hybrid tactics that blend Eastern endurance with Western innovation. Cyber and information warfare play a significant role in Russia's strategy, heavily influenced by China's cyber tactics.

(The writer is an expert on cyber security and counter terrorism; views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### COUNSELLING CENTRES FOR COUPLES

Madam — Recently, many cases of divorce rocked the nation. The case of Atul Subhash, who ended his life, giving up due to the mental agony faced by his wife during divorce and another incident where a Karnataka woman demanded Rs 6.16 lakh per month as alimony, raised doubts among youth on the institution of marriage. To curb the rising cases of divorce, the Odisha government has come up with a welcome initiative to open a pre-marriage counselling centre in the state. CM Mohan Charan Majhi, following a proposal from National Commission for Women (NCW) Chairperson Vjaya Rahatkar, took this thoughtful initiative. With the changing times, the mindset of the young couples is changing. The word 'divorce' is becoming very common in the country these days.

In case of any conflict, be it external or internal, without giving a second thought, the married couple is straightaway heading for a divorce, just like returning a defective product to a shop. Due to a lack of guidance and understanding, some couples don't even put effort into fixing their marriage, which later leads to affairs and family disputes. This practice needs to change; this is where the pre-marriage counselling centres will help the couples. There are some conflicts that can be resolved under proper guidance and advice that the pre-marriage counsellors will provide to couples. This initiative will pave the path for young couples to take the right call at the right time without falling prey to any misjudgments and misunderstandings. The initiative from the Odisha government is a commendable approach to curb divorce cases and to ensure the mental and emotional wellbeing of married couples.

Manoj Kumar Jena | Cuttack

### IAF CHIEF CRITICISES HAL

Madam — Indian Air Force Chief Air Marshal Amar Pratap Singh has said his confidence in defence PSU Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) continues to

## Supreme Court slams freebies



Recently, during the hearing of a PIL seeking shelter for the homeless in Delhi, the Supreme Court's bench deprecated the distribution of freebies ahead of elections and remarked that it would be better if the homeless were sought to be integrated into mainstream society so that they could contribute to the nation. The order has been passed in the backdrop of a chart handed over in the court by a petitioner in person, which showed the statewide position with regard to the number of homeless persons, the

number of shelters available, and the number of persons who could be accommodated in the said shelters. The Supreme Court expressed concern over political parties promising freebies and asking whether it was not "creating a class of parasites" instead of bringing people into the mainstream workforce who could contribute towards the nation's development.

The bench has also remarked that people are not willing to work due to the lure of cash transfer schemes like "Ladkhi Behin" and free rations. Shooting down his submission, Justice B R Gavai recounted his personal experience of how agriculturists in Maharashtra were not getting labourers as they were getting things free at home. SC's strong observation comes at a time when political parties go all out to woo voters by promising freebies like free electricity and water with little concern for state finance.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

### INVEST IN AI

Madam — The Chinese DeepSeek has motivated the major countries including India seeking deep into the Artificial Intelligence pursuit. China surprised the world with its latest AI application but it is the hard work of their government, fund managers, institutions, regulatory authorities for two decades with the investment of billions of US Dollars. The global cooperation in developing the latest AI technology to excel ahead of DeepSeek is welcome. Our 23 IITs and 26 IIITs, IISc have thousands of students, researchers and the most competent faculty who can synergise their efforts, resources and infrastructure to develop our own advanced AI. The Government should immediately thrust their concerted efforts with the regulatory framework, funding and infrastructural resources and pool our top and globally prestigious engineering institutions to develop our own AI at a fast pace.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## The true cost of 5G: Why prices are high now—but will not stay that way



GAURAV GANDHI

New technologies start costly but become more affordable as adoption grows. With economies of scale, 5G costs will drop, unlocking new opportunities for businesses

The 5G technology is widely recognised for its ability to deliver lower latency, faster speeds and improved connectivity, supporting a vast number of devices simultaneously. However, many consumers perceive 5G as an expensive innovation, primarily due to the high cost of chipsets, while overlooking broader cost factors. Although chipset expenses are a component, they do not represent the complete financial picture. The Cost of 5G Hardware When considering 5G, it is common to focus on the price of chips. While 4G chips are priced below \$10, 5G chips currently exceed \$100. However, focusing solely on chipset costs ignores the larger financial framework. The primary expense of 5G stems from the extensive infrastructure required to support the network. Telecom providers must invest in building new base stations, fibre-optic networks, and antennas to enable 5G connectivity. Historically, new technologies such as cloud computing and smartphones were expensive when first introduced.



However, as demand grew and adoption increased, prices gradually decreased. A similar trend is anticipated with 5G.

### The Inevitable Drop in 5G Costs

Technological progress consistently follows a pattern: initial prices are high, but they decline over time. A case in point is the smartphone market, where the average cost dropped from \$443 in 2011 to \$372 in 2013. Similarly, cloud computing services have become significantly cheaper over the past decade. The same economic principles apply to 5G. As technology advances and adoption rates increase, costs will inevitably decrease.

