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INSIDE

MONEY 10

GOVT TO LAUNCH ANOTHER ROUND OF PLI SCHEME FOR STEEL SECTOR



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RRTS brings Meerut closer to Delhi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi takes a ride on a Namoo Bharat train during the inauguration of the 13 km stretch of the Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) corridor between Sahibabad and New Ashok Nagar PTI

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI
The BJP AAP rivalries came to fore as the Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a 13-km section of the Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) corridor from Sahibabad in Uttar Pradesh to New Ashok Nagar and the Janakpuri West-Krishna Park Extension stretch, the first section of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation's Phase-IV network to open for public. Even before the Rapid Rail Transport System could open for public, the race to grab credit started full steam. Prime Minister Modi and

former chief minister of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal took cudgels at each other to win the brownie points. In a blistering attack on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government again during a massive rally in Rohini, PM Modi made a strong appeal to people to bring the BJP to power in Delhi, as he attacked the Arvind Kejriwal-led party with "AAP-da" and "Sheesh Mahal" jibes and assured Delhiites that no welfare scheme would be discontinued if the saffron party forms the government. AAP retorted saying that AAP believed in the service of Delhi and that it had the 'aashriwaad' of Delhiites.

Addressing a rally, the prime minister called AAP's Delhi government as "AAP-da government" (disaster government) that has stalled Delhi's progress. PM Modi said the AAP-da government does not have the vision to develop the national capital and the responsibility given to AAP-da means punishment for the people of Delhi. The prime minister appealed to voters to end the AAP's misrule and give the BJP a chance to lead Delhi towards a brighter future. Modi said every season in the city has turned into a period of "emergency," with drinking water shortages in the summer, water logging

during the monsoon and pollution during the winter. Highlighting the achievements of the BJP-led central government over the past decade, PM Modi pointed to landmark initiatives that have transformed India's infrastructure, connectivity, and global standing. He cited projects like the expansion of the Delhi Metro, the Namoo Bharat Train, Bharat Mandapam, Yashobhoomi, and the National War Memorial as examples of BJP's commitment to development. "In the last 10 years, the BJP government at the Centre has doubled Delhi's metro network, built world-class infrastructure, and prioritized public welfare. These are the actions of a government focused on progress, not excuses," PM Modi said. The prime minister accused Delhi's AAP government of wasting a decade fighting with the Centre and urged its people to give the BJP an opportunity to turn the national capital into a city of the future.

PM Modi also accused the AAP government of spreading fear that a BJP government in Delhi would discontinue several welfare schemes launched by the AAP. Hours after Modi's accusation, AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal held a press conference and said the BJP is seeking votes by abusing him. Reacting to PM Modi's attack, Kejriwal said that these projects wouldn't have been inaugurated had his party not cooperated with the Centre over alleged "atrocities" against the party's leaders.

Bidhuri shoots from the hip; Cong fumes, BJP distances

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Not new to stirring a political uproar for his remarks, senior BJP leader and party's candidate from Kalkaji Ramesh Bidhuri has yet again created controversy by stating that he will develop smooth roads of his constituency if he wins like Congress Lok Sabha MP Priyanka Gandhi's 'cheeks'. "I assure you that just as we made the roads in Okhla and Sangam Vihar, we will make all the roads in Kalkaji like Priyanka Gandhi's cheeks," Bidhuri is heard saying in the purported video, which went viral on social media. This comes at a time when the Delhi assembly elections are just a few weeks away with the AAP and Congress calling the statement 'anti-women' and cornering the BJP over the issue.



Speaking to The Pioneer, Bidhuri claimed that he made the statement with no intentions to hurt anyone's sentiment and both AAP and Congress should reflect on their own behaviour towards women before pointing fingers at anyone. "When it comes to Congress, they forgot what statement



former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Yadav made on BJP MP Hema Malini. Is she not a woman? He was in their cabinet. Did they ask him to apologise? Moreover, did AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal not insult women by calling Atishi a 'temporary' Chief Minister? Does he not trust that a woman can win the

elections on her name? Their MLA Naresh Balyian has also made similar statements but they did not have any problem with it," he remarked. Reacting to the AAP and Congress making this a poll issue, he said that their situation is best explained through a phrase 'khisyaanii billii khambaa noché' (an embarrassed or ashamed person tends to vent his/her feeling by quarrelling). "They have nothing else to do so they are making this an issue. Congress is engulfed in corruption while AAP has no vision for Delhi. What will Atishi say to the public that we will improve the dilapidated state of roads in Kalkaji and Govindpuri in the next five years when they have already ruled for a decade?" he questioned.

Delhi LG relaxes job norms for 1984 riot survivors

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has approved full relaxation in required educational qualification and age relaxation up to 55 years for 88 applications for employment from victims of 1984 anti-Sikh riots. This relaxation has been approved for their appointment in Government Service to the post of Multi-Tasking Staff (MTS), a statement said. "Repeated representations had been made by the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee, public representatives and groups of victims, who had met LG recently, in this regard," the communiqué added. A Rehabilitation Package, including provision of jobs, was sanctioned by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Government of India (GoI) on January 16, 2006, for victims of 1984 anti-Sikh



Delhi Lt. Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, inaugurates 'Yamuna Vatika', in New Delhi PTI

riots. "The Revenue Department in a subsequent special drive got 72 applications out of which appointment was given to 22 applicants by obtaining age relaxation from then LG," it said. In Oct 2024, LG granted full relaxation in required educational qualification to the post of MTS for leaving out 50 applicants out of the total 72 received

during the special drive. "Revenue Department was also directed to process the cases for granting employment to one of the children of the applicants wherein applicants have surpassed the age of employment," an official from Raj Niwas stated. He added that after directions, the Revenue Department organised special camps during November 28 to 30 last year and issued notices in leading newspapers, inviting applications for employment to family members of 1984 anti-Sikh riots victims. "Subsequently, a total of 199 applications, were received, of which 89 candidates were found eligible, but all these were above the age limit and a few also missed out on the required educational qualification," it said, adding that LG's approval for relaxation will clear obstacles of 88 applicants for their appointment as MTS in Government Service.

Coast Guard chopper crashes, three dead



Rescue work underway after a helicopter of the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) crashed during landing at Porbandar airport. PTI

Coast Guard chopper crashes, three dead

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ AHMADABAD

Three crew members were killed after a helicopter of the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) crashed and caught fire at an airport on the outskirts of Gujarat's Porbandar city, police said. The incident took place at 12.10 pm when the ICG's Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH), which was returning from a routine sortie, crashed while landing on the runway of the Coast Guard airport, Porbandar Superintendent of Police Bhagirathsinh Jadeja said. The chopper crashed near the runway and caught fire. The blaze was later brought under control with the help of a fire tender, Jadeja said. The three crew members onboard were brought out of the chopper and rushed to a hospital in Porbandar in a severely burnt condition, he said. "While two of them were declared brought dead, one was alive when brought to the hospital and died later," Kamala Baug police station's inspector Rajesh Kanmiya said. Their identities were not yet known, he said. The incident comes four months after the ICG's ALH MK-III helicopter crashed into the Arabian Sea off Porbandar on September 2 last year, killing three crew members. The bodies of its pilot and a diver were recovered soon after the incident, while the body of the third crew member was found after more than a month.

Strict anti-spam norms on anvil

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

TRAI will start, this month, a pilot to onboard paper-based and past permissions given by commercial communications onto its digital distributed ledger technology (DLT) platform, a process that in the long-run would include scrubbing and verifying their current validity and offering opt-outs to those keen on it, Chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti said, adding



that tighter regulations on curbing spam as well as new consultation examining an authorisation framework for telemarketers can also be expected in coming weeks. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has also ruled out any rethink on its latest regulation that mandates service providers to

offer separate special tariff vouchers (STV) for voice calls and SMS. Lahoti told PTI in an interview that while consumers can be encouraged to use data, they cannot be "compelled" to do so. TRAI's focus is to protect not only the interest of the industry, but also the interest of the consumer, who must have the option to pay only for services they need, he said. The regulator is also all set to initiate a massive revamp of its IT system, a move, it expects, would lead to rationalisation and reduction in multiple instances of filings by telecom companies and other industry stakeholders. Deloitte which has been roped in as a consultant is on the verge of submitting its report on revamp of its IT systems. The regulator will thereafter appoint an agency for the revamp and the entire exercise will be prioritised and completed this year, Lahoti said. On TRAI's list of priorities for 2025 are recommendations on satellite communications spectrum — arguably one of the most keenly watched events in a high-stakes game involving telcos like Jio, and Airtel on one side and Elon Musk's Starlink pitted on the other. Lahoti declined to comment on the specifics or timeline for release of the recommendation except to say "all comments are being examined on their merits and we will take a balanced view".



Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

GRAP III revoked following marginal improvement in AQI

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

WEATHER

AQI	339
MAX	18.6°C(-0.7)
MIN	9.4°C(+2.5)

Delhi can now breathe a sigh of relief as the pollution levels have eased and GRAP III has been revoked from immediate effect. The restrictions on BS 3 petrol and BS 4 diesel cars were officially lifted on Sunday night. The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) for Delhi and its adjoining area has decided to revoke the Stage-III ('Severe' Air Quality) measures under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) for Delhi-NCR with immediate effect. This comes after an improvement in the Air Quality Index (AQI) levels in the region, driven by favourable meteorological conditions. The decision was taken during a meeting held on January 1, 2025, following a downward trend in the AQI levels, which had breached the 350-mark earlier, prompting the initial invocation of Stage-III actions on January 3. The CAQM has confirmed that the

actions under Stage-I and Stage-II of the revised GRAP will remain enforced. These measures will continue to be implemented, monitored, and reviewed by the relevant agencies in the entire NCR to prevent any further deterioration in air quality. In light of this improvement, the sub-committee decided to revoke the Stage-III measures, based on both the real-time AQI data and forecasts from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM). These forecasts indicated that while the AQI could remain in the "Very Poor" or "Poor" category, it was not expected to deteriorate further.

Special category visas for international students

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India has launched two special category visas for international students intending to pursue higher education in academic institutions in the country. The 'e-student visa' and 'e-student-x' visa have been introduced by the Ministry of Home Affairs and all applicants will have to use the 'Study in India' (SII) portal launched by the government, officials said. The e-student visa facility can be availed by eligible foreign students registered on the SII portal while e-student-x visa is offered to the dependents of those holding e-student visas, they said. The SII portal facilitates the admission process of international students who wish to pursue either long-term or short-term courses in India. Students will need to apply for a visa separately on the portal https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/ but the authenticity of their application will be checked by the students to apply to Indian higher educational institutions through SII website, the officials said. Students may apply for the visa after receiving an admission offer letter from any of the SII partner institutes. The e-student visa will be granted to such foreign



nationals who obtain admission to studying in India and who wish to pursue such studies, regular, full-time, courses of under graduate, post graduation, PhD and such other formal programmes at educational institutes duly recognised by the statutory and regulatory body in India, the officials said. Student visas are issued for up to five years, depending on the duration of the course. They can also be extended in India. Further, those having valid e-student visas can enter India from any desired port of immigration check post, the officials said. The SII is a flagship project of the Ministry of Education which hosts international students seeking higher education through its 600+ partner institutes offering more than 8000+ diverse courses in disciplines such as engineering & technology, management, agriculture, sciences, arts and humanities, language studies, commerce, law, paramedical sciences covering pharmacy, nursing, and select niche courses like Buddhist Studies, Yoga, etc.

Fukahori, the Nagasaki atomic bomb survivor dies at 93

PTI ■ TOKYO



Shigemi Fukahori, a survivor of the 1945 Nagasaki atomic bombing, who devoted his life to advocating for peace and campaigning against nuclear weapons, has died. He was 93. Fukahori died at a hospital in Nagasaki, south-western Japan, on January 3, the Urakami Catholic Church, where he prayed almost daily until last year, said on Sunday. Local media reported he died of old age. The church, located about 500 metres from ground zero and near the Nagasaki Peace Park, is widely seen as a symbol of hope and peace, as its bell tower and some statues and survived the nuclear bombing. Fukahori was only 14 when the US dropped the bomb on Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, killing tens of thousands of people,

including his family. That came three days after the nuclear attack on Hiroshima, which killed 140,000 people. Japan surrendered days later, ending World War II and the country's nearly half-century of aggression across Asia. Fukahori, who worked at a shipyard about 3 kilometres from where the bomb dropped, couldn't talk about what happened for years, not only because of the painful memories but also how powerless he felt then. About 15 years ago, he became more outspoken after encountering, during a visit to Spain, a man who experienced the bombing of Guernica in 1937 during the Spanish Civil War when he was also 14 years old. The shared experience helped Fukahori open up. "On the day the bomb dropped, I

heard a voice asking for help. When I walked over and held out my hand, the person's skin melted. I still remember how that felt," Fukahori told Japan's national broadcaster NHK in 2019. He often addressed students, hoping they take on what he called "the baton of peace," in reference to his advocacy. When Pope Francis visited Nagasaki in 2019, Fukahori was the one who handed him a wreath of white flowers. The following year, Fukahori represented the bomb victims at a ceremony, making his "pledge for peace," saying: "I am determined to send our message to make Nagasaki the final place where an atomic bomb is ever dropped." A wake is scheduled for Sunday, and funeral services on Monday at Urakami Church, where his daughter will represent the family.

Bangladesh cancels training of judges in India

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh's interim government on Sunday cancelled a planned training programme for 50 judges and judicial officers in India, scrapping a previous notification. "The notification has been cancelled," a law ministry spokesman said without elaborating. The Daily Star newspaper, however, reported the cancellation came in compliance with a directive from Bangladesh's Supreme Court. The cancellation order came a day after the state-run Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha reported that 50 lower judiciary judges would



undergo a one-day training programme from February 10 at the National Judicial Academy and the State Judicial Academy in Madhya Pradesh. The trainee judges selected under the programme were district and sessions judge or its equivalent officers, additional district and sessions judge, joint district judge, senior assistant judge and assistant judge. The Indian government was supposed to bear all the

expenses for the training programmes. India and Bangladesh have witnessed strained ties since the deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled to New Delhi on August 5 last year following a massive student-led protest that toppled her Awami League's 16-year regime. There have been a series of attacks on Hindu community members and their places of worship after the interim government headed by Muhammad Yunus came to power on August 8. New Delhi has already raised concern with Dhaka, especially after a Hindu monk was arrested in a sedition case and put in jail after he was denied bail last month.

CM Rise School in Badnagar to be named after Atal Ji: CM

PNS ■ UJJAIN

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav announced that the newly developed and dedicated CM Rise School in Badnagar will be named after Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee, as a tribute to the former Prime Minister who received his early education at this very institution.

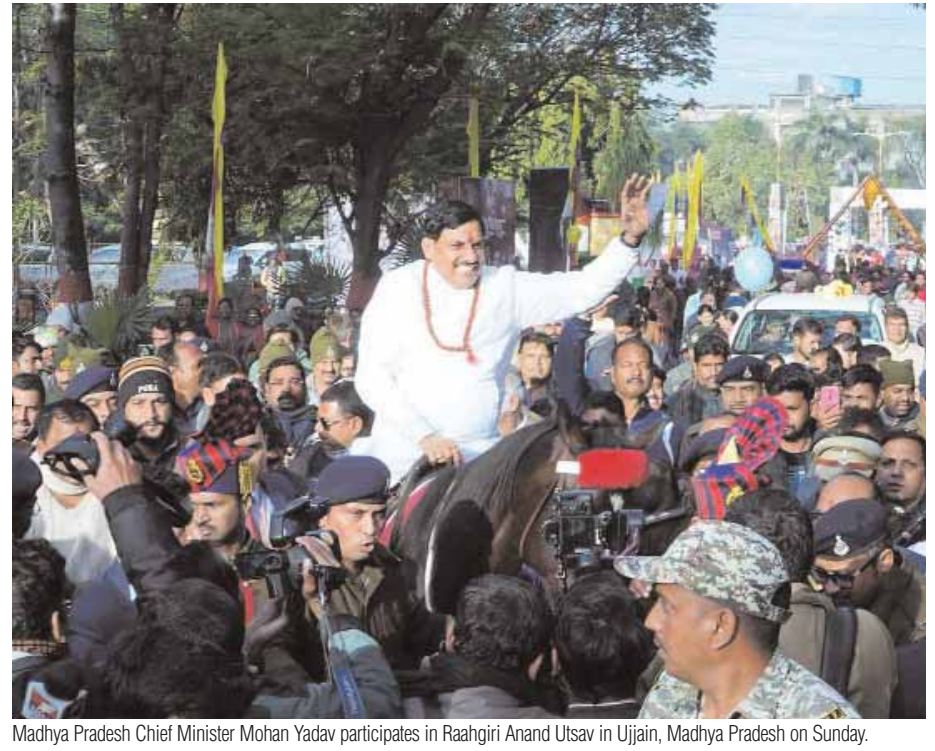
Speaking at the dedication ceremony of the school building, constructed at a cost of over Rs 40 crore in Badnagar, Ujjain district, on Sunday, Yadav highlighted the importance of honoring public sentiments when naming villages and cities. He said that Gajnikhedhi Panchayat will now be renamed Chamunda Mata, Jahangirpur will be known as Jagdishpur, and Maulana village will be renamed as Vikram Nagar. He emphasized that these changes, reflect the government's commitment to preserving cultural heritage and aligning with public sentiment.

Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and New and Renewable Energy Shri Prahlad Joshi was specially present in the dedication programme. Yadav performed Bhoomi Pujan of the new construction works done at a cost of Rs 466.27 lakh in Krishi Upaj Mandi Complex Badnagar and also dedicated 7 newly constructed sub health centres at a cost of Rs 343.80 lakh in Badnagar Assembly constituency.

Yadav dedicated the CM Rise School and inspected the newly constructed building and appreciated the construction work. He also congratulated the people of Badnagar for this new achievement in the New Year. Yadav said that investment proposals worth Rs 4 lakh crore have been obtained for industrialization in the state in the year 2024. This will provide employment to more than 3 lakh people. With the efforts of industrialization, a factory will be set up by a big industrial group in Badnagar at a cost of Rs 3500 crore. He said that a food processing unit will also be established in Badnagar soon. The Chief Minister said that the Bhoomi Pujan of Parvati-Kalisindh-Chambal river linking project has been performed. Its direct benefit will be available to 13 districts of the state. On completion of this project, the fields of Badnagar area will also be lush with crops for all the twelve months. To utilize the talent of the youth of the state in the state itself, we will recruit more than one lakh youth in government service and a campaign is being run for this.