### Economies of Scale and Cost Reduction

One of the key drivers of cost reduction in 5G is economies

of scale. As more telecom providers, businesses and consumers adopt 5G, the cost of deployment will continue to decline. The larger the global 5G network, the more cost-effective its implementation becomes. Research by Juniper predicts that global 5G connections will surge from 5 million in 2019 to 1.5 billion by 2025. Mass production plays a crucial role in reducing costs. Increased production volumes lead to lower prices for 5G hardware, including chips, antennas, and base stations. The 5G base station market is expected to grow from \$37.44 billion in 2020 to \$132.06 billion by 2025, at a CAGR of 28.67 per cent, according to Mordor Intelligence. These massive investments will drive economies of scale, further lowering the cost of private 5G network deployment for businesses.

### Affordable 5G Handsets and Private Networks

The competition in chipset manufacturing is already pushing down 5G handset prices. As these prices drop, the overall cost of related hardware and services will follow, accelerating global 5G

adoption.

### 5G's Impact on Business

As 5G technology becomes more affordable, businesses will have greater opportunities to enhance their operations. While early adoption may come with higher costs, the long-term benefits will far outweigh these expenses. 5G's ultra-fast connectivity and real-time data transfer capabilities will drive productivity, streamline processes, and facilitate better decision-making. Furthermore, 5G can revolutionise industries by enabling advanced applications in customer service, video streaming, and mobile capabilities.

### The Future of 5G Affordability

As adoption scales up, deployment costs will decline, making 5G a more democratised technology. This affordability will allow businesses of all sizes to embrace 5G, fostering innovation in artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and beyond. The widespread availability of 5G will enable businesses to stay competitive in the digital world.

(The writer is Founder & CEO, Echelon Edge Pvt Ltd; views are personal)



A S MITTAL

## FIRST COLUMN

## INDIA'S AI DIPLOMACY

India's plan to host the fourth global AI summit in Delhi underscores its strategic push for leadership in AI innovation



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visits to Paris and Washington, where he engaged with two of the most influential leaders from the developed world, come at a crucial juncture of shifting geopolitical dynamics. The central theme of these high-level bilateral discussions revolved around advanced technology cooperation in an increasingly fragmented world. India played a significant role as the co-chair of the AI Action Summit in Paris, alongside host nation France. This marked the third global event dedicated to artificial intelligence, drawing comparisons to the Kumbh Mela of technology—bringing together policymakers, corporate leaders, experts, and world leaders.

The summit's primary focus was on leveraging the transformative potential of AI, a technology that has been likened to groundbreaking human advancements such as the invention of the wheel and the mastery of fire. Meanwhile, China introduced DeepSeek, a nimble generative AI tool, posing a serious challenge to the near-monopolistic dominance of US tech giants that have invested billions in AI research and development. Compounding the complexities of global AI governance, former US President Joe Biden, during his final week in office, passed an executive order known as the Interim Final Rule (IFR) on the Framework for Artificial Intelligence Diffusion.

This order imposed export restrictions on critical software and hardware essential for AI development, targeting nations deemed adversarial to US interests—chiefly China—but also impacting close allies



such as India. Global technology stakeholders have since urged the new US administration to maintain consistency with the previously established Regulatory Freeze Order. They have called for the suspension of the AI Diffusion Rule until further review and stakeholder consultations ensure that the regulations align with both national security and international trade interests.

Despite industry appeals, President Donald Trump has yet to overturn the executive order signed by his predecessor. However, his administration issued a fresh executive order on January 23, signalling a possible shift in approach. Within days of assuming office, President Trump reaffirmed the United States' commitment to AI leadership, stating that the country has historically been at the forefront of AI innovation due to its robust free-market economy, world-class research institutions, and entrepreneurial drive. His directive emphasized eliminating barriers that could hinder American AI progress, revoking certain existing AI policies, and reinforcing the US's global leadership in AI. He further asserted that sustaining AI dominance was vital for human advancement, economic competitiveness, and national security. India, aiming for a prominent role in global AI governance, innovation and development, has set forth an ambitious AI mission of its own.

This vision, however, is heavily reliant on high-end semiconductor chips and Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) currently controlled by US technology firms. Any restrictions on access to these critical processors could pose significant challenges to India's AI aspirations. Modi's engagements in Paris, India's announcement to host the fourth global AI summit in Delhi, and his discussions with President Trump and other world leaders signal a strategic move toward securing India's place at the forefront of global AI advancements. These diplomatic efforts mark an essential step in navigating the rapidly evolving AI landscape and ensuring India's stake in shaping the future of this transformative technology.

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

## Will 'Jan Vishwas 2.0' deliver real reform

While initiatives like upcoming Jan Vishwas 2.0 aim to ease regulatory burdens, deeper reforms are essential to cut red tape and curb the menace of bribery



Despite concerted efforts to combat corruption, red-tapism and bribery remain formidable barriers to business growth in India. The recent "India Business Corruption Survey 2024" presents a troubling picture: 66 per cent of business entities admit to paying bribes, with 54 per cent stating they were coerced to expedite government processes, obtain permits, ensure compliance, or acquire duplicate licenses. The problem is most acute in sectors governed by overreaching officials in labour, GST, income tax, pollution, provident funds, property registration, drug and health departments. The economic impact is undeniable.

A survey by EY-FICCI reveals that four out of five respondents believe corruption is a significant deterrent to foreign direct investment (FDI). This underscores the urgent need to overhaul India's compliance framework to foster a transparent, fair, and predictable regulatory environment. While the government initiated compliance reforms two years ago, progress has been sluggish.

The Jan Vishwas Act of 2023 was a step forward, decriminalising 180 provisions related to imprisonment clauses that burden businesses and entrepreneurs. However, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's 2025 budget announcement about 'Jan Vishwas 2.0' aims to further decriminalise around 100 provisions. While this is a welcome step, it barely scratches the surface—over 20,000 provisions with imprisonment clauses remain untouched.

## The Constant Flux of Compliance Rules

For Indian businesses, compliance is already a complex challenge, but its intersection with corruption makes it nearly insurmountable. Regulatory officials often wield compliance provisions as tools to extract bribes. Many businesses report that unofficial payments are still required to secure regulatory approvals, even when all necessary compliances are met. A significant flaw in the system is



FOR INDIAN BUSINESSES, COMPLIANCE IS ALREADY A COMPLEX CHALLENGE, BUT ITS INTERSECTION WITH CORRUPTION MAKES IT NEARLY INSURMOUNTABLE

the enormous subjectivity granted to inspectors, who can threaten imprisonment or factory shutdowns without accountability.

Another pressing issue is the overwhelming frequency of compliance updates, which fosters inefficiency and corruption.

Over the past year alone, there have been 9,420 compliance updates—an average of 36 daily changes. This staggering rate of change indicates either regulatory incompetence or a deliberate design to create systemic corruption pipelines. A bureaucracy that needs to update rules at such an erratic pace is either incapable of foresight or complicit in fostering an environment where bribes become inevitable.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's (FSSAI) recent directive is a promising initiative to curb this chaos. Effective this January, changes to food label regulations will be announced only once a year, offering a model for predictable regulatory changes. Similar measures should be extended across all regulatory bodies.

## Labour Laws: The Elephant in the Room

A significant portion of compliance-related imprisonment clauses stem from labour laws, which fall under the Concurrent List of the Constitution. While India has replaced 29 colonial-era labour laws with four modern labour codes, they remain in limbo, awaiting implementation. Without this critical step, the long-touted "biggest labour reforms in independent India" remain mere rhetoric. State governments must act swiftly to operationalise these reforms.

## Simplifying Business Permits: A Digital-First Approach

Establishing a factory in India

requires submitting hundreds of self-attested and notarised documents across more than 40 government departments.

This archaic system breeds corruption and inefficiency. A digital-first approach could transform the process. Imagine a scenario where entrepreneurs can apply for factory permissions using a single business identifier, granting regulators access to verified documents via an entity called Digi Locker. Such a tamper-proof, authenticated repository could cut approval times from months to days, mirroring the success of India's Digi Yatra in streamlining airport security.

## One Nation, One Business Identity

India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) has revolutionised governance, but business compliance remains fragmented. Entrepreneurs must navigate at least 23 identity numbers issued by various Union and state authorities—from PAN, GSTIN, and CIN to professional tax numbers and factory licenses. Each identifier has its lifecycle, requiring periodic renewals and payments, leading to inefficiencies and corruption. A unified One Nation, One Business Identity system could dramatically simplify compliance, reducing bureaucratic friction and the opportunities for corrupt practices.

A small budgetary allocation toward this initiative could streamline regulatory interactions, enhancing India's appeal as a business destination.

## A Global Perspective: The US Efficiency Threat

The global competition for investment and talent is intensifying. The United States is advancing governance reforms, including the proposed

Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), to make business operations seamless. If the world's largest economy (GDP: \$27 trillion) becomes even more business-friendly, why would investors choose India's \$4 trillion economy, where red tape and corruption persist? The answer is simple: they won't. As American efficiency attracts global capital, India risks losing out on both investment and entrepreneurial talent, a fundamental driver of its knowledge economy.

## The Way Forward

The time for complacency is over. What was an opportunity yesterday is now an urgent necessity. To sustain its economic momentum, India must dismantle bureaucratic hurdles, create a predictable compliance environment, and eradicate corruption. A clear, well-structured compliance framework—ushered in through Jan Vishwas 2.0—is not just about ease of doing business; it's about safeguarding India's economic future.

The government must act decisively to attract global companies and empower Indian entrepreneurs to innovate, expand, and create jobs without fear or unnecessary regulatory friction. India stands at a crossroads. Whether the High-Level Committee for Regulatory Reforms embraces a bold compliance overhaul or hesitates, the stakes are high. The choice is clear: modernise or risk being left behind in the global economic race.

(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board and Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council. Views expressed are personal)

## Making road safety a national priority: A targeted mission to save lives

To achieve meaningful change and save lives, India must move beyond symbolism and adopt a mission-driven approach, treating road safety as a national imperative

Every year, India observes Road Safety Month, during which various events and programmes are organised by the government and civil society organisations at national and regional levels. These initiatives focus on raising awareness and educating the public on ways to reduce road casualties.

While this acknowledgment is a step forward, the critical question remains—has road safety truly become a national priority? Unfortunately, our approach is often reactive, addressing the issue only after tragic accidents occur, rather than proactively implementing global best practices to prevent them.

## A Grim Reality: What the Data Reveals

Road accident statistics paint

a stark picture, suggesting that road safety is yet to be treated as a priority by Indian citizens. Road accidents are an everyday occurrence in India, and there is rarely a day when one does not hear about a fatal crash.

According to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) report for 2022, India witnessed 461,312 road crashes, resulting in 168,491 deaths and 443,366 injuries. Alarming, nearly 70 per cent of these fatalities involved young individuals—many of whom were the primary earners of their families.