The Chief Minister highlighted the rapid transformation in the state's education sector, emphasizing the government's commitment to revolutionary reforms. He stated that the goal is to provide children in Madhya Pradesh with education of national and international standards, equipping them to effectively face future challenges. CM Rise Schools are emerging as a significant milestone in achieving this vision. Dr. Yadav underscored that shaping the future of children is the government's top priority. He assured that no child would be deprived of school education due to a lack of resources, and efforts are underway to prepare students for future demands. The state is progressing toward modernizing all schools, aiming to bridge the gap between private and government schools by enhancing resources and providing quality education in CM Rise Schools. Additionally, the Chief Minister expressed his resolve to curb the growing preference for private schools by offering superior education in government institutions. He also announced the construction of Gita Bhawans across the state to instill moral values in children, emphasizing the importance of holistic development alongside academic.

Yadav said that places like Ujjain Sandipani Ashram, Janapav, Amjhera etc. of the state related to the Leelas of Lord Krishna are being made pilgrimage areas.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav participates in Raahgiri Anand Utsav in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh on Sunday.

PIMR Indore leads fight against digital scams

PNS ■ INDORE

As cyber criminals exploit technology to unprecedented levels, India faces a digital epidemic with over Rs 11,000 crore lost to online scams in the first half of 2024 alone. Alarmed by the soaring figures and the growing threat of "digital arrest" frauds, the Women Empowerment Cell of the Prestige Institute of Management and Research (Bhumika) took proactive steps by organizing an awareness session to educate students and the public on staying safe in the digital world.

Addressing the packed session, Additional DCP (Crime), Indore, Rajesh Dandotiya, painted a grim picture of India's cyber-crime landscape. "Every five minutes, a cybercrime is reported in the country. Unfortunately, many victims, including highly educated professionals, hesitate to lodge complaints, fearing public shame. This lack of action only emboldens fraudsters, leaving hundreds of cases and crores of rupees unreported," he said.

Dandotiya urged immediate reporting of incidents to help authorities freeze fraudulent accounts and recover funds. He also cautioned against common traps like responding to unknown calls or clicking suspicious links, while sharing practical safety tips to protect against digital frauds.

The session brought attention to the rise of AI-powered scams, which have shaken public trust and dealt severe financial blows.

According to the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), Indians lose an average of ₹60 crore daily to cyber frauds, with Rs 120.3 crore lost to "digital arrest" scams alone. Over 6,000 complaints are filed daily on the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal, but experts believe many more crimes remain unreported.

Earlier, PIMR Group Director, SS Bhakar, lauded the Women Empowerment Cell for its initiative, calling it a crucial step in creating digital awareness among students and faculty. "Cyber frauds are not just financial crimes; they erode trust in technology and institutions. Sessions like these are vital for empowering individuals to navigate the digital age safely," he said.

We will be Vishwa Guru again following Gurukul tradition: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has said that only the Guru takes us from darkness to light. The Guru identifies the infinite potential inherent in his student and nurtures his character during education. Our ancient Gurukul tradition is still relevant today. Today, many developed countries are adopting our old Gurukul tradition and educating their children. We too will have to reconnect with the same Gurukul tradition, only then will our country be able to become a world leader again. We are moving towards the holistic development of students in the state by imparting life and moral values and practical education to them inside and outside the class. By radically improving educational quality, we will make the state a model education state of the country. Teachers have a crucial role to play in this.

Yadav was addressing the selected teachers departing to Singapore for an international educational tour under the STARS project on Sunday connecting virtually, from Ujjain. He said that teachers are always respectable to us, and we will make maximum use of their infinite capabilities and long experiences in the educational development and expansion of the state in creating a Vikasit Bharat and a Vikasit Madhya Pradesh. Yadav said that our history has been rich in the educational scenario. Nalanda, Takshashila, Vikramshila universities, and many other world-renowned educational institutions including Ujjain's Sandipani Ashram did the nation a favour by providing high-quality education in those times. At that time, the Gurus had a vision to recognize the art skill and aptitude of their students, this was the reason that Lord Shri Ram-Lakshman and Shri Krishna also took education from their Gurus.

The Chief Minister said that we want to develop the same vision of the Guru in today's teachers as well. The teachers selected for the Singapore tour should understand this opportunity well, learn new techniques of teaching and on returning, provide the benefit of those techniques to the students of the state, so that they stand out in their academic performance and character.

He said that the selected teachers should learn the benefits of conducting foreign studies, as well as share their country's goodness with the world so that various educational cultures and innovations can also be exchanged. Yadav said that the identity of the country and the state will be established in the world only with the active participation of teachers. He encouraged and wished all the teachers of the state selected for the international educational tour (to Singapore) for a successful and pleasant educational tour. School Education Minister Uday Pratap Singh flagged off the teachers' foreign tour team bus from the Subhash School of Excellence Bhopal campus.

School Education Minister Singh said on this occasion that our government has made many innovations for the educational development

of the state. We are making efforts with great sensitivity to improve the quality of education. Teachers are the pivot of our education system. It is their teaching skills and behaviour that inspire society. All the teachers selected for foreign study will become master trainers of our state. We will utilize their expertise and characteristics in developing the educational scenario of the state. He told the selected teachers and officials to take full advantage of this historic opportunity.

Try to learn more in less time, because the future of the students of the state is in the hands of the teachers. Whatever new techniques, and new skills the teachers learn, we will ensure that the students get maximum benefit from them.



Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board launches a third edition of the adventurous biking event 'Riders in the Wild' to promote adventure tourism, at Wind and Waves at Boat Club in Bhopal on Sunday.

Bhopal's sanitation effort continues to bite the dust

ANKUSH SINGH ■ BHOPAL

Often compared with a scintillating sanitation performance by neighbouring Indore—the cleanest city in the country, Bhopal's municipal efforts are proving inadequate against persisting sanitation issues, irregular waste collection, and a lack of civic responsibility.

Indore, the financial nerve centre of Madhya Pradesh, has been adjudged the cleanest city in the country during six consecutive national sanitation surveys of the Swachh Bharat Mission between 2017-2023. While a call to any landline number in Indore is met with exhortations for better sanitation in the city, the municipal body in Bhopal is still struggling to rid the city of Garbage Vulnerable (GV) points.

Mohammad Sohail says that his 2,000-odd square feet residential plot in the Kaziq Camp area of the old city is one such spot. He says that repeated requests have failed to stop neighbours from dumping waste at the site where he plans to build his family home.

"The sleep-wake pattern is responsible. By the time people in the neighbourhood wake up, the municipal waste collection activity is already over, and people simply dump waste at any convenient location," says Sohail. Rekha Sahu, a resident of Shiv Nagar at Karond, links the irregular waste collection in her area to the problem. "Collection vehicles do not come regularly. Residents face a lot of difficulty in disposing of garbage," she laments.

"This forces residents in her neighbourhood to seek alternative methods of disposing of waste, which can lead to very unhygienic conditions," she adds.

Aadil Khan, a resident of Khanogaon, echoes similar concerns, saying, "People dump waste by the roadsides and at any open space." "Such practices not only create an eyesore but also pose health and environmental hazards," says Khan, whose neighbourhood stands on the banks of the Upper Lake. Sachin, a resident, states that the whole process of waste disposal is not efficient. "Mounds of waste from drains are left for days before being removed."

With citizens blaming the BMC for continuing unhygienic practices in the city, Anil Barthe—a sanitation worker at the civic body—complains about the lack of civic sense that prevails in several localities. "Despite constant counselling, instructions, and even spot fines, people continue to throw both wet and dry wastes inside the garbage vehicle. Although we clean

neighbourhoods thoroughly, waste just piles up within hours." "We continue to clean up as it is our job, but support from residents is crucial for changes in the sanitation scene," he reminds.

Assistant Health Officer at BMC's Zone 19, Ramakant Yadav, says that problems persist despite the municipal body's move to impose spot fines on those refusing to adhere to sanitation guidelines. He says the sanitation challenge continues to remain tough mainly because residents in the city simply refuse to act responsibly.

While there is no denying the robust BMC impetus on the sanitation front, ground realities in several middle-class localities in the city suggest that it may be a while before Bhopal overcomes Indore to emerge as the cleanest city in the state, and the country.

Cash, jewelry worth Rs 20 lakh stolen from Inspector's residence

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Thieves broke into the house of a Radio Branch Inspector in Danish Hills View Colony, Bhopal, and escaped with gold and silver jewelry worth ₹20 lakh and ₹20,000 in cash. The incident occurred while the family was away at their government accommodation in Radio Colony, Bhabhadra, since December 31. The theft came to light when Inspector Narottam Chauhan and his family returned home on Saturday night. They discovered the main gate lock broken and the cupboard inside ransacked.

The locker was forced open, and valuable items, including several necklaces and a jewelry box, were missing. Some discarded boxes and polythene bags were found scattered inside the house.

Inspector Chauhan's family immediately alerted the Kolar police, who registered an FIR around 11:30 p.m. Forensic experts inspected the crime scene, and an investigation was launched. The house, located in Danish Hills View Colony, is part of a posh residential area in Bhopal that becomes largely deserted after evening, making it an easy target for burglars.

Despite the high-profile location, which includes the personal residence of BJP state president VD Sharma nearby, no CCTV footage of the crime scene has been recovered so far.

Police suspect the theft took place over four days while the family was away. They are now reviewing CCTV footage from nearby cameras to trace any movements of the suspects during this period.

Additional DCP Malkit Singh stated that efforts are underway to identify and apprehend the thieves. The police, in collaboration with the crime branch, are analyzing evidence and scanning CCTV footage from the vicinity. Singh expressed confidence that the culprits would soon be tracked down and brought to justice.

The incident has raised concerns about the safety of even the most secure neighborhoods in Bhopal. Authorities are urging residents to take extra precautions, especially during extended absences, to avoid similar incidents.

200 gms of Hashish seized from miscreant

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Shahjehanabad police have nabbed a drug peddler who was trying to sell Hashish was arrested. Total 200 grams of contraband worth Rs 2,000.00 was recovered from the accused.

Police said that taking action on a tip off the accused Devendra Sen (19) Ratna Colony, Nishatpura was nabbed and hashish was found in his possession in a plastic foil. When frisking properly a sharp knife was recovered from the waist of the accused.

On weighing the hashish found in the possession of the accused the weight of the hashish was found to be 200 grams.

The accused was arrested from the spot and a case was registered against the accused in Shahjehanabad police station, Bhopal under section 8 and 20 NDPS Act 25 Arms Act and investigation was started. Detailed inquiry is being conducted with the accused regarding the hashish and knife found in his possession.

AIIMS Bhopal performs surgery to remove rare adrenal tumor

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

AIIMS Bhopal has successfully conducted a rare and challenging surgery to remove a large adrenal tumor, known as a pheochromocytoma, from a 27-year-old male patient. The tumor, which was located behind two major blood vessels in the body - the inferior vena cava (IVC) and the aorta - made the surgery exceptionally complex.

These vessels are responsible for carrying large amounts of blood to and from the heart, making their location and involvement extremely delicate. Pheochromocytomas are rare tumors that form in the adrenal glands, small organs located above the kidneys.

These tumors can produce excess hormones, leading to severe symptoms such as very high blood pressure, palpitations, and sudden headaches. If untreated, such tumors can be life-threatening. In this case, the tumor was unusually large and located deep in the body, pushing against vital structures. During the operation, the medical team had to carefully navigate around the IVC and aorta to avoid damaging these vital blood vessels.

Another major challenge was managing the dramatic fluctuations in blood pressure caused by the tumor itself. Pheochromocytomas release large amounts of adrenaline-like hormones, which can cause the patient's blood pressure to rise dangerously during surgery. After removal, blood pressure often drops suddenly, requiring careful monitoring.

AIIMS Bhopal ED Prof. Ajai Singh praised the surgical team for their outstanding expertise and collaborative efforts in handling such a rare and complex case. He said, "This surgery reflects the exceptional medical expertise and teamwork at AIIMS Bhopal. Successfully managing such a rare and challenging case strengthens our commitment to providing advanced healthcare services to the community."

The surgery was performed by a multidisciplinary medical team, including Urology Surgeons Dr. Devashish Kaushal, Dr. Kumar Madhvan, Dr. Ketan Mehra and Dr. Nikita Shrivastava the CTVS team comprising Dr. Yogesh Niwariya and Dr. Vikram Watti, the Anesthesia team led by Dr. Vaishali, and nursing staff Priyadarshini and Uroj. The patient is now recovering well under the supervision of the medical team.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy Prahlad Joshi greet newly wedded couple during the marriage ceremony of the son of Karnataka Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot in Nagda, Ujjain district Madhya Pradesh on Sunday.

Chief Minister attends wedding ceremony at Nagda

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Sunday attended the wedding ceremony of Sushri Kriti with Shri Naveen Narendra Gehlot, grandson of Karnataka Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot, at Rangoli Garden in Nagda. CM Dr. Yadav wished the newlyweds a happy, prosperous and blissful married life.

On reaching the wedding venue, Governor of Karnataka Thawar Chand Gehlot and family members welcomed Chief Minister Dr. Yadav by presenting a flower bouquet. CM Yadav blessed the newlyweds and groom and bride and gifted them holy copies of Shrimad Bhagvad Gita as a souvenir.

On this occasion, Union Minister Prahlad Joshi, MP Anil Ferozia, MLA Nagda Tej Bahadur Singh, MLA Shajapur Arun Bhimawad, former MLA Jitendra Gehlot, Chairperson of Municipal Corporation Nagda Santosh OP Gehlot, former MLA Dilip Singh Shekhawat, former member of Zila Panchayat Neemuch Ashok Khinchi, Sultan Singh Shekhawat, along with public representatives and officers, employees were present.

68 detained in raids on Spa centres over immoral activities

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In a significant operation, the Crime Branch of Bhopal Police detained 68 individuals from 15 spa centers across the state capital on Saturday night. The raids revealed that several establishments were allegedly operating under police protection and were involved in immoral activities. However, all detainees were released after being served notices.

The coordinated action involved 10 police teams targeting spa centers in various areas of the city. Among the 15 establishments inspected, four were found hosting unlawful activities, while 11 were closed at the time of the raid. The detained individuals included 35 women and 33 men, with three women identified as being from Nepal.

A particular focus of the operation was the Green Valley Spa in the Baghsevania area, where 22 women and 18 men were apprehended, marking the largest action of the night. Investigations revealed that most of the women detained were locals, while others hailed from outside the city. Police are scrutinizing the backgrounds of all involved.

The raids also exposed a concerning connection to law enforcement. A constable allegedly provided protection to the Green Valley Spa. Investigators are now analyzing the call detail records (CDRs) of both the constable and the spa's operator, a woman, to establish the extent of their involvement.

Following the raid, the Crime Branch handed over the accused to the respective police

stations, including MP Nagar, Kamla Nagar, and Baghsevania. The role of two policemen associated with the operations of the spa centers is under suspicion, with their CDRs also under scrutiny.

The raids targeted approximately 10 spa centers, uncovering five locations where sex rackets were being run under the guise of wellness services. However, operators at some establishments fled upon learning about the raids, evading immediate action. Police also visited a mall in the Misrod area, but all spa centers there were found closed.

Objectionable materials were recovered during the operation, particularly from the Mikasho Family Spa and Panchkarma Center in MP Nagar. Evidence suggests that these establishments operated an organized

system where customers selected profiles of women shared via WhatsApp or other social media platforms. Profiles were reportedly sent to customers by brokers, and appointments were scheduled online. Customers were charged substantial amounts, with the revenue distributed between spa operators, brokers, and the women involved.

The detained women included individuals from diverse backgrounds, and authorities suspect some might be students. Police are working to verify their identities and addresses to uncover further details. ACP Mukhtar Qureshi revealed that 41 spa centers have been identified in Bhopal, with reports of immoral activities being carried out in several of them. He assured that the Crime Branch would continue

to take action against establishments engaging in such illegal practices.

The operation has highlighted the deep-rooted issues within the city's spa industry, including the involvement of law enforcement officials. The Green Valley Spa in Baghsevania, in particular, has come under scrutiny for allegedly being operated under police protection. Investigations are ongoing to determine the extent of the alleged complicity and to hold those responsible accountable.

This crackdown underscores the commitment of law enforcement agencies to address illegal activities disguised as legitimate businesses. Authorities have vowed to continue monitoring and acting against such establishments to uphold the law and protect public welfare.



Congress party activists stage a protest against former Minister of Transport and present Minister for Food and Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Govind Singh Rajput for allegedly having links with former RTO constable Saurabh Sharma demanding CBI investigation and resignation of the minister, in Bhopal on Sunday. Madhya Pradesh Lokayukta police recovered assets worth Rupees 7.98 crores from the residence of former RTO constable Saurabh Sharma during a raid recently.



A scene from the play 'Godan' staged at Shaheed Bhawan in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

New Year celebration at old age home

PNS ■ INDORE

In a heartwarming gesture to welcome the New Year, the Cultural Club of Medi-Caps University organized a vibrant outreach program at the Gold Coin Sev Trust Old Age Home. The initiative brought smiles, laughter, and festive joy to the elderly residents, reaffirming the club's commitment to community welfare.

The event was filled with lively and soulful performances by the students, including mesmerizing musical renditions and high-energy dance sequences that captivated the audience. The residents, many of whom often spend their days in solitude, were thrilled to experience the exuberance and creativity of the young performers.

To make the celebration more interactive, the students conducted a series of engaging games, ensuring everyone's participation. The air was filled with excitement as residents enthusiastically joined in, showcasing their competitive spirit and enthusiasm. Winners of the games were honored with thoughtful gifts, adding a personal touch to the celebrations.

The program concluded with the distribution of sweets and fresh fruits to all residents, symbolizing the spirit of sharing and care that marked the occasion. The students' warm interactions and thoughtful gestures left a lasting impression on the elderly, who expressed their heartfelt gratitude for the memorable New Year celebration.

Madhya Pradesh has the potential to become the dairy capital of the country: Chief Minister

PNS ■ UJJAIN

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has said that in the current scenario, India is one of the youngest countries. In line with the vision of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, we have to make full use of youth power in national interest and development. Dairy technology opens a new avenue for the youth.

Academic degree course of Dairy Technology is being started in Vikram University, Ujjain, the place of education of Lord Krishna. Degree course in animal husbandry will now be provided to students in Ujjain along with Jabalpur. In future, this course will also be provided in other universities as per the National Education Policy 2020. CM Dr. Yadav was addressing the seminar organised by the Animal Husbandry Department and Vikram University on Sunday in the Golden Jubilee Auditorium of Vikram University Ujjain.

Chief Minister Yadav said that the skilled youth trained in dairy technology will take Madhya Pradesh to the top position in milk production with their strong will and hard work using dairy technology. India is the world's largest milk producer and Madhya Pradesh ranks third in the country with a 9% share in milk production. The average milk production in the state is 673 grams, while the national average is 471 grams. We should not be satisfied with these achievements.