While the 2023 report is yet to be released, officials have already indicated a steep rise in casualties, making Indian roads even more hazardous. The United Nations Decade of



ASHIM SANAYAL

Action for Road Safety aims to reduce road deaths by 50 per cent by 2030, and India is a signatory to this ambitious goal. However, despite past commitments, the recent MoRTH report shows an 11.9 per cent increase in accidents, with deaths rising by 9.4 per cent and injuries by 15.3 per cent compared to 2021. This translates to an average of 1,264 accidents and 462 deaths

per day, or 53 accidents and 19 deaths every hour. Achieving the 50 per cent reduction target by 2030 seems increasingly difficult unless immediate and sustained action is taken at both central and state levels.

## Strengthening Laws and Enforcement

The introduction of the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019, was a significant step toward improving road safety, imposing stricter penalties and regulations. Initially, the law was taken seriously, but its impact faded over time due to inconsistent enforcement. Socio-cultural factors often override the fear of legal consequences, making road safety a neglected concern. The reality is that road crashes are preventable, and the



term "accident" itself is misleading.

## The Urgent Need for Action

Adopting a structured and data-driven approach to road safety is imperative. Studies indicate that focusing on key risk factors—such as speeding, non-compliance with seatbelt and helmet laws, and unsafe road designs—can significantly reduce casualties.

Speeding alone contributes to approximately 73 per cent

of all road accidents in India. Scientific speed limits should be enforced on expressways, highways, urban roads and even rural areas where mobility is increasing rapidly. Non-compliance with safety measures is another major concern. In 2022, over 16,715 people lost their lives due to not wearing seatbelts, and more than 50,000 two-wheeler riders died because they were not wearing helmets. These numbers highlight the urgent need to enforce safety regulations strictly and create widespread awareness about their importance.

## Road Safety as a National Mission

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has successfully led multiple national missions, including Swachh Bharat

Abhiyan, Skill Development, Yoga for Fitness, Immunisation Programmes, and Child Health Initiatives. These programmes achieved remarkable success through targeted policies, funding and regular progress reviews.

Given the scale of road safety concerns, India must adopt a similar mission-driven approach. Declaring road safety a National Mission would ensure the allocation of dedicated budgets, the establishment of clear targets, and continuous monitoring at both central and state levels. Regular progress reviews, monthly reports, and rigorous enforcement mechanisms would motivate authorities to take proactive steps toward improving road safety.

## A Collective Commitment to

## Saving Lives

Road safety is not just about reducing casualties; it is about safeguarding the wellbeing of every citizen, strengthening the economy, and securing the future of India's youth. The financial burden of post-crash medical care, loss of productivity and emotional distress on families is immense.

As a global signatory committed to saving lives, India must take decisive steps to ensure road safety is not merely a campaign but an integral part of governance. The time to act is now—by adopting a mission-mode approach, enforcing existing laws and making road safety a top national priority, we can create safer roads for all.

(The author is COO consumer VOICE; views are personal)









## Exploring the Magic of Childhood

Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Anup Soni bring Vani Tripathi Tikoo's imagination to life, says TEAM VIVA



At the heart of every child's world lies a boundless imagination, a place where rules fade and dreams take flight. It's this magic that Vani Tripathi Tikoo's book *Kyon Nahi Ho Sakte Haathi Lal* brings to life. The launch event at the National School of Drama in New Delhi was a celebration of creativity and storytelling, filled with warmth and nostalgia.

Nawazuddin Siddiqui, reflecting on his time at NSD with Vani Tripathi Tikoo, shared how their theatre journey shaped their understanding of narrative and imagination. He highlighted the book's core message, adults should embrace a child's creativity and view the world through their eyes, full of possibility.

Anup Soni's captivating reading added to the evening's charm, drawing the audience into the whimsical story.

*Kyon Nahi Ho Sakte Haathi Lal* captures the playful spirit of childhood, offering a reminder that some of the most meaningful lessons come from the stories we tell our children.

The book is a tribute to the boundless imagination of childhood, celebrating art, creativity and the magic of storytelling. It encourages readers to embrace curiosity, cherish the joy in small moments and never lose sight of the wonder that makes childhood and every new idea, so special.

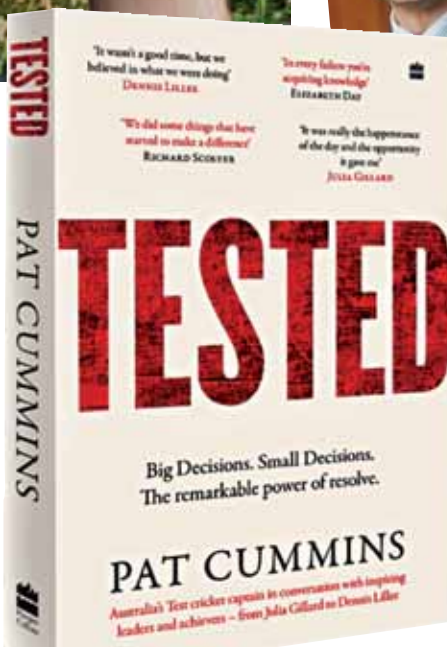


Australian cricket captain steps off the pitch into the world of storytelling with his book *Tested*, writes ABHI SINGHAL

In life, every decision, big or small, plays a role in shaping our journey. It is in the moments of choice that our true character is revealed, and our ability to navigate challenges determines our growth. Australian Test captain Pat Cummins, known for his fearless leadership on the cricket field, now brings this philosophy to the pages of his book, *Tested*. Releasing tomorrow, *Tested* is an analysis into the trials of leadership, resilience, and the defining moments that shape individuals.

Pat Cummins, widely regarded as one of the finest fast bowlers and a leader par excellence, has faced his own share of trials, both on and off the field. From injuries that threatened his career to the immense responsibility of captaining one of the most scrutinised cricket teams in the world, he has learned firsthand the value of resolve. In this book, he turns the spotlight away from himself and onto eleven extraordinary individuals who have inspired him with their ability to rise above adversity.

Through *Tested*, Cummins explores the stories of a diverse set of personalities, ranging from Australia's first female Prime Minister, Julia Gillard to a groundbreaking scientist, an indigenous leader to a cricketing legend, and more. These individuals also have one common thread, an unbreakable spirit that allows them to push through moments of doubt, seize opportunities, and create meaningful impact. Their journeys serve as powerful testaments to the idea that resilience is not just about bouncing back but about pushing forward with intent and purpose.



### ABOUT THE BOOK

Book: *Tested*  
Author: Pat Cummins  
Publisher: HarperCollins  
Price: ₹499/-

*Tested* has been divided into 11 different conversations as chapters, like Beyond all of the noise and glory of leadership is the work, which can be a harbour when you need on which is a conversation with Julia Gillard. Every inspired person has stood on the shoulders of giants which is a conversation with Richard Scolyer and many more.

### MOMENT OF CHALLENGES IN PAT'S LIFE

When Pat Cummins unexpectedly became Australia's 47th Test captain at age 28, it was the beginning of a personal leadership journey for him, a unique moment of challenge and pressure that would see him become a seasoned captain and, in his private life, become a father and husband but also lose his mother to cancer.

RELEASING TOMORROW

## Pat Cummins, Beyond the Game



### CHAPTERS IN CONVERSATION WITH



(Clockwise) Julia Gillard, Elizabeth Day, John Bertrand, Dennis Lillee, Ronnie Screwvala, Rob Sitch, Richard Scolyer and more. All the 11 invited guests or the people in conversation with Pat in the book have a story to tell about the life lived, decisions made be it big or small.

Cummins himself describes *Tested* as a deeply personal project, shaped by his own experiences of seeking guidance in moments of uncertainty.

Pat Cummins was offered the Australian captaincy shortly after his wife, Becky, gave birth to their first child, during a time when players lived under strict pandemic restrictions, resembling caged circus animals.

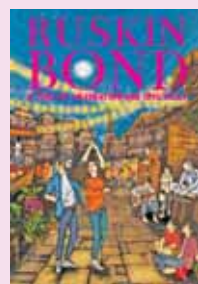
To this Pat wrote in the book, "I didn't feel prepared. I'd recently captained New South Wales in a handful of one-day matches, but before that I hadn't captained a side since I was fifteen. I hadn't even really thought that much about being the captain, even though I'd been a vice-captain for sometime. I was a bowler, after all; there hadn't been a bowler who'd captained the Test team for generations."

Talks like these have made the book interesting wanting to know more about his life both as a cricketer fan and an inspiration.

With a blend of inspiration, insight, and thought-provoking narratives, *Tested* is a master class in overcoming adversity. As it hits bookshelves tomorrow, it promises to be an essential read for anyone and everyone looking to understand the true essence of resilience and leadership.



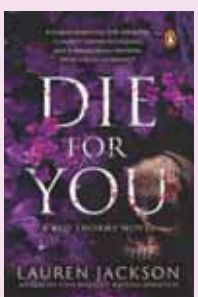
### SOULFUL READS



Book: *A Year of Celebration and Spectacle*  
Author: Ruskin Bond  
Publisher: Rupa  
Price: ₹295



Book: *Dating Dr. Dil*  
Author: Nisha Sharma  
Publisher: HarperCollins India  
Price: ₹250



Book: *Die For You*  
Author: Lauren Jackson  
Publisher: India Penguin  
Price: ₹499



Book: *Everyone Has A Story*  
Author: Savi Sharma  
Publisher: HarperCollins India  
Price: ₹499



Book: *Izmirlı, My Last Love*  
Author: Firat Sunel, Feza Howell  
Publisher: India Penguin  
Price: ₹599

NEW LAUNCH

## The Ramayana in Art



BY TEAM VIVA

*Ramayana in World Art and Thought* – An Anthology of Perspectives, edited by Padmashri Shovana Narayan, features contributions from sixteen respected writers, scholars and thought leaders, including Sharon Lowen, Lady Kishwar Desai, Amb. (Retd.) Sangeeta

Bahadur, Dr. K.K. Mishra, Dr. Abira Bhattacharya, Rear Admiral (Retd.) Dr. S. Kulshreshtha and Rana Safvi. Produced by Shubhi Publication, this coffee table book examines ethics, spirituality and morality within the Ramayana. It offers readers insightful perspectives on the epic's influence on art, culture and history across the world.

## A Call to Protect the Earth

Our Potpourri Planet' by Ranjit Lal is both a wake-up call and a guide to understanding the environmental crisis. With a blend of personal anecdotes, facts and sharp observations, Lal highlights urgent solutions ranging from lifestyle changes to policy reforms. The book also confronts our changing world: rising temperatures, melting glaciers, vanishing forests and polluted cities. Blending personal anecdotes with sharp facts, Lal highlights environmental crises and actionable solutions, criticising profit-driven policies. Engaging and hopeful, this book urges societal change, reminding us that while challenges are immense, the power to shape our future remains in our hands.