Considering the geographical location of the state, immense water resources and fertile land, we will make it the number-1 state in the country in the field



of dairy by through integrated efforts in the right direction. Yadav said that to make the state the dairy capital of the country, the government will also provide bonus to the cattle farmers on the basis of per liter purchase of milk. Along with this, the government is actively working to ensure that sufficient food is available for livestock. For this, new irrigation areas will be expanded. The Malwa region is also rich in agriculture and will now become rich in animal husbandry as well.

The welcome speech was given by Divisional Commissioner and Ujjain Milk Union Administrator Sanjay Gupta. He thanked Chief Minister Dr. Yadav for the benefits of agriculture and animal husbandry through Parvati-Kalisindh-Chambal river link project and Ken-Betwa river link projects. The Registrar proposed the vote of thanks in the programme. The programme began with

Change of Name	
My old name was JAIPAL.	
Written in my old Passport. I have Added surname with my name. Now I will be known as JAIPAL ROCHANI S/O NARUMAL. Resident H. No. 50, old Sindhi Colony, Berasia road Bhopal 462001 (M.P.)	

Traffic advisory for low visibility

Bhopal: With a dense fog cover enveloping the city several times over the last two weeks, the traffic police issued an advisory on Sunday for those driving in low visibility conditions.

Exhorting drivers to take necessary precautions, the traffic police advised motorists to ensure that their vehicles are equipped with fog lamps to enhance visibility around the vehicle.

Drivers were also advised to maintain an average speed of 30-40 km/h, as roads may be slippery during such weather.

Avoid overtaking unless necessary, and always maintain a safe braking distance from the vehicle ahead, especially when travelling at lower speeds.

Keep headlights on low beam and ensure that parking lights, fog lights, and indicators are switched on. This prevents glare from high beams, which may disrupt visibility for others.

Maintain a safe distance from the vehicle in front of you. At 30 km/h, leave at least 10 feet of space, and increase this distance if your speed rises, ensuring enough reaction time in emergencies. Turn on wipers and the vehicle's heater to prevent fogging on the windshield. Full attention should be given to the road, avoiding distractions such as using mobile phones or listening to music.

The installation of rear fog lamps is recommended to ensure that the vehicle is visible to traffic behind. The traffic police further advised motorists to avoid overtaking in foggy conditions and to refrain from changing lanes unless absolutely necessary.

The advisory stated that following these steps would help commuters reach their destinations safely and also help other motorists on the road remain secure.

Health programmes reviewed

Bhopal: A meeting was held at the Sanjeevani Polyclinic, Kamla Nagar, to review the health programmes and schemes operating in urban areas of the state capital. Medical officers and management staff from urban primary health centres and Sanjeevani clinics attended the meeting.

The review focused on the work completed up to December in the current financial year and discussed strategies for the next three months to meet the set targets.

Chief Medical and Health Officer (CMHO), Dr Prabhakar Tiwari, told health workers to ensure that welfare initiatives reach all eligible individuals during the Jan Kalyan campaign. He advised field workers to contact households directly to reach those eligible for welfare benefits.

Urdu Fest revolves around syncretic traditions

Bhopal: The second day of the Jashn-e-Urdu festival at the historic Gauhar Mahal celebrated Urdu literature and syncretic traditions through discussions, poetry, and an electrifying Qawwali performance on Sunday.

The event began with renowned speakers discussing the importance of unity and brotherhood in society.

The Director of the Madhya Pradesh Urdu Academy, Nusrat Mehdi, opened the session by stressing that the annual Urdu festival is not merely a celebration but a reminder of the values, culture, and traditions that define us as a nation.

She emphasized how literature, particularly Urdu, has been a powerful medium for promoting the philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is one family). Ali Abbas Ummid from Bhopal and Ishrat

Nahed from Lucknow spoke about the route Urdu literature adopts to carry forward a universal message of peace and humanity.

The event continued with a regional Mushaira, where poets from various regions presented their works. Poets like Shan Fakhri, Aziz Ansari, and Majaz Ashna captivated the audience with their expressive poetry on love, life, and human connection.

The evening saw a musical gathering featuring ghazals by Salim Allah Wale, followed by a mesmerizing Qawwali performance by Aftab Qadri from Indore. The rendition left the audience spellbound. The day concluded with expressions of gratitude from Mumtaz Khan, reflecting on the success of the event that beautifully combined literature, music, and the celebration of cultural heritage.

Thyrocare diagnostic chain has 100% of its labs with NABL accreditation

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Thyrocare, a leading diagnostic and preventive healthcare service provider in India, has set a historic benchmark by becoming the first national diagnostic chain in India to secure 100% NABL (National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories - the most renowned accreditation body in India today) accreditation across all its 29 laboratories.

The recognition highlights Thyrocare's commitment to ensure quality and reliability in diagnostics. The recognition was celebrated at a special event where NABL dignitaries felicitated Thyrocare's team.

The NABL dignitaries visited our national reference laboratory in Navi Mumbai and appreciated the lab infrastructure, analyzers, various types of technologies and diverse test menu.

Pankaj Johri, Director at NABL, lauded Thyrocare for this extraordinary accomplishment and congratulated Mr Rahul Guha (MD & CEO, Thyrocare) and Dr Preet Kaur (Vice President of Operations and Quality, Thyrocare) and team on this magnificent achievement.

Chakravarthy T. Kannan, Secretary General, Quality Council of India (QCI) appreciated this milestone of Thyrocare, saying "Viksit Bharat 2047 was launched by PM Mr Narendra Modi.



Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangubhai Patel presented a memento on the last day of Bhopal Utsav Mela 2024-25 at TT Nagar Dussehra ground in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

CM at Raahgiri

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav attended the Raahgiri Anand Utsav on Kothi Road during his stay in Ujjain on Sunday, he advised the citizens to do regular yoga and exercise.

CM Yadav inaugurated the Raahgiri Anand Utsav by lighting the lamp and enjoyed the performances of the cultural troupes. On this occasion, the CM also recited the bhajan 'Ganga Tera Pani Amrit, Maa Kshipra Tera Pani Amrit' from the stage. MP Anil Ferozia, MLA Anil Jain Kaluheda, Mayor Mukesh Tatwal, Municipal Corporation Chairperson Smt. Kalavati Yadav, Shri Vivek Joshi, Bahadur Singh Bor Mundla were also present along with public representatives and citizens.

Severe cold wave conditions to grip Madhya Pradesh from January 7

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh is bracing for another intense cold wave starting January 7, with temperatures expected to dip by 2-3 degrees Celsius. Dense fog was already reported in regions like Ujjain and the Gwalior-Chambal belt, signaling the onset of freezing conditions. Meteorological experts attribute this upcoming cold spell to an active Western Disturbance that will bring icy winds to the state.

According to Meteorologist V.S. Yadav, the impact of this weather system, currently active in the northwestern region, will intensify over the next 48 hours. The cold

winds are expected to gain speed, causing a noticeable drop in both daytime and nighttime temperatures. In addition to the chill, there is a possibility of light rain around January 10 due to the Western Disturbance.

The effects of the cold are already being felt in many parts of the state. In Chhindwara, dew drops were found frozen on leaves, and the minimum temperature dropped to 4.8 degrees Celsius. A striking orange and red sky was observed in Sehore, adding to the unusual weather phenomena. Fog enveloped cities like Chhatrapur, where visibility remained low until 8:30 am, with temperatures hovering around 12 degrees Celsius. Cloudy conditions persisted

in Khargone, where temperatures slightly increased by 0.5 degrees over the past 24 hours. In Raissen, after two days of sunshine, dense clouds covered the sky from Sunday morning.

The cold is a result of icy winds traveling from the northern regions due to heavy snowfall in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Ladakh. Jet streams at an altitude of 12.6 km were recorded at a speed of 240 km/h, intensifying the cold across the state. With melting snow in the northern regions, wind speed is expected to increase further, exacerbating the cold wave in Madhya Pradesh.

The Meteorological Department has issued a fog alert for multiple districts,

including Gwalior, Neemuch, Mandsaur, Sheopur, Morena, Bhind, Datia, Shivpuri, Guna, Ashoknagar, Niwari, Tikamgarh, Chhatarpur, Satna, Sidhi, Mauganj, Singrauli, Maihar, Umaria, Shahdol, and Anuppur, for January 6. Moderate fog conditions are likely to prevail on January 7 in districts like Rewa, Shahdol, Anuppur, and Tikamgarh.

On Friday and Saturday nights, temperatures remained below 9 degrees Celsius in cities such as Bhopal (7.2°C), Indore (11.4°C), Gwalior (8.3°C), and Jabalpur (7.6°C). Kalyanpur in Shahdol recorded the coldest temperature at 4.1°C, followed by Pachmarhi at 4.5°C and Mandla at 5°C. Other

regions, including Rewa, Raissen, Khajuraho, Khandwa, and Betul, also recorded minimum temperatures below 10°C. Despite the chilling nights, some areas experienced warmer daytime temperatures on Saturday. Bhopal recorded a high of 29.9°C, while Indore reached 31.6°C and Ujjain peaked at 31.5°C. In contrast, colder regions like Khajuraho recorded a daytime high of just 19.2°C, with Gwalior at 21.7°C and Jabalpur at 26.4°C.

This spell follows record-breaking cold in November and December. In November, Bhopal broke a 36-year-old record, with temperatures consistently 7°C below normal. Similarly, December witnessed a cold wave lasting

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

"PUBLIC NOTIFICATION"		
Notice is hereby given to all users of Railway lines premises situated on the completed section of the under noted section of North Central Railway, that the 25000 Volt, 50HZ, AC overhead traction wires will be energized on or after the date specified against the section. On and from the same date, the overhead traction line shall be treated as live at all times and no unauthorised person shall approach or work in the proximity of the said overhead line.		
Date of Energization : on or after 10.01.2025		
Section	From Km/Chainage	To Km/Chainage
Energization of 25 KV, A.C. 50Hz OHE of Belatal-Kulphar Section of new doubling Line in Jhansi Division of N.C. Railway	Km. 1234.485 (OHE Km. 1234/17A)	Km. 1243.590 (OHE Km. 1243/28)
15/25 (MG)		
North central railways @ CPRONCR www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in		

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-AUCTION NOTICE	
On Behalf of The President of India, The Divisional Railway Manager, (Commercial) Jhansi invites e-auction as per categories given as under:-	
Category	Catalogue No
Advertisement	JHS-RDN-01
Asset Details: ADVERTISEMENT RIGHT THROUGH DIGITAL MEDIA INSIDE CHITRAKUTDHAM KARWI (CKTD) RAILWAY STATION & LALITPUR (LAR) RAILWAY STATION UNDER RDN POLICY.	
Auction Start : 17/01/2025 at 10:30 hrs	
Auction End : 17/01/2025 at 11:10 hrs	
Note: Prospective bidders are requested to visit e-Auction Leasing module on IREPS website (www.ireps.gov.in). The Lot-wise details are available therein under the above mentioned Catalogue Number.	
20/25 (AS)	
North central railways @ www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @ CPRONCR	

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

No.: Dy. CEE/C/JHS/Public Notification Dated: 02.01.2025
PUBLIC NOTIFICATION Proforma-10-02

INDIAN RAILWAY

"INTRODUCTION OF 25 KV AC CHARGING"
 "WARNING TO ROAD USERS"

It is notified for information of the Public that in connection with introduction of 25 KV AC electric charging on Belatal-Kulphar section of new doubling line from Km. 1234.485 (OHE Km. 1234/17A) to Km. 1243.590 (OHE Km. 1243/28) in Jhansi Division of North Central Railway, height gauges have been erected at all the level crossings with clear height of 4.78 mtr above road level with a view to prevent loads of excessive height from coming into contact or dangerous proximity to live traction wires (Contact wire), which shall be at a height of minimum 5.50 mtr above rail level crossing at level crossing.

Public are hereby notified to observe the height specified above for the purpose of loading vehicles and to see that the loads carried in road vehicles do not infringe the height gauges under any circumstances.

The dangers of a load of excessive height are as follows: -
 (1) Danger to the height gauge and consequent obstruction to the road as well as the Railway line. (2) Danger to the materials or equipment carried or the vehicle itself. (3) Danger of fire and risk of life due to contact with or dangerous proximity to the conductors.

Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Const.
 North Central Railway, Jhansi

Stay vigilant against anti-national forces: VP Dhankhar to youth

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday urged the country's youth to "stay vigilant" against "anti-national forces", saying it alone will secure India's democratic values.

In his address at a ceremony at the Delhi Cantonment here to mark the formal inauguration of the NCC Republic Day Camp, he also said "nationalism has to override all other interests, personal or organisational".

The vice president said the foundation of "our national transformation" rests on five basic pillars and these include social harmony, environmental protection and adherence to civic duties.

"Our Constitution gives us fundamental rights and we are conscious of those fundamental rights but there are fundamental duties also. Nations blossom, nationalism is nurtured, growth is secured, harmony is stabilised when every citizen of the country believes and subscribes to fundamental duties. For civic duties, you as a disciplined members of the force can really be torch-bearers," he added.

A total of 2,361 NCC cadets from around the country are taking part in the month-long Republic Day camp, which began on December 30, and will culminate with the PM's rally on January 27.

The annual event is also witnessing the participation of 917 girl cadets, the largest contingent so far.

"The organisation instils nationalism and nation-first approach. No nation in the world can grow unless its citizens are deeply committed to nationalism," Dhankhar told the gathering.

"Nationalism has to override all other interests, personal or organisational. Nation first approach has to be our only approach, maintain these qualities as a tribute to our motherland," he said.

In his address, the vice president also emphasised that



India's vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047 is no longer a dream but a "certain destination".

He praised the National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets for being a section of the country's youth known for fostering unity and discipline with a sense of service to the nation.

"My dear cadets, stay vigilant against anti-national forces because that alone will secure our democratic values. Our dedication to motherland has to be the foremost. It has to be steadfast, it has to be unflinching, it has to be unshakeable because it is bedrock and foundation of our existence," Dhankhar said.

The vice president further said the "challenges are emanating" because the nation is witnessing a rise which is "globally acclaimed".

"A rise that is incremental for last decade or so, a rise that is envy of the world, a rise that is positively impacting every person in this country," he said. Dhankhar said the month-long camp, with convergence of

over 2,000 cadets, is bound to be "remarkably rewarding".

Of the 2,361 cadets at the camp, 114 are from Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh and 178 from the northeast region.

"Boys and girls, you represent our youth demographic dividend. This is envy of the world, our developed nation vision at 2047 is no longer a dream. It is our certain destination," the vice president said.

"You all are crucial to Bharat's development at 2047," he stressed.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government has envisioned becoming 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047 when the nation completes 100 years of independence from colonial rule.

"Boys and girls, you are fortunate to be living at a time when India is no longer a nation with a potential. It is a nation rising with unmatched infrastructure growth," Dhankhar said.

He cited various infrastructure projects, including new airports and metros, to emphasise his point.

"To reflect on our digital pen-

etration, technological advancement that has been accoladed by the world, we have 6.5 billion monthly digital transactions. Boys and girls, we are living at a time when national optimism prevails as we approach to becoming the world's third largest global economy," he said.

The vice president underlined that youth opportunities expand as "global institutions hail Bharat as favourite prime investment destination".

The government has taken much-needed initiatives and policy decisions. Now there is transformation from discriminatory to merit-based mechanisms all over," he said.

Emphasising the five-point mantra, Dhankhar said, "I urge all citizens and particularly the youth and more particularly the NCC cadets to practise these in all earnestness, in letter and spirit because subscribing to these, adherence to these, will be game changer and game changer for the better for Bharat, that is home to one-sixth of humanity."

VHP says acquittal of Nanded blast accused 'tight slap' on Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The VHP on Sunday termed the acquittal of the 2006 Nanded blast accused a "tight slap" on the Congress' face and asked the party's top leadership to apologise to Hindu society. The reaction came after a sessions court in Maharashtra's Nanded acquitted on Saturday all nine surviving accused in the 2006 blast case.

"The Congress' dream of proving Hindus to be terrorists in the 2006 Nanded blast case stands exposed, with the court acquitting all the persons made accused in the case during Congress rule," Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) national spokesperson Vinod Bansal said. He claimed the Congress and the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) had already been "exposed" in the Malegaon blast case.

"After 19 years, the Nanded court acquitted all the accused and slapped the Congress hard on its face for its anti-Hindu misdeeds," Bansal said. "At



least now, the top leadership of the Congress should apologise to Hindu society," he added. The case pertains to an explosion at the home of Laxman Rajkondwar -- allegedly a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) worker in Nanded city -- on the intervening night of April 4 and 5, 2006. His son Naresh Rajkondwar and VHP activist Himanshu Panse were killed in the blast, allegedly while assembling an explosive device, the investigators had claimed.

The case was initially investi-

gated by the Maharashtra ATS before being transferred to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). According to defence lawyer Nitin Ruwal, 49 prosecution witnesses were examined during the trial. However, the prosecution could not prove that the incident was a "bomb blast" and not the explosion of a gas cylinder or some other inflammable object, he told PTI on Saturday. The Congress was in power at the Centre and in Maharashtra at the time of the incident.

Three-day Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention to be held in Bhubaneswar from January 8

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian diaspora's achievements and contributions across the world and ways to further deepen their engagement with India are set to be the key focus at the three-day Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention to be held in Bhubaneswar from January 8. India's economic growth, policy reforms and developmental trajectory in several key sectors are also likely to be showcased to woo overseas Indian investors at the convention. A large number of overseas Indians, including top businessmen, entrepreneurs and economists, from over 50 countries are expected to participate in the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) convention. The PBD is celebrated on January 9 to mark Mahatma Gandhi's return to India on that day in 1915. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will formally inaugurate the high-profile event on January 9. It will feature a virtual address by chief guest Christine Carla Kangaloo, President of Trinidad and Tobago, according to the Ministry of External Affairs.



The theme of the convention is 'Diaspora's Contribution to a Viksit Bharat'. President Droupadi Murmu will deliver the valedictory address on January 10. She will confer the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards 2025 on select members of the Indian diaspora to recognise their achievements.

The country will also be showcased as an attractive investment destination, they said. This year, the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention is being organised by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in partnership with the Odisha government. Prime Minister Modi will also inaugurate four exhibitions at the PBD convention, including one titled 'Vishwaroop Ram - The Universal Legacy of Ramayana'.