## A Story of Unseen Affection forever

"On the Banks of the Mayyazhi", A moving saga of Mahe's people under French rule, says KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Way back in the 1960s, in the neighbourhood of Kanjirakkadu where we have our house, lived a Tamil Nadu-born woman named Pappamma. She was one of the early migrants to Perumbavoor who came there as a sanitary worker. Pappamma, tall and lean with a dark complexion, spoke only Tamil and covered herself in a sari sans blouse/jacket. The sanitary workers from Tamil Nadu, numbering around a dozen, were "herded" into a colony set up by the municipal authorities. They were given small tiled houses to stay in. While mornings were peaceful, the silence gave way to a kind of cacophony in the evenings when the workers returned home fully drunk.

Pappamma was an exception and kept away from the merry-makers. She developed an instant friendship with my mother and was always ready with a helping hand, whether it was drawing water from the well or washing utensils. In return for a couple of dosa and idli, my mother would get all the local news from Pappamma. Her friendship extended to me as well, and I still remember her bringing home coconut burfi from the local bakery. She was an embodiment of love and affection and would always scold my mother whenever she thrashed me for my childhood mischief.

When a person living at the far end of the alley bought an old Ambassador car, we children were thrilled because cars were a rare sight in our area. This was the first four-wheeler to join the neighbourhood and we would gather around it, watching the driver trying to kick-start the engine. One day, Pappamma told me, "Kumar, you should buy a car of your own so that I too can travel in it." I had no reply to her comment, but it was she who instilled in me a craving for an Ambassador car, a wish that remains unfulfilled even today.



Memories of Pappamma always haunt me, as she was like a member of our family, though the residents of the locality treated her and others in the colony as "untouchables." Pappamma passed away long ago, but her descendants continue living in the same colony. Interestingly, many of them now own cars, both used and brand new.

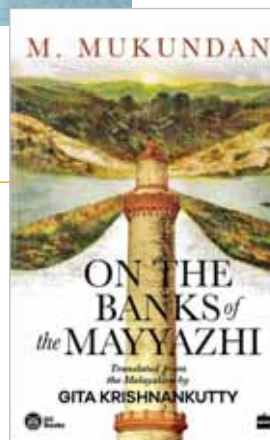
What brought Pappamma to my mind all of a sudden was the novel *On the Banks of the Mayyazhi* by M Mukundan, an avant-garde Malayalam writer. Mukundan was born in Mahe, a former French enclave in Kerala, now administered by the Union Territory of Puducherry. The novel, published in 1974, tells the story of the agitation launched by a section of people in this enclave for freedom from French rule and integration with India. However, there was an older genera-

tion in the French colony for whom Europeans remained the real masters. It was Kurambi Amma, grandmother of Dasan, the protagonist of the story, who reminded me of Pappamma.

Kurambi Amma, a staunch French loyalist, held the Sayivs (Malayalam term for Europeans) in high esteem. Leslie Sayiv, a half-French man, was an icon for Kurambi. Every evening, he would visit her for a pinch of snuff. One evening, Kurambi asked him to buy a car, one similar to that of the local French administrator. The interactions between Kurambi Amma and Leslie Sayiv, though described briefly, reveal much about the people who lived in the French colony in those days.

The story revolves around Kurambi's grandson Dasan and his love interest, Chandrika. Dasan, a revolutionary, was imprisoned by the French government for his Communist ideology. He later escaped to India and returned to Mahe after the French flag was lowered. Though the French authorities offered him the opportunity for higher education and a government job in Paris, Dasan rejected it, as he could not reconcile with the bourgeois system. This forms the core of the novel, but what makes it truly engaging is Mukundan's ability to create relatable characters. The story flows like the Mayyazhi River taking the readers along with it in its journey in search of the Arabian Sea.

*On the Banks of the Mayyazhi* placed Mukundan in the league of top writers. Gita Krishnankutty's translation of the novel is commendable. The usual hitches and awkwardness that plague translated works are absent, making this book a delight to read.



### ABOUT THE BOOK

Book: *On the Banks of the Mayyazhi*  
Author: M Mukundan  
Publisher: HarperCollins  
Price: ₹399/-

Shreyas was never supposed to be benched: Gambhir

PTI AHMEDABAD

India head coach Gautam Gambhir has rubbished speculation that Shreyas Iyer was being side-lined from the ODI set-up despite his brilliant form...

Wednesday. Iyer was preferred over Jaiswal eventually and Gambhir described him as an "important player" in the side.

"I know that you cannot judge someone (Jaiswal) by one innings. But we always knew that Shreyas was going to be an important player for us. Sometimes when you've only got three games, you want to try and rotate your squad as well," the coach reasoned.

"(And) when you have got Champions Trophy around the corner, you want to try and maximise these three games and try and give everyone an opportunity. But Shreyas was always in the scheme of things (and it is) good that he played all the three games," Gambhir added.



Bumrah, who played a decisive role in India's T20 World Cup win last year with 15 wickets including a vital spell in the final, has been ruled out of the eight-team event

which begins on February 19 owing to a nagging back problem. "Someone missing out opportunity could be a great opportunity for someone else as well, that is how sport goes.

Hopefully, these guys (Rana, Arshdeep and Mohammed Shami) can deliver and put their hand up and do the job for the team," he said. "It's a great opportunity for them

to try and deliver for the country, (it is) as simple as it can get. What we don't have, we do not have, and we are going to try and go with a very clear mind," he added.

Bumrah's replacement, Rana, has done reasonably well and was drafted into the Champions Trophy squad on Tuesday night. "I think guys have shown some really good signs. Harshit has come along really well. Arsh (Arshdeep) was really good today (Wednesday) as well. Obviously, you would always miss a bowler like Jasprit Bumrah," Gambhir said.

"But then, it is always good to have someone like Mohammed Shami back with his experience and quality." When asked if Bumrah's absence will give opposition teams any psychological advantage over India, Gambhir said, "We can't help it."

"If he's not available, he's not available. If he's injured, he's injured," Gambhir said. "Whether it's me, (or) whether it's the captain, we can't do much about it. We know that he's an important factor, but as I just mentioned, people like Harshit, Arsh (and) Mohammed Shami, all

these guys will put their hand up." Axar's elevation to No.5

Gambhir said the promotion of all-rounder Axar Patel at No 5 in the first two ODIs was largely to ensure a left-handed batter in the mix.

"That's the way cricket is meant to be played. I know a lot of people talk about it but that's the way we've got to play the game and that's the way cricket should be played," he said.

"It's not about the batting order, it's about who can create what (kind of) impact. If you have the option of putting a quality left-hander in the middle, why won't you do that? Why would you want to have top five as right-handers?" he asked. Gambhir said he the only criteria for deciding the order is the impact assessment of a player, which he believes, cannot be done purely through statistics.

"We don't look at averages and stats and all that stuff, we look at who can deliver more at that number and Axar has done fabulously well, (in) both the games he got the opportunity, (and) he delivered for us," he said. "I know there will always be people talking about it but I think that's the way we want to go in the future as well," he added.



Families not to travel with Team India for ICC Champions Trophy

PTI NEW DELHI

Families will not be accompanying the Indian cricket players heading to Dubai on February 15 for the ICC Champions Trophy (CT) as the BCCI's new travel policy comes into effect for the first time with this tournament.

BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity. "Since the tour is of less than one month, families won't be accompanying the players. But if exceptions are made, I think that individual will have to bear the full expenses as BCCI won't be covering any cost," he added.

The BCCI policy document states: "Players absent from India for more than 45 days during overseas tours can be joined by their partners and children (under 18) for one visit per series (format wise) of up to a two-week period.

"Any deviation from this policy must be pre-approved by the coach, captain and GM Operations. Additional expenses outside the visitors' period will not be covered by the BCCI."

However, families will be there with the team during the five-Test tour of England in June-July-August as the five-Test. The window for their two-week stay during the trip will be worked out later.

The new rules were drafted after India's horror tour of Australia during which the team was outplayed 1-3, leading to speculation about lack of discipline and cohesion in the dressing room.

Rules already put into effect

The senior official said that most of the rules have already been enforced by the BCCI.

"If you look at it, already no player can ask for a private vehicle to come for practice. All state units have been notified. Similarly once the players assembled in Kolkata (for the T20 series against England) and Nagpur (for the ODI series against the same side), the team has travelled together," he confirmed.

The stars have also adhered to the new regulations of playing domestic cricket when they get time off from their international assignments.

Accordingly, Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, and Shivam Dube turned up for Mumbai.

Virat Kohli played his first game for Delhi in more than 12 years amid a lot of fanfare. So did Rishabh Pant while KL Rahul represented Karnataka. Ravindra Jadeja played for Saurashtra.

Personal staff to stay at different hotel

Restrictions have also been imposed on personal staff (managers, agents, chefs), who were accompanying the team and the coaching group earlier. Accordingly, the personal secretary of a member of the coaching staff, who was regularly seen staying at the team hotel, now stays at a different facility even though he has been seen at every venue during the England home series.

RCB names Rajat Patidar as captain for IPL 2025

PTI BENGALURU

IPL franchise Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Thursday named Rajat Patidar as its captain for the upcoming season starting March 21, replacing South African Faf du Plessis who was released from the squad last year.

Patidar was among RCB's retained players before the mega auction in November, 2024 and has the experience of leading Madhya Pradesh in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (T20) and the Vijay Hazare Trophy (ODI).

The 31-year-old, who signed up with the franchise in 2022, guided Madhya Pradesh to the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy final where his side lost to Mumbai by five wickets last year.

"Rajat has the simplicity, (he) cares about the people around him, we have closely seen how he has led Madhya Pradesh, we really liked it," RCB chief coach Andy Flower said at the franchise event to announce



Patidar's elevation. The right-hander was also the second highest run-getter in the premier domestic T20 tournament, behind Ajinkya Rahane, scoring 428 from 10 matches at an average of 61 and a strike-rate of 186.08.

Patidar takes over from du Plessis, who was released after captaining the team from 2022 to 2024. The 40-year-old South African will play for Delhi Capitals this season.

Prior to the announcement on Thursday, there was some

speculation about Virat Kohli returning as captain of the franchise. Kohli was the RCB captain from 2013 to 2021 and has a fine record though he could not land them the title. The 36-year-old led RCB in 143 matches, the second longest stint as captain after the legendary Mahendra Singh Dhoni for Chennai Super Kings.