This exhibition would present the timeless epic of Ramayana through a curated juxtaposition of traditional and contemporary art forms, the MEA said on Sunday. The second exhibition will be on the diaspora's contribution to technology and Viksit Bharat. It will acknowledge the contributions of the Indian diaspora to the development of technology in the world. Another exhibition would be on the spread and evolution of the Indian diaspora in the world. It will showcase rare documents of people who migrated from Mandvi in Gujarat to Muscat in Oman. The PBD convention will have five thematic plenary sessions including one on 'Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers: Stories of Migrant Skills' and another titled 'Beyond Borders: Diaspora Youth Leadership in a Globalised World'.

The third plenary will be 'Green Connections: Diaspora's Contributions to Sustainable Development'. Another will be 'Diaspora Divas: Celebrating Women's Leadership and Influence -- Nari Shakti'. The MEA said the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas will also be held on January 8.

Former CRPF DG Prakash Mishra pens 'humorous' memoir

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former IPS officer Prakash Mishra spent his career dealing with dangerous situations such as protests and violence. Now, nine years after he retired, he is ready to offer a glimpse into the lighter side of the life in uniform in his soon-to-be released memoir.

"Comedy in Khakee: The Humorous Memoirs of a Policeman" has anecdotes of an "uncanny boss" frowning at pink napkins in a meeting and how a young Mishra played pranks on friends and teachers during school and training.

The memoir recounts how the son of a district magistrate in Odisha "loved to laugh, even at silly things, much to the annoyance of others".



the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the world's largest paramilitary force with over three lakh personnel. He also served as director general of police (DGP) in Odisha, apart from heading the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and having stints at the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the Union home ministry while on central deputation. "In an environment of policing, where seriousness often



overshadows the joys of life, 'Comedy in Khakee' seeks to remind us the power of humour and the importance of laughter," Mishra writes in his book, which is set to release on January 11 in Delhi. The book, much on the lines of the "humour in uniform" columns that appear in various publications globally, contains anecdotes, musings and observations about a variety of human beings and cir-

cumstances the former top cop observed while being in school, during his training at the National Police Academy and various stunts with the Odisha Police. He admits to playing pranks, sometimes bordering on the dangerous, along with his twin brother during his early days and later with his "partners-in-crime" friends and batchmates. The book describes an incident of a commode at the residence of his senior -- a deputy inspector general -- collapsing while the officer was sitting on it and tales of "sumptuous" feasts being organised by police personnel for their seniors during routine police station inspections. "There was a particular officer of the rank of commissioner, who used to love this kind of arrangement. I had heard that once, during an inspection of the office of the subdivisional officer, he was given such a sumptuous

lunch. Having eaten his full, he retired for an afternoon siesta," Mishra writes in the book. The characters, including an "uncanny boss" who ended an important meeting as he had got offended with the "pink napkins" served with potato chips, remain unnamed. The 198-page book is peppered with anecdotes and repartee that went around in the police establishment during Mishra's tenure while dealing with a multitude of circumstances -- protests, riot-like situations or during routine practice at the firing range for cops. The book is "for the jesters among us who remind us not to take ourselves too seriously and bring light into our lives with their wit and charm," according to Mishra. The retired IPS officer confesses in the book that it was in his school that he learnt "rascals can be of different types."

NIA arrests PFI member for funding plot

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA has arrested a cadre of the Popular Front of India (PFI) for channelising funds from Dubai for the banned outfit to further its unlawful activities in India, an official statement issued on Sunday said. A team of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested Mohammad Sajjad Alam of East Champaran district, Bihar, on Saturday as soon as he landed at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport here from Dubai, UAE, it said. An arrest warrant had been issued against Alam, a trained cadre of the PFI, by a special NIA court. A lookout circular (LOC) had also been issued against him, the statement said. According to the NIA, the accused was involved in channelising illegal funds from Dubai to PFI cadres in Bihar through a UAE, Karnataka and Kerala-based syndicate. The funds were used for pro-



moting the banned outfit's criminal and unlawful activities, the NIA said. The case, which was initially registered by Phulwari Sharif police in Bihar in July 2022, relates to PFI cadres' involvement in unlawful and anti-national activities. The cadres conspired to create an atmosphere of terror and spread religious enmity between members of different religions and groups through activities prejudicial to the maintenance of peace and harmony in the country, the statement said. Aimed at disrupting

public tranquillity and causing disaffection against India, their activities involved the use of criminal force to advance the PFI ideology of establishing Islamic rule in India as envisaged in the organisation's vision document, "India 2047: Towards Rule of Islam in India, Internal Document: Not for circulation", the probe agency said. The NIA, which took over the case days after it was registered by police, has charge-sheeted 17 accused in the case. Alam is the 18th accused to be arrested in the case.

Yogi to perform Ram Lalla's abhishek during Pratishtha Dwadashi fest on January 11

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ AYODHYA

Ayodhya will host the Pratishtha Dwadashi festival from January 11 to 13, celebrating the first anniversary of Ram Lalla's installation in the grand temple. On the opening day, January 11, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will perform the sacred Abhishek of Shri Ram Lalla in the sanctum sanctorum at 11 AM. Following this, he will inaugurate a cultural program at Angad Tila and address devotees. Devotional songs by renowned artistes such as Sonu Nigam, Shankar Mahadevan, and Malini Awastgi will also be released on the occasion.

Champat Rai, General Secretary of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust said, "On January 11, corresponding to Paush Shukla Paksha, Dwadashi, Vikram Samvat 2001, we mark one year since the establishment of the newly built temple at Ayodhya Dham, the sacred birthplace of Maryada Purushottam Lord Shri Ram, the patron of Indian culture and Sanatan Dharma." He added, "Events will include vibrant kirtans at key locations across Ayodhya, such as Lata Chowk, Janmabhoomi Path, Shringar Haat, Ram Ki Paidi, Sugriva Fort, and Chhoti Devkali. Young artistes will enchant audiences with musical performances throughout



the city." As part of the festivities, he said, "A three-day Shri Ram Raag-Seva program will take place in a pavilion near the temple's sanctum sanctorum. This initiative, led by Ayodhya artist Yatindra Mishra with support from the Sangeet Natak Academy, will present devotional offerings to Lord Shri Ram through music, dance, and instrumental performances." The Trust has extended invitations to saints and devotees from across the country. Champat Rai urged residents and pilgrims to participate in the celebrations, making at least a one-day visit during the three-day festival to honor the occasion and experience

the spiritual atmosphere of Ayodhya. Three days of the program Day 1 (January 11): The festival will open with Raga Seva, performed by renowned singer Usha Mangeshkar, sister of the legendary Lata Mangeshkar, and accompanied by Mayuresh Pai, who will present devotional bhajans. This will be followed by a soulful duet (jugalbandi) of the sitar by Sahitya Nahar and the violin by Santosh Nahar. The day will conclude with a captivating Bharatnatyam dance performance by Dr. Ananda Shankar Jayant. Day 2 (January 12): The second day will begin with Raga Seva by celebrated folk singer

Shailesh Srivastava, featuring traditional Badhawa and Sohar melodies. Following this, classical vocalist Kalapini Komkali will perform Shri Ram bhajans and Nirgun Gayan. The day's program will end with a mesmerizing flute recital by the internationally acclaimed maestro, Rakesh Chaurasia. Day 3 (January 13): The festival's final day will start with a classical vocal performance by the acclaimed Aarti Ankalikar, followed by an elegant Kathak performance by renowned dancer Shobhana Narayan. The grand finale will feature classical singing and Shri Ram bhajans by the celebrated South Indian duo, Shri Krishna Mohan and Shri Ram Mohan Thrissur Brothers.

PM Modi to virtually inaugurate Jammu railway division, boosting train services in Northern India

PTI ■ JAMMU

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the newly created Jammu railway division through virtual mode on Monday, paving the way for efficient management of train services in the northernmost region of India.

With the establishment of the new railway division in Jammu, a long-standing demand of people of the region has been fulfilled. This milestone event comes ahead of the much-awaited inauguration of train services to Kashmir from Katra, with the final trial run scheduled for Tuesday.

"The prime minister will inaugurate the Jammu railway division through virtual mode from New Delhi tomorrow," an official said. In Jammu, the event will be attended and addressed by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and Member of Parliament Jugal Kishore



Sharma. Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh is also expected to participate. Headquartered in Jammu, the newly created division will involve the reorganization of the Ferozpur Division. It will include the following sections under its jurisdiction, including Pathankot-Jammu-

Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla (423 route km), Bhogpur-Sirwal-Pathankot (87.21 route km), Batala (excluding)-Pathankot (68.17 route km) and Pathankot-Joginder Nagar (narrow gauge section, 163.72 route km). The total length of these sections will be 742.1 kilometres. Presently, the Indian

Railways operates 17 zones with 68 divisions across the country. he Railway officials said the final jurisdiction will be determined based on the Detailed Project Report. The division will feature modern, hi-tech facilities, leveraging the full potential of Information Technology (IT), they said. With the creation of this division, the

Indian Railways will now have 70 divisions under its 17 zones. The newly established division will oversee operations on India's iconic rail projects, including the country's first cable-stayed rail bridge, the Anji Khad Bridge and the world's highest railway arch bridge over the Chenab River at Kauri.

The Chenab Rail Bridge, located in Reasi district, stands 359 metres (1,178 feet) above the riverbed, making it 35 metres taller than the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The Jammu division will also manage the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Railway Link (USBRL) project, which is now nearing completion. The Anji Khad Bridge has a total length of 473.25 metres, including a 120-metre viaduct and a 94.25-metre central embankment. Currently, the railway services in Jammu and Kashmir are managed by the Ferozpur Division of Northern Railways.

Alliance with RJD a 'mistake', party did nothing while in power: Bihar CM Nitish Kumar



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday snubbed the RJD, headed by his arch-rival Lalu Prasad, stating that he had forged alliances "by mistake" with the opposition party which "did nothing" while in power. The JD(U) supremo made the remark days after Prasad, a former CM himself, had claimed that the RJD was keeping its "doors open" for the former ally, who is now back in the BJP-led NDA. Talking to reporters in the north Bihar district of

Muzaffarpur, as part of a state-wide Pragati Yatra, Kumar said, "Those who were in power before us... Did they do anything? People used to fear stepping out of their homes after sunset. I had by mistake (galti se) aligned with them a couple of times." "What was the condition of women back then? Today you can see these self-help groups, which we gave the name Jivika. The Centre replicated our model and called it Ajivika. Did you see such confident rural women earlier," asked the longest-serving CM of the state.

Kumar, however, did not take questions about the cryptic "offer" from Prasad, which was made light of by the RJD supremo's son and heir apparent Tejashwi Yadav, but endorsed by ally Congress. Prasad's comments had come in the backdrop of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's equivocal stance on projecting Kumar as the chief ministerial candidate in the assembly polls due in less than a year. State BJP leaders, on their part, have been maintaining that the JD(U) supremo will be the "face" of the NDA in the 2025 assembly elections.

Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah challenges Kumaraswamy to prove corruption allegations with evidence



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ DAVANAGERE

With Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy accusing his government of corruption and ministers of extracting commission, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday challenged the JD(S) leader to prove his allegations with evidence. He said allegations should not be made without documents and proof. "Let him prove it. Ask him to prove that 60 per cent commission is taking place and there is corruption. Let him prove it. Not just making allegations, one has to prove it," Siddaramaiah told reporters here, responding to a question. He said the opposition's job is not only to make the allegations, they should also prove it with evidence and documents. Earlier in the day, speaking to reporters in Mysuru, Kumaraswamy targeted the Siddaramaiah-led government and accused it of corruption and extracting commission, while alleging that ministers themselves are involved in this.

"Contractors supporting them (Congress party) are themselves saying that it (commission) has crossed 60 per cent and the earlier government was better. The loot is happening at PWD or irrigation departments. While getting contracts is one part, now even for allotment of houses, it seems money has to be paid... "Earlier, small officers were involved, but now it is happening at Vidhana Soudha. Ministers

have to be paid for release of houses...At every department percentage is fixed..." Kumaraswamy alleged as he highlighted the suicide of officials and contractors. Asking Siddaramaiah to answer to his own conscience, the union minister further accused those around CM of indulging in looting of the state's and public resources. "...You (CM) will have to pay for it."

Responding to a question on this year's Budget priorities, the CM, who also holds the Finance portfolio, said the Budget will be presented in March and he will speak about priorities when he begins the pre-budget consultation meetings. On the recent hike in bus fares, Siddaramaiah said, bus fares have increased during all governments, considering the salaries of employees, the increase in diesel prices, the cost of purchase of new buses and also inflation.

He said, "Bus fares were increased long ago, and as we were told that all our road transport corporations are in distress, and as there was a long standing demand, we have increased." Questioning whether there was no hike when BJP or Kumaraswamy was in power, the CM said, "Let them say they had not increased fares. Hasn't the central government increased railway fares?"

The revised bus fares, hiked by 15 per cent across the board, came into effect at midnight on Saturday, amidst stiff criticism from opposition parties and various sections.

20 years on, Spanish woman returns to India in search of biological mother

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHUBANESWAR

Sneha, a Spanish citizen, has returned to India in search of her biological mother, who had abandoned her and her brother 20 years ago.

However, 21-year-old Sneha is running out of time as she has to return to Spain on Monday for her educational commitments.

The researcher in children's education wanted to trace her roots and reached India with scanty information about her past.

Her Spanish parents Gema Vidal and Juan Josh supported her in her quest and Gema accompanied Sneha to her home state. They had adopted Sneha and her brother Somu in 2010 from an orphanage in Bhubaneswar, where they were kept after their mother Banalata Das abandoned them in 2005.

"The purpose of my journey from Spain to Bhubaneswar is to find my biological parents, especially my mother. I want to find her and meet her. I am fully prepared for the journey even if it is difficult," Sneha



told PTI.

Asked if she would hide her biological mother for abandoning her, Sneha remained mum. She was only over a year old, and her brother was just a few months old at that time.

Accompanied by Gema, a yoga teacher in Zaragoza city of Spain, Sneha arrived in Bhubaneswar on December 19 last year and they have been staying in a hotel. Somu, however, could not come as he was busy with some work in Spain.

If they do not find Sneha's biological mother by Monday, they will come back in March for a longer stay. "We have to return to Spain as Sneha has joined a training programme which should not

be discontinued. If we do not get Banalata in the next 24 hours, we will come back to Bhubaneswar in March," Gema said.

Banalata had abandoned Sneha and Somu at their rented house in Nayapally area in Bhubaneswar in 2005. Banalata's husband Santosh, who worked as a cook in a private firm, had earlier abandoned his family, which comprised his wife, and four children, including Sneha and Somu.

Later, Banalata also left the rented house with another son and daughter, leaving behind Sneha and Somu. The house owner later informed the police and they were shifted to an orphanage.

In 2010, Sneha, then more than five years old, and Somu, around four years old, were legally adopted by the Spanish couple.

"Sneha is very responsible and educated. She is the joy of our house. She is our life," Gema said.

Gema had earlier revealed to Sneha and Somu about their roots in Odisha and that they were adopted.

"She is well educated and conducting research, so she decided to locate her biological mother and I accompanied her to this place," Gema said. During their frantic search in Bhubaneswar, Gema and Sneha came across a retired teacher of Rama Devi Women's University, Sneha Sudha Mishra, who helped them find out the names of her parents.

"We found out about her parents' names from the house owner in Nayapally and later the names were verified with the police and the orphanage," Mishra said.

With the help of Mishra, Sneha and Gema met city Commissioner of Police Dev Datta Singh, who assigned the job of locating Banalata Das and Santosh Das to two police personnel Anjali Chhotray and Gangadhar Pradhan.

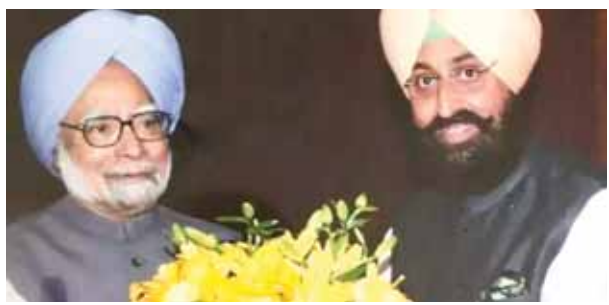
"We have found out that Banalata Das and Santosh are from Badamba-Narsinghpur area in Cuttack district. We have engaged police and panchayat functionaries to locate them," Inspector Anjali Chhotray said.

Congress leader Partap Singh Bajwa seeks Bharat Ratna for former PM Manmohan Singh

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Congress leader Partap Singh Bajwa on Sunday wrote to Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and Assembly Speaker Kulraj Singh Sandhwan, seeking a joint resolution in the House to recommend the Bharat Ratna for former prime minister Manmohan Singh.

Bajwa proposed the joint resolution to advocate for Singh to be conferred with India's highest civilian honour in recognition of his "monumental contributions to the country's progress and his exemplary service." He also wrote to BJP Legislative Party leader Ashwani Sharma, Shiromani Akali Dal MLA Manpreet Singh Ayali, and Bahujan Samaj Party lawmaker Nachatar Pal, proposing that



an all-party delegation meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi to push for Singh to be conferred with the honour. Singh - the architect of India's economic reforms - died on December 26 at the age of 92 following age-related complications. In his letter, Bajwa said, "I am writing to propose a collective initiative of profound national significance -- one that

transcends political boundaries to honour one of India's most distinguished statesmen, Dr Manmohan Singh." "Singh's contributions to our nation have been unparalleled. As the principal architect of India's economic liberalisation in 1991, he set the foundation for the country's transformative growth, resilience and global standing.

His tenure as prime minister was marked by a steadfast focus on inclusive development, social justice and economic stability, directly impacting millions of lives across the nation," he added.

Bajwa said he proposed the joint resolution due to Singh's contributions profoundly shaping India's destiny. "As a proud son of Punjab, Dr Singh's dedication to public service and nation-building continues to inspire us all," he said in a post on X.

"I have also proposed forming an all-party delegation to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi to advocate for this recognition. Honouring Dr Singh with the Bharat Ratna will not only celebrate his extraordinary contributions but also reaffirm our shared commitment to democracy,

integrity, and excellence in public service," the Qadian MLA added in the post.

In his letter to the chief minister and the speaker, Bajwa said Singh's journey was a testament to resilience, dedication and humility.

"As a proud son of Punjab, he upheld the values of hard work and service throughout his remarkable career. His contributions to the state are equally commendable, addressing critical challenges in agriculture, rural development, and education, and catalysing growth in Punjab as well as in the country," he said.

Bajwa added that what distinguished Singh was his unwavering commitment to the nation, consistently prioritising the greater good over political divides.

the police for help, he was met with disappointment. The local police reportedly dismissed his complaint, claiming it was a matter for Sitapur authorities and sent him back without initiating any investigation. As Kamlesh's story spreads, the village is abuzz with jokes about bathroom breaks becoming the new runaway tactic. But for Kamlesh, the joke is anything but funny. "I thought I was starting a new chapter in life," he said. "Turns out, it was the start of a comedy show." For now, Kamlesh might think twice before funding another wedding-or-trusting someone who insists on a bathroom break mid-ritual.

Four killed, two missing after vehicle falls into river in J-K's Kishtwar



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Four people were killed after their vehicle skidded off the road, rolled down a hill and fell into a river in Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday, police said.

Two persons, including the driver, are missing and a rescue operation is underway. The accident took place in the Paddar area, a police official said.

Police did not immediately identify the vehicle. Udhampur MP and Union minister Jitendra Singh expressed grief over the loss of lives in the accident. "Saddened to learn just now that 4 of the passengers travelling in the vehicle have been found dead on the spot. Two other persons, including the driver, are not traced as yet. My sincere condolences to the bereaved families," he said in a post on X.

The minister said he contacted Deputy Commissioner, Kishtwar, Rajesh Kumar Shavan immediately after receiving the report about the accident. "Rescue teams have been put into action. I am regularly receiving the updates," he said.

Bride takes bathroom break and flushes groom's hopes away!

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

In a tale that left an entire village chuckling in disbelief, a bride in Khajni's Bharohiya area in Gorakhpur took an innocent bathroom break during her wedding rituals-and never came back. The 40-year-old groom, Kamlesh Kumar, now finds himself not just heartbroken but also missing jewelry, cash, and his faith in second chances.

The drama unfolded at the Shiv Temple, where Kamlesh, a farmer from Sitapur's Govindpur village, was tying the knot for the second time. Having lost his first wife, he had hoped to rebuild his family, even



paying a mediator Rs 30,000 to help find him a bride. But it seems the mediator's guarantee didn't include

"sticking around until the pheras." According to Kamlesh, the bride arrived at the temple

on Friday with her mother. As the rituals began, everything seemed to be going smoothly-until the bride excused herself for a quick visit to the bathroom. Minutes turned to hours, and it became clear that the bathroom wasn't her only destination.

Her mother, who was supposed to be supervising the ceremonies, also vanished into thin air. "She was dressed so beautifully; I didn't think she'd sprint off like that," Kamlesh told reporters, trying to hide his embarrassment. "I gave her sarees, beauty products, jewelry, and even paid for all the wedding arrangements. I didn't think

I'd be footing the bill for her great escape."

The incident left wedding guests bewildered and Kamlesh devastated. "I just wanted to start over, but now I'm worse off than before," he lamented. Kamlesh revealed that a man from Sitapur demanded Rs 30,000 in exchange for arranging his marriage. After paying Rs 3,000 upfront, Kamlesh was taken to Khajni on January 1, where he was introduced to a woman and a girl at a hotel. The woman from Khajni took Kamlesh's phone number after the meeting. Following this, the Sitapur broker informed Kamlesh that an additional Rs 60,000

was required-Rs 30,000 for himself and Rs 30,000 for the woman in Khajni.

Subsequently, the woman from Khajni contacted Kamlesh, asking him to bring Rs 30,000 on January 3, assuring him that the marriage would be arranged immediately. Trusting her, Kamlesh arrived in Khajni with his son to finalize the wedding.

However, after taking the money, jewelry, and other items, the woman, who was supposed to be the bride, and the Sitapur broker disappeared in an auto under the pretext of preparing for the jaimala (garland exchange) ceremony. When Kamlesh approached



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Vision for rural India

PM Modi hails rural resilience at Grameen Bharat Mahotsav; says rural prosperity is essential for national growth

Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered an inspiring address at the Grameen Bharat Mahotsav 2025, held in New Delhi, highlighting the transformative strides made in rural development. The event celebrated the resilience and progress of rural India under the theme "Building a Resilient Rural India for Viksit Bharat 2047"—a vision to make India a developed nation by its centenary year of independence. PM Modi emphasised that the government's intentions, policies and decisions are invigorating rural India with newfound energy. He highlighted significant achievements in healthcare, agriculture and basic infrastructure that have elevated the quality of life in villages and driven economic growth. Reflecting on India's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, he proudly noted how Indian villages defied global doubts by ensuring vaccine access to the last mile. He attributed this success to inclusive economic policies that cater to every section of society. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address at the Grameen Bharat Mahotsav



2025 highlighted significant achievements in rural development, painting an optimistic picture of progress. While these strides are commendable, a closer examination reveals underlying challenges that must be addressed to ensure holistic and sustainable rural transformation. PM Modi emphasised healthcare advancements, noting the establishment of over 1.5 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs and the growing reach of telemedicine in rural areas. These initiatives reflect substantial progress; however, challenges such as a shortage of trained healthcare professionals, limited infrastructure, and inconsistent internet access in remote villages continue to hinder equitable healthcare delivery. Agriculture has been a central focus of rural development efforts, with financial assistance under PM-KISAN and a significant increase in agricultural loans helping farmers enhance productivity. Yet, structural problems persist in the agrarian sector, including reliance on unpredictable monsoon, insufficient crop diversification and market volatility. The protests against contentious agricultural reforms also highlight the need for more inclusive policy-making and effective stakeholder engagement. The Prime Minister highlighted the sharp reduction in rural poverty, which has reportedly fallen below 5 per cent from 26 per cent in 2012. While this represents significant progress, the persistence of rural inequality and exclusion of marginalised communities from development initiatives cannot be ignored. Poverty metrics alone do not capture the broader challenges of deprivation, including limited access to quality education, healthcare and social mobility. Infrastructure gaps, such as unreliable road connectivity, inadequate digital networks, and inconsistent electricity supply, limit the potential of rural economies. Furthermore, rural India's heavy dependence on agriculture underscores the urgent need for economic diversification and the creation of jobs in manufacturing and services. Prime Minister's vision is indeed laudable but a lot needs to be done for upliftment of rural masses.

PICTALK



'Sadhus' of 'Shri Niranjani Akhara' take part in a procession towards Sangam, in Prayagraj

Harmony: A prerequisite for national unity



ATUL SEHGAL

The resurgence of communal discord calls for urgent reflection and action. It is time to expose the forces that exploit differences for personal gain

The global communal ecosystem is showing change for the worse. The word communal here connotes and covers ethnic, racial, religious and sectarian communities. The last seven decades since 1950 have not seen very many episodes of communal conflict or conflagration in the global society. After the terrible death and destruction wrought by the Second World War (1939-1945) and the horrible communal riots following the partition of India into two independent states, episodes of communal violence have been relatively less compared to that in earlier periods of world history. Of late, the world is riven by acrimony and wars at multiple locations and communally divisive sentiments across global societies appear to be rising again. It seems that during the above period, the sentiments of mutual hatred and antipathy among certain global communities remained suppressed, only to resurface now.



It is time to review and relook at the elements that go into building and strengthening communal harmony. With the world in the terrible throes of wars at several locations, it is perhaps time to strengthen communal harmony and amity globally, particularly in our society and not to allow it to be undermined. History has been written largely by the conquerors of countries and the governing elite. We often do not have true accounts of history do not read true history or otherwise are inclined to interpret facts wrongly, driven by our deep-seated prejudices. If we look closely at the picture and analyse it dispassionately, we shall find that it is generally the politicians and rulers who incited communal violence for their own selfish needs or vile vested interests. Often, these acts of incitement are obscured through disinformation campaigns. There are cultural and ideological differences between communities. What to talk of mainstream religions like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity or Buddhism, there are major and minor variants of these religions and sub-ideological sects whose number touch-

es almost three thousand. They all have major or minor ideological differences. Notwithstanding the many differing and dissonant injunctions of their scriptural texts, peace and harmony are basic to the progress and prosperity of citizens in every country, and every society and they are dear to all human individuals. That is why there are constitutions, laws and regulations in every country for proper governance that incorporates the functional upholding of universal peace promoting human values of justice and equality. Hence, we need to expose the machinations of the political elite to strengthen communal harmony in today's world. In the context of the current global scenario, the incidence of violence against Hindus in Pakistan or Bangladesh is more because of mischief and misdeeds of the ruling elite. During the colonial period in India, communal riots were frequently triggered by politicians or the governing elite. In our country with population of 145 crore, nearly 21 crore are Muslims. They have been a part and parcel of our society for ages. We need to better integrate them, not appease them for petty political gains. The need of the hour is ideological realignment. And we should quickly brace ourselves for it. Let us not allow the demolition or destruction



DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD IN INDIA, COMMUNAL RIOTS WERE FREQUENTLY TRIGGERED BY POLITICIANS OR THE GOVERNING ELITE. THIS HAPPENS WHEN RELIGION AS A PRACTICE OF FAITH IS GIVEN A POLITICAL COLOURING

of religious buildings anywhere, but build monuments of universal, secular and humanistic culture to promote communal harmony. Let us build buildings and institutions that bind humans, not separate them. Let us educate global humans on the eternal metaphysical truths that apply to all, everywhere. Let us awaken humanity to the threads of universal knowledge about the Creator, creation and their relationship. Bharat has been the cradle of human civilisation because the divine knowledge emanating from the one Creator was revealed in this land to sages at the dawn of civilization. That core knowledge enshrined in the divine scriptures Vedas and ideology based on that needs resurrection today. Humans can live sensibly and peacefully for ages if they wish to. Only they need to be aligned with universal Dharma. Man-made sects separate; universal Dharma (righteousness) unites—because the latter comes from the omniscient Creator of all humans. When we talk of Sanatan as the religion of the inhabitants of Bharat, we refer to the above said broad-based, universal and eternal religion of humanity that transcends caste, creed, ethnicity and sect. Sanatan Dharma is the prescribed code of living handed down to the

earliest humans by the Creator. Let us strengthen adherence to that eternal code of living expected from humans by the one master of the Universe whose subjects we all are. Let us focus on the common, positive strands of ideology that exist in various mainstream religions and let us deliberate on the ideological strands that are dissonant with the universal Sanatan Dharma. Let us not mix religion with politics; rather let us give politics a more humanistic complexion. That is what is required today. We Indians are in the process of nation rebuilding after centuries of lying low due to depredation by foreign invaders. Now is the time for fast-track progress and we must beware of nefarious designs of foreign powers to create impediments to our progress. We should try to reform our political and legal institutions to make them truly secular and democratic. Let us make our national fabric strong, placing it above caste, creed, faith or religion. At the same time, we should strive to dissolve our ideological differences in the bright shining light of Sanatan Vedic Dharma which has been the beacon of guiding light of all humanity for eons since the dawn of civilisation. (The author is a management consultant based in New Delhi; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ISRO EMBARKS DOCKING MISSION

Madam — On December 30, ISRO has embarked on another mission that has vast application in future exploratory missions. In fact, the space docking experiments or SpaDex mission are linked to the plan for setting up India's own space station named the Bharatiya Antariksh Station by 2035 to carry out spacewalks and research in microgravity conditions. This mission also carries the PS4 orbital experiment module 4 or POEM 4, using the spent fourth stage of PSLV C 60 which otherwise would have ended as space debris carrying 24 payloads. Autonomous orbited docking is a sophisticated manoeuvre mastered by a few elite nations like the USA, China and Russia and India too is set to join this group. Docking is indispensable for missions that require heavy spacecraft and equipment that cannot be launched in one go, viz the International Space Station for instance.

A manned foray to the moon and the operation of the country's first space station is not possible without it. It could also open up opportunities for India's space research agency to collaborate with global missions that require docking facilities. The success of missions like Chandrayaan 3 and Aditya 1 in 2023 followed by the setting up of the first space observatory to study the polarisation of cosmic X-rays in 2024, to the recent Cabinet approval in Sept 2024 of Venus Orbital Mission to study the different aspects of Venus, clearly showcases that it has enough expertise to contribute to the divergent facets of planetary research. This mission is the handiwork of collaboration between public and private enterprises and underscores not just its technical prowess but also lays a solid foundation for future endeavours that will shape the global space landscape. **Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital**

RELIEF FOR BHOPAL RESIDENTS

Madam—It is really sad that it took four decades to remove the toxic waste from

HMPV virus outbreaks spark panic



In China, the spread of viruses causing respiratory illnesses like Influenza A, HMPV, Mycoplasma Pneumonia, and COVID-19 has increased. This spread is affecting children's health significantly, leading to a rise in hospital admissions. These viruses exhibit symptoms similar to other respiratory infections, such as devastation caused by COVID-19, trusting the "Chinese Dragon" seems difficult. Five years ago, Wuhan's coronavirus outbreak wreaked

havoc worldwide, and now, the HMPV virus appears to have originated from the same location. Is this merely a coincidence, or is Wuhan a hub for developing biological colds and fevers in children. Now, the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) is spreading in China, sparking fears that a similar outbreak could occur again. Wuhan, the epicentre of the initial coronavirus outbreak, is reportedly the origin of this new virus as well. China has stated that the situation is under control, and no travel restrictions have been imposed internationally. The Chinese Dragon seems to be spewing various deadly viruses. It is essential for the World Health Organization to take timely notice of these recurring dangerous viruses emerging from China. **Dattaprasad Shirodkar | Mumbai**

MELANISTIC LEOPARD SPOTTED AGAIN

Madam — After a "melanistic leopard" was spotted in the forests near Odisha's Nayagarh, wildlife lovers are understandably euphoric. Over the last five years, various forests of the country have reported the sighting of "melanistic leopards." Black feline of the big cat family, with small head, a robust jaw and strong hind legs—that's the compact description of "panther" or "melanistic leopard." In India, dense forests of the southern part harbour the black beauty. The black cats love to live in dense evergreen forests so that they can, as far as possible, avoid light. A genetic mutation, dominant or recessive, causes an overexpression of melanin pigments resulting in the so-called 'melanistic leopard.' However, the joy of sighting the big cat should be tempered with sobriety. Some 15 variants of the black cats are endangered. **Ganapathi Bhat | Akola**

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Embracing your unique journey to success

This year, let's shift our focus inward, honour our unique paths and recognise the triumphs that shape who we are

How often have you beaten yourself up saying you don't measure up to others in terms of skills and success? How often have you undervalued your accomplishments with a desultory wave of hand accompanied by a "Oh, this is something everyone does" or "I haven't done anything great"? Chances are that we have done it a greater number of times than what is good for our self-esteem and confidence.



A student of mine recently approached me for a review of her college admission essay wherein she had not highlighted many of her strengths that could catch the attention of the admission officer. "Oh, ma'am, these are things everyone in our school does. This isn't anything extraordinary," she said. I sat her down and explained: "We aren't worried about what others are doing. Our focus should be on what we have done so far and how it has been of consequence to us and others." The biggest reason for our disenchantment with our lives in this pacy world is we often undermine our capabilities by trying to match them with

others and trying to be one up over the rest. As long as we keep looking at others, we shall never be able to make the cut, which is completing a task to the best of our abilities, putting forth the best of our ideas as they emerge in our intellect and assessing their value not in terms of where you stand or what your ranking is in comparison, but giving ourselves due credit for the distance we have come given our specific challenges in life. No victory is small. To the little boy participating in a sack race at school, winning it or making it to the other end without stumbling should be an accomplishment. To a student who successfully makes a presentation in class, the comfort that she feels standing in front of a class and speaking about what she believes in is a success. To

our character and our path forward. The mistake we often make is believing that success has a standard template. It doesn't. As we step into a new year, let us make a conscious choice—to shift the gaze inward, to honour our unique journeys, and to celebrate the progress we've made, however small it may appear. Let us define success not by comparisons but by the courage to keep going, the strength to rise after a fall, and the grace to applaud ourselves for showing up. You are enough. Your story matters. And your victories, no matter how quiet, deserve recognition. Here's to a year where we measure success by our growth, not by how we compare to others. Let those who conquer mountains do so with pride and let those who climb smaller hills find joy in reaching their summits. And for those who can climb neither—whether by circumstance or choice—let their strength shine in being the cheerleaders who uplift others on their journeys. (The author is a Dubai-based columnist, and writing coach and has published six books. Views are personal)



ASHA IYER KUMAR



FIRST COLUMN

GOD IS THE SOLE CONTROLLER

Logic, practicality and experience point to the necessity of a singular, omnipotent force governing all



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Imagine there being more than one controller of the Creation. They disagree on some matters and are not able to resolve them. What kind of chaos will result? Therefore, there being more than one controller is illogical, impractical and unimaginable. And this reality rules out all small controllers, as we imagine ourselves to be. Don't we all feel that we control something or another? Do we? These examples should provide the answer. There is a huge corporation, which employs thousands of people worldwide. Its owner has a say over who is used and at what level.

This is fine till something like a COVID-19 pandemic hits. There are lockdowns, quarantines and other social restrictions. This affects the working of the corporation. What about the so-called controller? He is under quarantine. Another example is of a president of a big country. He is puffed up by the power he enjoys. Unfortunately, he is assassinated. The assassin had control over his life, and this assassin was hanged. Who controlled what?

Let me take a common household. The man of the house making most decisions about the household may feel that he is a controller. What happens when the lady of the house opposes him on some issue? Where did the control go? We must understand that making decisions is not controlling anything because that would require controlling results. A team leader can make decisions on behalf of his team but he, himself, is controlled by circumstances. The only entity, who can ensure some result every time is God only, and no one else, now or ever. Having understood that God is the whole and sole controller, let us



understand how He manages it. The control is exercised through the 'Karmaphala Principle', which is just and according to the highest religious principles ('with - the Bhagavad Geeta 18.78), which is 'dharma'. Briefly, it is 'what you sow is what you reap.' Isn't that fair? No one can complain, and no one escapes punishment either, death notwithstanding.

Many engage in wrongful acts hoping to get away from punishment from man-made laws, but in God's control, no one does. Similarly, rewards are forever coming, as decided by the Divine Authority, which works under the superintendence of God. Similarly, God has empowered the material nature to give birth to the world along with moving and stationary objects. And on account of this, the world goes on. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 9.10) Questions are raised about God's fairness and the System set by Him not being just. It is not true, which will be clear from the following examples. How was Hiroshima wiped out? Why were so many women and children killed or maimed? Surely, many must have been innocent.

The answer is very simple. All those born there were destined to be hurt in that fashion. Only those, who had bad karmaphalas coming to fruition were born there. Doesn't the divine authority have control over who would be born where? They have complete control and they also know the future.

Accordingly, they manage the Creation. Another instance could be of an infant dying soon after birth. Could we know that this soul had punishment coming for the heinous crime he had committed in his previous life; he had forced his wife to abort because the child was a girl? I am speculating, but that could be a reason. All souls are relocated after death. Where they will go will depend on many factors. Only God knows!