Under him, the team won 68 games, and logged 70 losses and four no-results. In 2016, Kohli had led the franchise to the IPL final, and made 973 runs, to date the highest for a batter in a single IPL season.

In IPL 2024, Kohli was the top run-getter with 741 runs at a strike-rate of 154.

The franchise conceded that Kohli's name was also discussed for the leadership role.

Bahutule appointed Rajasthan Royals spin-bowling coach

PTI JAIPUR

Former India cricketer Sairaj Bahutule was on Thursday appointed Rajasthan Royals' spin-bowling coach for the upcoming IPL season, adding to the long list of support staff led by head coach Rahul Dravid.

Bahutule, a former leg-spinner and left-hand batter, played two Tests and eight ODIs taking a total of five wickets but his exploits in first-class cricket put him in the league of domestic greats. Bahutule, 52, scored over 6,000 runs and took 630 wickets, besides 197 scalps in List A games.

"The 52-year-old returns to the Royals having been a part of the setup from 2018-21. He represented India in two Tests and eight ODIs and has since transitioned into a successful coaching career, mentoring teams such as Mumbai, Bengal, Kerala and the Indian national men's team where he has been instrumental in developing emerging talents," said Rajasthan Royals in a statement. Head coach Dravid said Bahutule would bring a wealth of experience to the side that won the inaugural edition of the IPL in 2008 under the legendary Shane Warne.

"Sairaj's deep understanding of spin bowling and his extensive coaching experience make him an invaluable addition to our team."

AFFIDAVIT

I, Khadiya Bhagat S/o Banwari Bhagat R/o Village Chipu Garh toli, P.S.-Kairo, District-Lohardaga, Jharkhand. That in my Indian army service book (15783870M) my daughter's name is written as Annaya Kumari in place of Ananya Kumari. That correct name of my daughter is Ananya Kumari. Vide affidavit CF No.75, dated-06.02.2025.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Swati Lal, W/o Sumit Kumar Lal R/o Behind Anapurna Niwas, Near Kartike Plaza, Bajla Chowk, castairs town, Deoghar, Jharkhand-814112. Before marriage my name was Swati. That after marriage with Sumit Kumar Lal, My name is Swati Lal. That Swati Lal and Swati is same and one person i.e. my self. Vide Affidavit No. 124 dated-12 February 2025.

Kane lifts Bayern to beat Celtic in Champions League playoffs

PTI MUNICH

Bayern Munich looks set to survive the new Champions League playoffs round. AC Milan joined Atalanta and Monaco losing their first-leg games Wednesday.

Bayern got high-class strikes from Michael Olise and Harry Kane either side of halftime in a 2-1 win at Scottish champion Celtic. The return game is Tuesday in Munich.

"The (Celtic) fans haven't seen many losses here, especially in Europe, so we appreciate the importance of the game and the victory," Bayern coach Vincent Kompany said. Bayern had joined Real Madrid and Manchester City

as Champions League title winners in the past five years who surprisingly found themselves in the playoffs because they finished outside the top eight in the new 36-team single standings format. Madrid won 3-2 in Manchester on Tuesday.

Feyenoord's goal in a rain-soaked 1-0 win over Milan came in the third minute and relied in France goalkeeper Mike Maignan spilling Igor Paixao's shot into the net. Feyenoord's Brazilian winger gave Milan new signing Kyle Walker a tough first game in the competition for the seven-time European champion.

It also was a quick winning start for Feyenoord's interim coach Pascal Bosschaert in his



first game after the firing Monday of Brian Priske. Benfica won 1-0 at Monaco with another goal from Vangelis Pavlidis, a delicate chip shot in the 48th. Monaco had Al Musrati sent off four minutes later.

Club Brugge scored with a disputed penalty kick in stoppage time to beat Atalanta 2-1. That was a meeting of teams that finished 24th and ninth, respectively, in the 36-team standings two weeks ago. The top eight teams in those standings advanced direct to the round of 16 in March, leaving Nos. 9 to 24 to compete this month for eight more entries in playoffs over back-to-back midweeks.

against Kasper Schmeichel, his longtime rival in Tottenham vs Leicester and England vs Denmark games. Bayern star Kane's sharp volley in the 49th, when left unmarked at the back post at a corner, was his 19th career goal past Schmeichel, more

than any other goalkeeper he has faced. It was a second impressive goal conceded by Schmeichel, who was helpless against Michael Olise's rising left-footed shot in the 45th.

On a tough evening for Celtic's all-American central defense of Cameron Carter-Vickers and Auston Trusty, the Scottish champion has more hope next Tuesday thanks to Japan forward Daizen Maeda cutting the deficit late on. "At 2-1, Bayern are hanging on," Celtic coach Brendan Rodgers said. "Let's go and have no regrets and see where it takes us. We've shown we can play football and be a threat."

Pavlidis hot streak

Benfica's Greece forward might be the most in-form striker in the Champions League. It is now six goals in the competition and five in the past three games including a hat trick against Barcelona. The 26-year-old Pavlidis latched onto a pass from the halfway line and shrugged off

defender Mohammed Salisu before neatly clipping the ball over goalkeeper Radoslaw Majecki in the 48th minute. Benfica's win was soured by another injury for veteran winger Angel Di Maria. The 2022 World Cup winner with Argentina lasted 20 minutes as a substitute before sustaining a left hamstring injury. He pulled up near the penalty area and immediately lay on the ground.