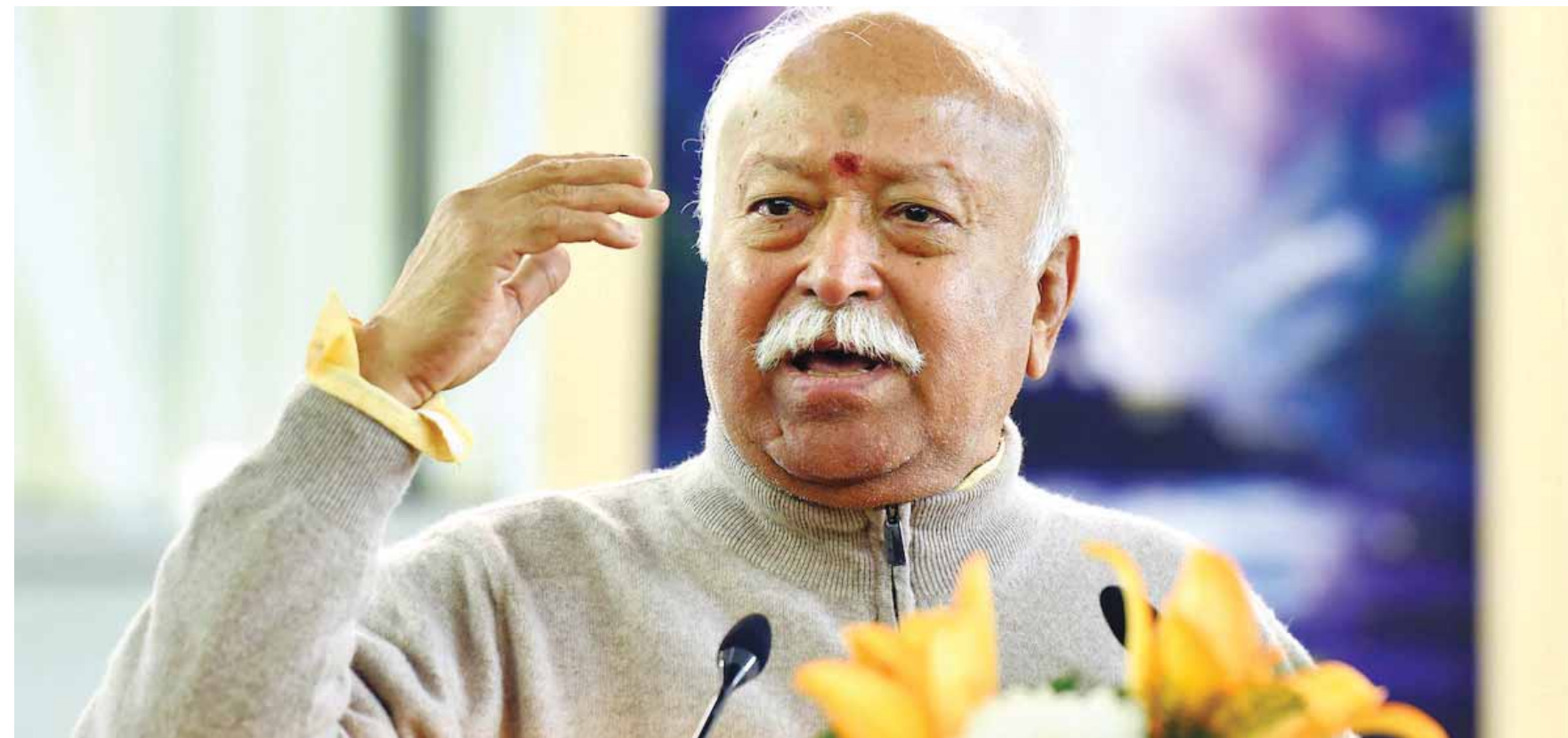
(The writer is a spiritual guide and teacher; views are personal)

Bhagwat champions unity as the path to India's Vishavguru vision



SUKHDEV SINGH

Highlighting the risks posed by divisive narratives such as 'Mandir-Masjid' disputes, Mohan Bhagwat stresses the importance of embracing India's pluralistic identity



Delivering a Sahjeevan Vyakhyanmala series lecture on the topic, India—the Vishavguru, the RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat expressed his concern over the recent upsurge of 'Mandir-Masjid' disputes and pointed out: "After Ram Mandir, some think they can become leaders of Hindus by raking up similar issues in new places". Rejecting the practice, he said, "This is not acceptable." Echoing his comment on Gyanvapi Masjid that "We look for a Shivaling beneath every mosque," implying that we should not, he cautioned: "The days of hegemony are gone," and that now "People choose their representatives, who run the government." Questioning the "language of dominance," he acknowledged the pluralistic nature of Indian society, where "tradition" allows people to live in harmony while following their respective faiths. Drawing a comparison of India with the world, where similarity is the principle of unity, for India, he said, "Diversity is an ornament of unity, and we should respect and accept it."

Rejecting hatred, malice, enmity, and suspicion daily under the burden of the past, he ruled out the 'majority-minority' binary and emphasised, "Everyone is equal here." To be a Vishavguru, India should be a nation of people who can rise above caste and religious differences. By what he has said, Bhagwat has targeted more than one point while acknowledging the reality of about 200 million Muslims besides the Christians, Sikhs, and others in India, on the one hand, and the geopolitical realities, on the other. If that is so, then the word 'Hindu' needs to be accepted as an Arabic-Persian cognate of the Sanskrit 'Sindu' and 'Hindustan' as a reference to the land of Hindus, i.e., the people living beyond the river Sindhu, but not a place of and for the people of a specific religion. The historical chronicles state that the river 'Sindu' was pronounced as 'Indus' by the Greeks



THE INDIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY WAS CODIFIED BY A SECTION OF PEOPLE AS A HINDU NATIONAL RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND AN ISLAMIC NATIONAL IDENTITY, DIVIDING THE PEOPLE ON RELIGIOUS LINES

and 'Al-Hind,' which later became 'Hinds' or 'Hindus' by the Arabic Iranians.

The Greeks called 'the land of Indus' India, while the Arabic-speaking people called the region 'Hindustan.' It was a reference to the geographical region of old Punjab. The land of Hindus i.e. the people of river Sindhu, called Hindustan or India in the above sense, is a land of several religious faiths, such as Shaivism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, besides the principles of ancient Vedas and Puranas, and the word 'Hindu' has been a geographic and a cultural identifier to distinguish between the indigenous people and others who came as traders or invaders, like Muslims, Christians, and Jews, etc., at the initial stages of their entry into the region; the distinction, however, did not mean religious opposition.

It only acted as an identifying communicative 'sign': for communication is organised on two axes: the axis of similarities and the axis of differences. The people from the 'other' lands gradually became the people of the land called Hindustan, or India, settling permanently and adding to the diversities on the land of the river Sindhu.

Since there is no definite founder and no single holy text to establish a religion called 'Hinduism,' it remains only a set of socio-cultural practices while the people practice a variety of their respective religious worship.

The words 'Hindu' and 'Hindustan' have remained signifiers for the geographic-cultural practices until projected as a religious and national identifier in

the early twentieth century in opposition to the colonial rule and in reaction to the Khilafat Movement by the Muslims in support of the Turkish Ottoman Sultan during the freedom movement of India.

The Indian national identity was codified by a section of people as a Hindu national religious identity and an Islamic national identity, dividing the people on religious lines. The division was perpetrated by the colonial British in more than one way, leading to the partition of India. Since 1947, free India has been a sovereign state nation, though it should have been a state of cultural nations politically united as a federal political state, settling the issue of religious nations forever. Yet India has stood the test of its unity in diversity with some collisions on the sidelines.

The internal dynamism of society and state is its continued collision and cohesion in their weaving: the more complex a society or a state is, the higher its level of collision-cohesion dynamics. For the well-being of the land and its population, the political drivers must turn the power to strengthen 'diversity' against the 'forced homogeneity' as a principle of organisation. But with the rising assertion of Hindu religious identity and a Hindu nation-state over Hindu geographic-cultural identity juxtaposing with the recent upsurge in 'Mandir-Masjid' controversies, rightly perceived by Mohan Bhagwat, the danger to the unity and cohesion is more imminent than not.

The sooner the ideologues of identities understand it, the better it is for the people living

together for centuries. Mohan Bhagwat seems to have realized it, and rightly so, he has underplayed the slogan—one nation, one people—stating, "Without Muslims, Hindutava is incomplete": Hindus and Muslims are different but complementary. Hindustan, or India, or Bharat, is a land of diversities, and only by choice of the ideology and practice of inclusion, it can become Vishavguru. To be the Vishavguru is to experience and accommodate more diversity. The Vishav, i.e., the universe, is organized into networks of similarities and differences, yet the precursor of life on earth is the 'difference' that engenders diversity.

Mohan Bhagwat's nuanced remarks underscore the importance of unity amidst diversity in India's journey toward becoming a Vishavguru. Acknowledging India's pluralistic fabric, he emphasised harmony over divisive narratives like 'Mandir-Masjid' disputes and rejected notions of religious hegemony. Bhagwat traced the historical and cultural origins of terms like 'Hindu' and 'Hindustan,' advocating for their geographic and cultural significance rather than a singular religious identity. He urged political and social leaders to strengthen diversity as a foundation for national cohesion. By embracing inclusion and mutual respect, India can truly embody the universal ideals required to be a global guide and leader.

(The writer is Professor (Retd), Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, Vice-Chairman, Indian National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage, New Delhi; views are personal)

The Bhagavad Gita: A blueprint for resilience, holistic health and leadership

From inspiring modern management practices to enriching prenatal care, the Gita's teachings resonate deeply in today's fast-paced world

The Bhagavad Gita is revered as a profound source of resilience, wisdom, and ethical guidance, often referred to as the essence of the Upanishads. Known as Brahmavidya or "Superior Knowledge," it offers timeless insights into life, existence, and cosmic truths. Despite being composed millennia ago, the Gita remains relevant today, providing practical teachings for navigating the complexities of modern life.

Its wisdom extends across diverse fields such as management, leadership, psychology, and medicine. For example, many prestigious

The Relevance of Beeja Sanskara and Garbha Sanskara
A lesser-known yet signifi



KASHINATH SAMAGANDI

cant aspect of the Gita is its emphasis on Beeja Sanskara (pre-conception practices) and Garbha Sanskara (post-conception practices). Through the concept of Atmaja Bhava, it highlights the importance of establishing a deep connection with the unborn child. These practices, rooted in Ayurveda and

Yoga, nurture wisdom, emotional stability, and virtuous qualities in the foetus, fostering holistic development. The scripture also underscores the importance of Satvika Ahara—a pure, balanced diet. During pregnancy, this diet not only supports the physical health of the mother and foetus but also nurtures emotional and spiritual harmony, laying the foundation for a well-rounded individual.

Resilience, Energy and Cosmic Balance

Rather than considering the Gita as the book of any person, caste, creed, country or religion, it is a guide to one's own personal, mental, social, and spiritual resilience and adaptability. Its teachings on perseverance, balance, and inner

strength resonate deeply with those facing modern challenges. The Gita's perspective on energy and cosmic balance aligns with contemporary scientific principles.

Ayurvedic Insights on Foetal Development

The Gita's teachings influence Ayurvedic principles, particularly in prenatal care. It identifies six essential Bhavas contributing to foetal development: Matruja Bhava (mother's qualities) Pitruja Bhava (father's qualities) Atmaja Bhava (soul connection) Satmyaja Bhava (compatibility) Rasaja Bhava (nutrition) Satvaja Bhava (mental stability)

These emphasise the importance of parental health, nutrition, emotional well-being, and spiritual align-



ment in shaping the child's future. Such principles form the core of Garbha Sanskara practices, increasingly recognised in modern prenatal care for their holistic approach.

The Balanced Mind: Sthitaprajna

One of the Gita's most profound teachings is the concept of Sthitaprajna. This idea of remaining unaffected

by success or failure, challenges or triumphs, is particularly relevant in today's fast-paced world. Cultivating such equanimity fosters mental resilience and emotional stability, enabling individuals to navigate life's ups and downs with composure.

Holistic Health Through Integration

The Gita advocates an integrated approach to Ahar (diet), Vihar (lifestyle), Nidra (sleep), Achar (conduct), and Vichar (thoughts).

These elements must work cohesively to promote comprehensive health and wellness. This holistic philosophy supports inter-science and intra-science integration in medicine. Intra-science integration ensures that all aspects of a medical system

work together to manage chronic conditions effectively, while inter-science integration leverages the strengths of multiple systems for optimal care. This collaborative approach is essential for addressing both acute and chronic conditions.

Holistic Development and Liberation

The Gita offers a roadmap for holistic self-development, encompassing physical, mental, and spiritual growth.

Its teachings on Dharma (duty), Karma (action), and Bhakti (devotion) provide practical guidance for leading a purposeful and ethical life. Moreover, the Gita provides insights into personal development, emotional mastery, and the attainment of Moksha (liberation).

Its universal principles resonate across disciplines such as psychology, philosophy, and leadership, offering a framework for self-realisation and collective well-being. In conclusion, the enduring relevance of the Bhagavad Gita lies in its universal message of harmony, balance, and self-awareness. It inspires individuals and societies towards holistic growth and ethical living.

Whether guiding inner conflicts or addressing societal complexities, the Gita remains an effective tool for achieving balance, resilience, and self-mastery in an ever-changing world.

(The author is Director of the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga; views are personal)

South Korean protesters brave cold to demand Yoon's ouster as detention deadline looms

AP ■ SEOUL

Hundreds of South Koreans, bundled up against freezing temperatures and snow, rallied overnight into Sunday near the residence of impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol, calling for his ouster and arrest, as authorities prepared to renew their efforts to detain him over his short-lived martial law decree. Dozens of anti-corruption agency investigators and police attempted to execute a detention warrant against Yoon on Friday but retreated from his residence in Seoul after a tense standoff with the presidential security service that lasted more than five hours. The one-week warrant for his detention is valid through Monday. There were no immediate indications that anti-corruption authorities were ready to send investigators back to the residence as of Sunday afternoon. Staff from the presidential security service were seen installing barbed wire near the gate and along the hills leading up to Yoon's residence over the weekend, possibly in preparation for another detention attempt. A Seoul court last Tuesday issued a warrant to detain Yoon and a separate warrant to search his residence after the

embattled president repeatedly defied authorities by refusing to appear for questioning and obstructing searches of his office. But enforcing them is complicated as long as Yoon remains in his official residence. Investigators from the country's anti-corruption agency are weighing charges of rebellion after the conservative president, apparently frustrated that his policies were blocked by a legislature dominated by the liberal opposition, declared martial law on Dec. 3 and dispatched troops to surround the National Assembly. The Assembly overturned the declaration within hours in a unanimous vote and impeached Yoon on Dec. 14, accusing him of rebellion, while South Korean anti-corruption authorities and public prosecutors opened separate investigations into the events. If the anti-corruption agency manages to detain Yoon, it will likely ask a court for permission to make a formal arrest. Otherwise, Yoon will be released after 48 hours. The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials, which is leading a joint investigation with police and military investigators, says detaining Yoon would be "virtually impossible" as long as he is protected by the presidential

security service. The agency has urged the country's acting leader, Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok, to instruct the service to comply with their execution of the detention warrant, but Choi has yet to publicly comment on the issue. The chiefs and deputy chiefs of the presidential security service defied summonses on Saturday from police, who planned to question them over the suspected obstruction of official duty following Friday's events. Yoon's legal team said it will file complaints against the anti-corruption agency's chief prosecutor, Oh Dong-woon, and approximately 150 investigators and police officers involved in Friday's detention attempt, which they claim was unlawful. The team said it will also file complaints with public prosecutors against the country's acting defense minister and police chief for ignoring the presidential security service's request to provide additional forces to block the detention attempt. Yoon's lawyers had submitted an objection to the warrants against the president on Thursday, but the Seoul Western District Court dismissed the challenge on Sunday. Park Chan-dae, floor leader of the main opposition



Protesters stage a rally demanding the arrest of impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol near the presidential residence in Seoul, South Korea on Sunday. The letters read 'Arrest Yoon Suk Yeol'.

Democratic Party, called for the anti-corruption agency to move quickly to detain Yoon, saying it was deeply disappointing to see the agency "hesitating and letting time slip away." Hundreds of anti-Yoon protesters rallied for hours near the gates of the presidential residence from Saturday evening to Sunday, voicing frustration over the failed detention attempt and demanding

stronger efforts to bring Yoon into custody. Separated by police barricades and buses, pro-Yoon protesters were gathering in nearby streets, denouncing his impeachment and vowing to block any efforts to detain him. "With barely a day left before the execution deadline for Yoon Seok Yeol's detention warrant, the presidential security service continues to hide a

criminal and the Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials cannot be more relaxed," Kim Eun-jeong, an activist, said on a stage during the anti-Yoon rally. "Angry citizens have already spent two freezing nights demanding his immediate detention. Are their voices not being heard?" Yoon's lawyers have challenged the detention and search war-

rants against the president, saying they cannot be enforced at his residence due to a law that protects locations potentially linked to military secrets from search without the consent of the person in charge - which would be Yoon. They also argue the anti-corruption office lacks the legal authority to investigate rebellion charges and that police officers don't have the legal authority to assist in detaining Yoon. While the presidential security act mandates protection for Yoon, it does not authorize the presidential security service to block court-ordered detentions. The service's attempts to block the execution of the warrant may amount to an obstruction of official duty, according to Park Sung-bae, an attorney specializing in criminal law. While the president mostly has immunity from prosecution while in office, the protection does not extend to allegations of rebellion or treason. The agency said its outnumbered investigators had several scuffles with presidential security forces that threatened their safety and expressed "serious regret" that Yoon was not complying with the legal process. After getting around a military unit guarding the residence's grounds, the agency's investigators and police were able to

approach within 200 meters (yards) of Yoon's residential building but were stopped by a barricade comprising around 10 vehicles and approximately 200 members of the presidential security forces and troops. The agency said it wasn't able to visually confirm whether Yoon was inside the residence. The Defense Ministry says the troops at Yoon's official residence are under the control of the presidential security service. Kim Seon-ho, the acting defense minister, conveyed his concern to the presidential security service, saying that deploying military personnel to block the execution of the detention warrant would be "inappropriate" and requesting that the troops aren't placed in a position where they might confront police, according to the ministry. Yoon's defense minister, police chief and several top military commanders have already been arrested over their roles in the period of martial law. Yoon's presidential powers have been suspended since the National Assembly voted to impeach him on Dec. 14. Yoon's fate now lies with the Constitutional Court, which has begun deliberations on whether to uphold the impeachment and formally remove Yoon from office or reinstate him.

Ukraine will ask allies to boost its air defences: Zelenskyy

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he will again call on allies to boost its air defences at this week's meeting in Germany, as US President-elect Donald Trump takes over later this month with a vow to end the almost three-year war quickly. Zelenskyy said that dozens of partner countries will participate in the meeting of the Ramstein group at Ramstein Air Base in Germany on Thursday, "including those who can help boost our capabilities not only to defend against missiles but also against guided bombs and Russian aviation." "We will discuss this with them and continue to persuade them," Zelenskyy said in his nightly address on Saturday. "The task remains unchanged: strengthening our air defence." US Defence Secretary Lloyd J. Austin will attend the meeting.

Biden was originally scheduled to attend the October summit in Ramstein but it was postponed because of response to Hurricane Milton that battered the US. In its last few weeks in office, the Biden administration was pressing to send as much military aid as possible to Ukraine before Trump is sworn in January 20. Trump claimed during his election campaign that he could end the war in one day and his comments have put a question mark over whether the United States will continue to be Ukraine's biggest — and most important — military backer. Zelenskyy said last week that Trump is "strong and unpredictable," and those qualities can be a decisive factor in his policy approach to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Russia controls about one-fifth of Ukraine, and capitalised last year on weaknesses in Ukraine's defences to slowly advance in

eastern areas despite heavy losses of troops and equipment. The war's trajectory isn't in Ukraine's favour. The country is shorthanded on the front line and needs continued support from its Western partners. Zelenskyy said Saturday that Russian and North Korean troops had suffered heavy losses in the fighting in Russia's Kursk region. "In battles yesterday and today near just one village, Makhnovka, in the Kursk region, the Russian army lost up to a battalion of North Korean infantry soldiers and Russian paratroopers," Zelenskyy said. "This is significant." Zelenskyy said last month that 3,000 North Korean troops had been killed and wounded in Kursk, where Ukrainian forces launched an incursion in August, dealing a blow to Russia's prestige and forcing it to deploy some of its troops from a slow-moving offensive in eastern Ukraine.

The incursion didn't significantly change the dynamic of the war, and military analysts say Ukraine has lost around 40 per cent of the land it initially captured. In other developments, nine people were wounded in a Russian guided bomb attack on the border town of Semenivka in Ukraine's northern Chernihiv region on Saturday evening, local officials said. Moscow sent 103 drones into Ukraine overnight on Sunday, Ukrainian officials said. According to Ukraine's air force, 61 drones were destroyed and 42 were lost likely due to electronic jamming. Russia's Defence Ministry said that 61 Ukrainian drones were shot down overnight into Sunday in five regions of western Russia. No casualties were reported but Rostov regional Gov. Yuri Slyusar said residential buildings and cars had been damaged by falling drone debris.

World Bank to approve USD 20 bn lending package for Pak: Report

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The World Bank is set to approve a USD 20 billion indicative lending package for Pakistan — a pioneering 10-year initiative to protect its funded projects from political transitions and focus on six targeted areas, according to a media report. The programme, titled "Pakistan Country Partnership Framework 2025-35", aims to improve social indicators in the most neglected but important areas. The Express Tribune newspaper reported, citing official documents. It will focus on reducing child stunting, combating learning poverty, enhancing climate resilience, decarbonising the environment, expanding fiscal space, and boosting private investment to improve productivity. These areas have broad support across the political spectrum and are expected to remain unaffected by government changes during the 2025-2035 period, which is anticipated to include at

least three general elections. This 'Country Partnership Framework' is scheduled to be approved by the World Bank board on January 14, following which the global lender's Vice President for South Asia Martin Raiser is also expected to visit Islamabad. According to the World Bank's assessment, the planning framework "will help shield the programme from the country's volatile polity and frequent swings in priorities and requests that follow government changes." The requests arising from government changes have caused "fragmentation of the World Bank portfolio and diluted impacts," it said. A key Pakistani official, who was part of the framework development, said that the World Bank picked Pakistan as the first country where it would introduce the 10-year partnership strategy. "The World Bank's total indicative lending envelope for fiscal year 2025 to 2035 will total around USD 20 billion," reads a

draft of the framework. Out of the USD 20 billion, the World Bank's concessional arm, the International Development Association (IDA), will lend USD 14 billion and the remaining USD 6 billion is projected to be provided through the relatively expensive window — the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). "However, these indicative loans will depend upon the evolution of the IDA funding over the years, Pakistan's standing and performance, including with respect to the Sustainable Development Finance Policy and its debt vulnerability indicators," reads the document. In addition to the USD 20 billion loans to the government of Pakistan, the new framework also aims to support another USD 20 billion private lending by the World Bank's two other arms — the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). This

brings the total package to USD 40 billion but the official loans will be equal to USD 20 billion, according to the newspaper. The new lending will focus on six areas that "currently enjoy strong support across the Pakistani political spectrum," according to the documents. However, it will phase out lending from 10 less-impactful sectors, such as transport, power transmission, telecoms, tertiary healthcare and higher education. The World Bank's concessional and expensive lending will be meant for "larger projects on average, more frequent scale-ups and expansions, and less pilots and one-off operations," according to the planning document. The Washington-based Bank's new strategy marks a shift from "short-term macro-fiscal adjustment programmes and often small investments scattered in a wide array of sectors, to more selective, stable and larger investments in areas that are critical for sustained development and growth."

Israel kills member of Palestinian security forces who it says was militant

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli forces killed a member of the Palestinian security services in the occupied West Bank whom they accused of being a militant. Tearful Palestinians on Sunday meanwhile laid to rest six people killed in Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip the day before, including a teenager. In a separate development, Israel warned that a ceasefire in Lebanon could break down if Hezbollah militants do not withdraw from the border and Lebanese troops fail to police the buffer zone. Israel's paramilitary Border Police said they carried out an operation in the West Bank village of Meithaloun to arrest Hassan Rabaiya, describing him as a wanted militant. They

said he was killed in a shootout while trying to escape, and that the troops found a shotgun, weapons parts and around USD 26,000 in cash inside his home. Meithaloun is near the northern West Bank city of Jenin, an epicentre of Israeli-Palestinian violence in recent years. The Palestinian security services identified Rabaiya as a first lieutenant in its Preventive Security force, saying he was killed while "performing his national duty". The Palestinian Authority has been waging a rare crackdown on militants in Jenin in recent weeks, angering many Palestinians. Last week, the Palestinian Authority ordered the Al Jazeera news network to suspend its operations in the

West Bank. Israel has also banned the Qatar-based broadcaster, accusing it of being a mouthpiece for Hamas militants. Al Jazeera denies the allegations and accuses both Israel and the Palestinian Authority of trying to silence critical coverage. The internationally recognised Palestinian Authority exercises limited autonomy in parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank and cooperates with Israel on security matters. But Israel has long accused it of inciting violence and turning a blind eye to militants, while Palestinian critics view it as a corrupt and ineffective body that aids the occupation. The West Bank has seen a surge of violence since Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack out of Gaza ignited the war there.

Costas Simitis dies at 88

AP ■ ATHENS

Costas Simitis, former prime minister of Greece and the architect of the country's joining the common European currency, the euro, has died at age 88, state TV ERT reported. Simitis was taken to a hospital in the city of Corinth early Sunday morning from his holiday home west of Athens, unconscious and without a pulse, the hospital's director was quoted as saying by Greek media. An autopsy will be performed to determine the cause of death. The government decreed a four-day period of official mourning. Simitis will receive a state funeral. Warm tributes appeared, and not just from political allies. "I bid farewell to Costas Simitis with sadness and respect. A worthy and noble political opponent," Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said in a Facebook post.

180m people have been denied voting rights, says Bangladesh CEC

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh's Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin on Sunday said that almost 180 million people have been denied their voting rights and the Election Commission wants to end their deprivation, The Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported. The CEC, while addressing the inaugural ceremony of a training programme for election officers ahead of a voter list updating exercise, said the Election Commission (EC) wants to remove the fact that the people have been deprived of the voting right for so long. "We want to remove the pain of their deprivation. We are steadfast in our commitment," he said.



The countrywide door-to-door data collection for updating the list of possible voters will start on January 20. The CEC said they are here to hear the 180 million people who have been suffering from the deprivation of voting rights. "We've taken the responsibility so that we can remove their deprivation," he said. He said the commission's main goal is to arrange

a fair and credible election. "It's a marathon race beginning from today up to the delivery of the result," he said. "Our goal, commitment and promises to the nation is to present a free, fair and credible election as the nation has been deprived of it for so long," the CEC said. Meanwhile, the EC has decided to investigate irregularities and shortcomings in all previous elections, including the three preceding elections that have been controversial during the Awami League-rule in 2014, 2018 and 2024. The 2014, 2018 and 2024 national elections are widely regarded as some of the most controversial in the country's history. The newly formed EC, which assumed office on November 21,

has already initiated several reform measures while preparing for the 13th National Election. A few days ago, CEC Nasir Uddin said that ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League may participate in elections unless the government or the judiciary issues a ban against the party. Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, 84, who was sworn-in to lead the interim government after the ouster of Hasina in August, during his Victory Day speech on December 16 indicated that elections might be held by early 2026. "Broadly speaking, the election can be scheduled between the end of 2025 and the first half of 2026," he said. Yunus said that the elections would be held after updating the voters' list.

Snow brings widespread disruption across UK, Germany

AP ■ LONDON

Heavy snow and freezing rain brought widespread disruption across Europe on Sunday, particularly in the UK and Germany, with several major airports forced to suspend flights. With the weather set to stay inclement on Sunday in the UK, there are concerns that many rural communities, particularly in the north of England, could be cut off, with up to 40 centimetres (15 inches) of snow on ground above 300 metres (985 feet). The National Grid, which oversees the country's electricity network, said it had been working to restore power after outages across the country. The company's live map shows

power cuts in Birmingham in central England, Bristol in the west and Cardiff in Wales. Many sporting events have already been postponed, though the heavyweight Premier League fixture between rivals Liverpool and Manchester United is on, following an inspection at Liverpool's home ground of Anfield and of local conditions. Liverpool's John Lennon Airport and Manchester Airport had to close runways, but both appeared poised to reopen them by late Sunday morning. Leeds Bradford Airport, however, said it had closed its runway on Sunday morning. The road network was heavily impacted too, on what would have been a very busy day with

many families returning home from the Christmas and New Year break and students heading back to universities. Many roads had been preemptively closed by local authorities but stranded vehicles and collisions have caused disruption elsewhere. On the railways, many services were cancelled, with National Rail warning of disruption continuing into the working week. Britain's main weather forecaster, the Met Office, says sleet and snow will continue to push north on Sunday and will be heaviest in northern England and into southern Scotland. After experiencing freezing rain, which occurs when super-cold rain freezes on impact, the south will turn milder.

The Environment Agency has also issued eight flood warnings across southern England on the River Taw and River Avon. Snow and ice were also causing havoc in Germany, where a bout of winter weather is spreading from the southwest. Authorities have issued black ice warnings for drivers and pedestrians, advising people to stay home where possible. Frankfurt airport cancelled 120 of its 1,090 planned takeoffs and landings on Sunday, according to the Fraport press office. At Munich airport, only one runway was open while the other one was being cleared. In Baden-Wuerttemberg eight people were injured when a bus skidded off the road near the town of Hemmingen.

Winter storm threatens central US with snow, blizzards

AP ■ WASHINGTON

A major, disruptive winter storm was sweeping across the central US on Sunday, forecasters said, bringing with it a dreaded combination of snow, ice and plunging temperatures. The National Weather Service issued winter storm warnings from Kansas and Missouri — where blizzard conditions are expected — to New Jersey. In the two states where blizzard warnings were in effect, travel "could be very difficult to impossible," with snow whipped around by high winds reducing visibility, the NWS said. Gusty winds could bring down tree branches. "Do not travel unless necessary!" the NWS said. The polar vortex of ultra-cold air usually stays penned up

around the North Pole, spinning like a top. But sometimes it escapes or stretches down to the US, Europe or Asia — and that's when large numbers of people experience intense doses of cold. Studies show a fast-warming Arctic gets some of the blame for the increase in polar vortex stretching or wandering. **Snow and ice in the forecast:** By Saturday evening, widespread heavy snow was likely between central Kansas and Indiana, especially along and north of Interstate 70. Part of the interstate was closed in central Kansas by the afternoon. Total snow and sleet accumulations for parts of Kansas and northern Missouri were predicted to be as high as 14 inches (35.6 centimeters). The storm was forecast to

move then into the Ohio Valley, with severe travel disruptions expected. It will reach the Mid-Atlantic states on Sunday into Monday, with a hard freeze even expected as far south as Florida. Severe thunderstorms, with the possibility of tornadoes and hail, were also possible ahead of the storm system's cold front as it crosses the Lower Mississippi Valley, the National Weather Service warned. Parts of upstate New York saw 3 feet (0.9 meters) or more of snow from a lake effect event expected to last until late Sunday afternoon. **Car wrecks start as storm hits:** A fire truck, several tractor-trailers and passenger vehicles overturned west of Salina, Kansas. Rigs also jackknifed and went into ditches, state

Highway Patrol Trooper Ben Gardner said. He posted a video showing his boots sliding across the highway blacktop like an ice-skating rink. "We are in it now," Gardner said as he drove to the scene of an accident. Online, he begged for prayers and warned that some roadways were nearly impassable. Freezing rain in Wichita, Kansas, sent authorities to multiple crashes in the morning, and police urged drivers to stay home if possible and watch out for emergency vehicles. Governors in neighboring Missouri and nearby Arkansas declared states of emergency. Whiteout conditions threatened to make driving dangerous to impossible, forecasters warned, and heighten the risk of becoming stranded.

Singapore concerned over increasing 'sham marriages' with foreign women

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Singapore authorities are concerned over the increase in 'sham marriages or marriages of convenience' between Singaporean men and foreign women...

UK Opp wants Starmer to scrap plans for Islamophobia definition

PTI ■ LONDON

Britain's Opposition Conservative Party is leading calls for Prime Minister Keir Starmer to scrap government plans for an official definition of Islamophobia...

decades the most appalling crimes from predominantly British-Pakistani men were legalised and actively covered up to prevent disorder.

"The foreign nationals responsible must be deported - no ifs, no buts. And the officials that covered up must be sent to jail for their appalling cowardice.

His intervention comes as sources in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), led by Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner, were referenced by The Daily Telegraph

to claim that officials were considering whether to introduce a formal definition of Islamophobia.

Office of the Superintending Engineer 3rd Circle, Public Works Department, Pithoragarh. National Competitive E-Tender Notice. Letter No. : 83/13 PIU-03/2024 Dated : 04/01/2025

Austrian People's Party nominates Christian Stocker as interim leader

AP ■ VIENNA

Austrian People's Party on Sunday nominated its General Secretary Christian Stocker as interim leader after the expected resignation of Chancellor Karl Nehammer...

dent's office in Vienna. "What is important for me is that the way of stability and the centre can be continued," he said.

Indian Railways Fostering New Regional Growth Hubs for Viksit Bharat. Inauguration of New Jammu Railway Division of Northern Railway & Charlapalli New Terminal Station in the twin cities of Secunderabad and Hyderabad and Foundation stone laying for Rayagada Rail Division Building in Odisha by Narendra Modi Prime Minister.

New Orleans mourns victims of truck attack

AP ■ NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans mourned, wept and danced at a vigil Saturday evening along the famous thoroughfare where a man rammed a pickup truck into a crowd, killing and injuring revellers who were there to celebrate the new year.

pouring of love. I'm floating through it all," she said. New Orleans native Autrele Felix, 28, left a handwritten card beside a memorial for his friend Nicole Perez, a single mother who was killed.

BHOPAL | MONDAY | JANUARY 6, 2025

FDI in India growing rapidly: Goyal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

FDI inflows into the country are surging, with investors from the Middle East, Japan, European Union, and the US recognising India's status as a top investment destination, driving rapid economic growth and generating millions of new jobs, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said. He said that global investors are showing keen interest in India as the country offers several advantages such as strong domestic market, skilled and talented workforce and rule of law. "I can clearly see FDI (foreign direct investment) in India once again growing rapidly and creating millions of jobs. Countries in the Middle East, EFTA region, Japan, and investors from the EU and the US are all realising that India continues to be the most preferred destination for FDI," Goyal told PTI. He added that India's stable and predictable regulatory framework, coupled with a favourable business environment and progressive policies aimed at enhancing ease of doing business, is attracting an increasing number of investors from around the world. "Last month I met a CEO of one of



the largest funds in the US, who is also the largest investor in India, and he shared with me that his investments in India over the last 10 years have been some of the best investments his funds have ever done," he noted. The US fund, Goyal said, informed him that they are investors in India for the last 20 years, but more than 80 per cent of their investments happened in the last few years.

investment (FDI) inflows since January this year despite global uncertainties and challenges. In the January-September period this year, FDI into the country rose by about 42 per cent to USD 42.13 billion. The inflow was at USD 29.73 billion in the year-ago period. The inflows during April-Sept 2024-25 grew by 45 per cent to USD 29.79 billion against USD 20.48 billion in the same period previous fiscal. Total FDI in 2023-24 was a healthy USD 71.28 billion. The key sectors attracting the maximum of these inflows include the services segment, computer software and hardware, telecommunications, trading, construction development, automobile, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals. FDI is allowed through the automatic route in most of the sectors while in areas such as telecom, media, pharmaceuticals and insurance, government approval is required for foreign investors. These inflows are important as India would require huge investments in the coming years for its infrastructure sector to boost growth. Healthy foreign inflows also help in maintaining the balance of payments and the value of the rupee.

Govt to launch another round of PLI scheme for steel sector

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



The government will launch another round of production-linked incentive scheme for the steel sector on Monday. The 'PLI scheme 1.1' will be launched by the steel minister H D Kumaraswamy. "Union Minister of Steel and Heavy Industries... will launch 'PLI scheme 1.1' for the steel industry and call for applications... On January 6," the steel ministry said in a statement. To encourage domestic production of specialty steel and lower imports by drawing in capital investments, the government had earlier introduced the PLI scheme for specialty steel. The scheme has attracted investments worth Rs 27,106 crore, envisaging creation of 14,760 direct employment opportunities with an estimated production of 7.90 million tonnes of specialty steel. As of November 2024, companies have already

invested Rs 18,300 crore and generated over 8,660 in employment. The government has been interacting regularly with the participating companies and based on feedback, it was felt that there was a scope to notify the scheme again to attract more participation, the statement said. The concept of Production-Linked Incentives (PLI) was conceived during the Covid-induced global lockdowns of 2020, emphasising the need to boost domestic manufacturing. Initially launched for three sectors, the PLI scheme was later extended to include steel in November 2020. The government had earlier said that it is working on another round of the PLI scheme for specialty steel as the response for the first round of the initiative did not meet expectations. Specialty steel is still one area where more is needed to be done. The government brought a PLI to incentivise the manufacturing of specialty steel but the uptake of the sops was not as expected, the government had earlier said. Specialty steel is a high-grade product used in sectors like defence, automobile, and electrical, among others.

Budget: CII suggests seven-point agenda for employment generation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The upcoming annual budget for FY26 could announce further measures to boost employment generation, CII said on Sunday, emphasising that job creation at a mass scale is important to engage the young population productively, and drive inclusive growth in the world's most populous nation. The industry body has suggested a seven-point agenda to harness India's demographic dividend, including an integrated national employment policy, support to labour-intensive sectors, and setting up an international mobility authority, among other targeted measures. With a median age of just 29 years, India is a young country, and is set to add 133 million people to its working-age population by 2050. The government could consider launching an internship programme in government offices in rural areas for the college-educated youth, CII said. It argued that this initiative would create short-term



employment opportunities in government offices while bridging the gap between education and professional skills. The programme would also help augment the available manpower resources for the effective implementation of various rural programmes and government initiatives. CII has also proposed introducing a new provision under income tax rule in lieu of Section 80JJA to encourage new employment. The new provision should continue as Chapter VIA deduction from gross total income, which is available even if a taxpayer opts for concessional tax regime.

using CSR funds, the formalisation of sectors like care economy, and establishing government-supported creches in industrial clusters could be taken to increase female labour force participation. Moreover, rolling out labour codes while ensuring social security coverage to the gig and platform workers would further strengthen the employment landscape. Many parts of the world are facing workforce shortages due to ageing populations, and India should leverage this opportunity. The government could consider setting up an international mobility authority under the Ministry of External Affairs. This authority could facilitate G2G collaborations for helping Indian youth tap the overseas employment opportunities. The authority could also work with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship to help develop skill development programmes aligned with global opportunities. In addition to technical skills, the programmes should also include cultural training, and foreign language skills.

Global trends, earnings, FII trading activity major drivers for markets this week: Analysts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Equity markets this week will take cues from global trends, trading activity of foreign investors and quarterly earnings, with TCS kick-starting the results calendar on Thursday, analysts said. Macroeconomic data announcements and the rupee-dollar trend would also dictate market trends, experts noted. "The Q3 FY25 earnings season will begin this week, with IT giants and leading financial institutions set to announce their results. TCS and Tata Elxsi will declare results on Thursday, January 9, 2025. Investors will closely monitor individual stock performances. "Following the earnings season, markets' focus is expected to shift towards the upcoming Union Budget and the policy decisions of the Trump 2.0 administration," Praveesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst, Swastika Investmart Ltd, said. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) have been net sellers, while domestic institutional investors (DIIs) have been actively buying. This ongoing tug-of-war between FIIs and DIIs is likely to play a crucial role in determining the



direction of the market this week, he added. "Looking ahead to the second week of the year, several key events are likely to influence market sentiment. The earnings season begins with IT major TCS, a key trigger as any signs of improvement in Q3 numbers could reverse the ongoing trend of FII outflows. Additionally, a host of economic data, including HSBC services PMI, and IIP, will be closely monitored for further cues," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said. The rupee depreciated 4 paise to close at a record low of 85.79 against the US dollar on Friday. Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said, "Looking ahead, the market is likely to focus on Q3 earnings, with expectations of improvement in earnings on a QoQ basis." On the global front, FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) minutes will be announced during the week. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 524.04 points, or 0.66 per cent, and the Nifty climbed 191.35 points, or 0.80 per cent. On Friday, the 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 720.60 points, or 0.90 per cent, to close at 79,223.11. The Nifty tanked 183.90 points, or 0.76 per cent, to 24,004.75. "Despite the short recovery in the past two sessions, markets lost the momentum as there is still a lot of pessimism due to slowing growth, higher domestic valuations, foreign fund outflows and uncertainty over US trade policies post Trump's resumption as the country's president.

Karur Vysya Bank adds two more branches in Tamil Nadu

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Private sector Karur Vysya Bank has inaugurated two more branches, taking the overall branch network to 475 in Tamil Nadu, the bank said on Sunday. The Tamil Nadu-based bank inaugurated two branches, one each in Chennai and the other at Tiruchirappalli. According to a press release, during the current financial year, the company has added 28 new branches, taking the overall presence of the banking network to 866 across the country. The new branches would provide basic banking transactions and would also address the specific needs of customers. It would also provide banking and financial services covering retail, institutional and consumer lending. As on September 30, 2024, the bank's total business stood at Rs 1,76,138 crore with a deposit base of Rs 95,839 crore and advances at Rs 80,299 crore. In the last financial year, the bank recorded its highest net profit of Rs 1,605 crore, the release added.

FMCG makers expect inflation to hit volume growth, operating profit in Q3



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hit by inflation, higher input costs and pricing measures, fast-moving consumer goods companies are expected to see a contraction in their gross margin and a modest-to-flat operating profit in the October-December quarter. Several FMCG makers are likely to log a low single-digit rise in their revenue, returning to the cycle of value-driven growth. One of the reasons could be that a number of companies have opted for a price hike in the December quarter due to rising costs of input items such as copra, vegetable oil, and palm oil. The price hikes came at a time when the urban market was dragged down by lowered consumption due to high food inflation. However, the rural market, which is slightly above one-third of the total FMCG market, stayed ahead of it. Some of the listed FMCG companies, such as Dabur and Marico, shared their updates for the third quarter

trade, which mainly consists of neighbourhood kirana stores, was under pressure in the October-December period. Marico expressed similar views, saying, "During the quarter, the sector witnessed steady demand trends on the back of improving rural consumption and stable sentiment in urban vis-à-vis the preceding quarter." Over domestic volume growth, Marico said it expects an 'uptick' in the December quarter but on a sequential basis and said its operating profit growth will be modest due to higher input costs. It expects a "higher-than-anticipated gross margin contraction" as key inputs faced 'higher-than-expected' inflation, said a quarterly update by Marico, which owns brands such as Saffola, Parachute, Hair & Care, Nihar and Livon, among others. "Among key inputs, copra prices remained firm at higher-than-expected levels and vegetable oil prices moved up during the quarter, while crude oil derivatives remained range-bound. The rising trend in input costs is expected to result in a higher-than-anticipated gross margin contraction on a year-on-year basis, as the company continues to favour consumer franchise expansion in the current environment," said Marico. According to NuVama, the urban demand scenario is challenging due to inflationary pressures, low wage growth and higher housing rental costs.



CCI will focus on leveraging tech for fair competition: Chairperson Kaur

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

CCI will focus on strengthening enforcement, enhancing collaborations and leveraging technology to ensure fair competition in the country, its chief Ravneet Kaur has said. Competition Commission of India (CCI), which has the mandate to foster fair competition as well as curb anti-competitive practices, has been working on understanding the dynamic interplay between traditional market practices and the rapidly evolving digital economy. "There is an imperative need for a nimble, proactive regulatory approach that adapts to emerging market challenges, particularly in sectors driven by technology and innovation," Kaur told PTI in a recent interview. Various amendments to the Competition Act were made in 2023 leading to introduction of new mechanisms, including settlement, commitment and deal value thresholds. The CCI Chairperson

emphasised that the endeavour is to strike a balance between effective oversight and a simplified, market-friendly regulatory regime. "Going forward, our focus will be on strengthening enforcement, enhancing collaborations and leveraging technology to uphold fair competition in India," she said. Among other efforts to boost its capabilities, the watchdog plans to hire more domain experts to help assess competition amid rapid changes in the technology landscape. "Recruitment of domain experts in areas like AI, data analytics and digital markets is a priority. This will ensure that CCI remains future ready and well equipped to address challenges posed by rapidly evolving technologies," Kaur said. Currently, the regulator is conducting two market studies on competition issues in relation to artificial intelligence and to renewable energy space across BRICS nations.

Govt should lower GST on cement at 18 per cent, frame policy to boost demand: JK Lakshmi

PTI ■ PATNA



The government should reduce GST on cement to 18 per cent from 28 per cent and take some policy measures in the upcoming Budget to boost consumption of this key building material, a senior official of JK Lakshmi Cement said. In an interview with PTI, Arun Shukla, President and Director of JK Lakshmi Cement, said there is a case to increase cement manufacturing capacity in India to meet the rising demand, which is expected to grow at an average annual rate of 7-8 per cent. "One of the long-cherished dream, or the wish for us, has been reducing GST on cement," Shukla told PTI on the sidelines of 'Bihar Business Connect 2024' meet held here recently. In India, cement is taxed at the highest rate of 28 per cent and this needs to be reduced to 18 per cent, he said while replying to a query on the Budget wishlist from the industry. "Cement is, I would say, one of the major component of driving growth in the economy," Shukla said, adding that cement is required to build world-class infrastructure that can support the growth of the Indian economy. He also emphasised on the need to enhance the consumption of cement in India. "Cement is one of the major drivers of growth, so how we can really increase

consumption of cement?" he said. Shukla said the cement concrete roads have more longevity and in the long run and it is more cost-effective than bitumen roads. "So my wish would be to really kind of drive this (cement consumption), through maybe some of the policies and specifications..." he said. JK Lakshmi Cement, part of the JK Organisation, is investing Rs 500 crore in Bihar to set up a manufacturing plant in Madhubani district. The Bharat Hari Singhania family-promoted JK Lakshmi Cement had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the state government in 2023 investors meet itself for its proposed manufacturing unit. The company has already acquired land and is in the process of obtaining other approvals to set up the plant. "We want to cater to local demand from this plant at Madhubani in Bihar," he said, adding that the plant is expected to be operational within a year. Shukla complimented the Bihar government for fulfilling its promises, including fiscal incentives, saying "they are really walking the talk." About the company's experience in Bihar so far, Shukla said, "I think the experience has been encouraging, and the very reason I am here for the second time to attend this meeting was to express my gratitude, but to also encourage my other colleagues to set up..." "The kind of support we have got from all corners, and the bureaucracy in Bihar was amazing. And this is one of perhaps the best experience which we had in setting up a new plant at new location," he said. JK Lakshmi Cement has 18 million tonnes of annual capacity. "We have set a target to reach 30 million tonnes by 2030," he said. The 12 million additional capacity expansions across various geographies are on track, Shukla said.



COMFORTING COLOURS

Colours have a very powerful impact on our mind and moods. This impact can be felt visually and subconsciously. Imagine a room, half painted with bright colours and other half with naturals and blacks, very similar to the web series *Wednesday*. Every individual has their own colour choice and associated psychological effects. Black might be appealing to one individual and pink to the other. It is so interesting to know the whole pseudoscience behind the colour theory. It has become very important to correctly use the strategy of colour around like in offices, houses, study area, workshop place etc. which is not merely an aesthetic choice; it is a powerful tool that can evoke feelings of comfort, calmness, and happiness. Understanding colour theory, the colour spectrum, and the application of colour codes can help anyone create environments that nurture the body, mind, and soul.

THE SCIENCE OF COLOUR THEORY

Colour theory is the foundation of how we perceive and interact with colours. It encompasses the colour wheel, which is divided into primary, secondary, and tertiary colours which we all have studied in our primary schooling.

Each colour elicits different emotional responses. For instance, warm colours like red and orange can stimulate energy and excitement, while cool colours such as blue and green promote calmness and relaxation.

In real life the application of colour theory can transform a space into chaos or calmness.

For example, a healthcare facility painted in soft blues and greens can create a soothing atmosphere for patients, reducing anxiety and promoting healing.

Conversely, vibrant yellows and oranges in a creative workspace can inspire innovation and collaboration.

Understanding the *Colour Band* and *Spectrum* is very important, to choose the right shade. The colour spectrum, which includes the visible light spectrum, ranges from red to violet. Each colour in this spectrum has unique psychological effects.

Colours influence our emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in profound ways, making them more than just aesthetic choices, writes **ANURAAG BHARDWAJ**



SOME SYMBOLIC MEANINGS OF VARIOUS COLOURS WITH PERSONALITY TRAITS:

RED: Symbolises passion, energy, and action; often associated with assertive, energetic individuals or leaders.

GREEN: Represents growth, harmony, and balance; often linked to nurturing, environmentally conscious, and calm personalities.

PURPLE: Conveys luxury, spirituality, and creativity; usually associated with imaginative, artistic, or introspective individuals.

YELLOW: Symbolises happiness, optimism, and intellect; often connected to cheerful, open-minded, and social people.

BLUE: Represents calmness, trust, and stability; typically associated with reliable, calm, and thoughtful individuals.

BLACK: Conveys sophistication, authority, and mystery; often linked to powerful, serious, and independent personalities.

WHITE: Symbolises purity, simplicity, and innocence; usually associated with peaceful, organised, and honest individuals.

ORANGE: Represents enthusiasm, warmth, and creativity; often linked to adventurous, energetic, and sociable people.

Colour choices vary from person to person, and there are many factors that can influence how someone perceives colours. An individual can utilise the colour band to create dynamic environments. For instance, a gradient of colours transitioning from warm to cool can guide individuals through a space, influencing their mood as they move. So how can anyone select the *Colour Codes* and understand *Shade Cards* for their use.

There are multiple options in shades of whites, yellow, red etc. available at the stores. So, to choose the right shade, the first method is *The Pantone Matching System (PMS)* is one widely used colour code system that provides standardised colours for various applications, from paint to textiles. Second, you can refer to the *colour fan deck* of any paint brand and choose from the colour family you like the most and feels aesthetic to you.

Most recommended colours to promote mental health are *light taupe, beige, pastel pinks, lavender, pastel greens, white or ivory, icy blue*. By understanding the psychological effects of colour and utilising these tools effectively, a person can create spaces that not only look beautiful but also nurture the body, mind, and soul. Try to unlock new possibilities for enhancing your daily lives through the power of colours.

— The author is an architect and is the founder of Anjaney Vastu & AB Architects



BREATHE IN AND BREATHE OUT

Ever wondered sometimes you take a deep breath in and you feel happy, but you don't know how that happiness comes from? Ever wondered why even one of the nostrils gets blocked and throws you off the track? Well in this article we are about to find out the healing through breathing. Now there will be no more queues for the doctor's appointment for little things and no more worries as we're about to find out how and why.

Before starting and before telling let's just figure it out I hope everybody has two holes in the nostrils. One is on the right and one is on the left. In yoga it is said one is *Ida* and the other is *pingla*, one is a feminine and the other is a masculine. Before starting, let's just figure it out. Let's go for the test now tell me which nostril is working more than the other, is it left or is it right. Just test it. As per the science of yoga the right nostril is associated with the heat with the sun and that is why it is also called the *Suryanadi*.

The *left nostril* is associated with calmness and coolness and that is why it is known as the *Chandra nadi*. Both of the *nadis* are equally important as one heats the body which is essential for living and one cools the body which is also equivalent for the living. But real bliss happens only when these two are working absolutely fine. That means you're breathing from both of your nostrils which is a rare phenomena and it is also known as a *Sushumna nadi* (middle nadi). The more both nostrils are working the



Simple breathing techniques can regulate your energy, calm your mind, and enhance overall well-being without relying on medicine, says **YASH GUPTA**



better the body the mind and the life will be as per the yoga and in the spiritual path as well. So all of the spiritual paths are associated only and only with the breath, nothing more but nothing less. So once if you're feeling very anxious and the restlessness comes up, are you feeling a high blood pressure just do one very simple thing: put your right arm onto your level as you're placing your arm on the shoulder of your friend? This will activate your left nostril and help you cool down the body. With this all of



the anxiety, worries, restlessness and the blood pressure will cool down naturally and you don't have to rely on any sort of medicine. Just your *nostrils* are enough to keep you in the balance and the same way if you're feeling very cold, like the winter season right now, try raising your left arm onto the shoulder of a friend and then see what magic happens to your body would naturally start to heat up. Now you can switch between your modes and regulate your body temperature accordingly. If

you don't have time to raise your arm and sit for five minutes simply use the cotton and plug it in your opposite ear and just stuff it completely so that it creates a vacuum. And then bingo that's done. You become your own doctor using just a breath as simple as that it is possible the healing lies in your breathing. Remember to breathe properly to live harmoniously.

— The author is an Art of Living faculty, meditation and mind coach and professional yoga trainer

Australia beat India to reach WTC final; reclaim BGT after 10 years

PTI ■ SYDNEY

listless India was knocked out of the World Test Championship (WTC) final as Australia cruised to a six-wicket victory in the fifth Test here on Sunday to reclaim the Border-Gavaskar Trophy after 10 years, leaving the visitors with much to deliberate in a difficult transition phase made worse by over-the-hill batting stars.

Australia won the five-match series 3-1 and qualified for the WTC final against South Africa slated at the Lord's from June 11 to 15.

While Australia would be eyeing a second successive WTC mace, it would be the first time since the event's inception that India won't be in the finals. The team had finished runner-up in the previous two summit clashes.

On Sunday, the target of 162 could have been trickier for Australia had India's new Test captain Jasprit Bumrah been in a position to bowl despite painful back spasms. But once Virat Kohli led

the team out, it was as clear as the Sydney skyline that defending the total would be next to impossible. Bumrah deservedly walked away with the player of the series honour for his astonishing haul of 32 wickets in five matches. But it was hardly a consolation for the shambolic team performance that India managed, showing resilience only in brief phases.

"Little frustrating but sometimes you have to respect your body, you can't fight your body. Disappointing, probably missed out on the spiciest wicket of the series," Bumrah said of his inability to bowl in the second innings during the presentation ceremony.

Prasidh Krishna (3/65 in 12 overs) and Mohammed Siraj (1/69 in 12 overs) were not a patch on Bumrah and despite multiple breakthroughs, they bowled too many poor deliveries to make it easy for the hosts to canter home in just 27 overs.

Usman Khawaja (41), Travis Head (34 not out) and debutant Beau Webster (39 not out) completed



the formalities, putting an end to India's misery in a tour that has exposed all of the team's batting frailties and an unhealthy reliance on Bumrah.

Once Bumrah was ruled out after he tried some shadow bowling during the morning warm-up session and didn't feel comfortable, the writing was on the wall.

The magnificent Scott Boland (6/45) and the ever-reliable Pat Cummins (3/44) polished off the Indian tail for just 157 in 39.5 overs. If one takes out Rishabh Pant's fiery 61 and Yashasvi Jaiswal's 22, the other nine players collectively contributed a mere 74 runs.

The series would leave the men who matter in Indian cricket establishment with a lot on their minds when they deliberate on ways to get the house back in order.

With six of the completed innings yielding less than 200 runs, one doesn't need a soothsayer to tell what went wrong on the tour.

Regular skipper Rohit Sharma and

batting talisman Virat Kohli flopped with technical issues troubling them throughout the season.

Jaiswal (391 runs) was the top-scorer despite three ducks followed by rookie Nitish Kumar Reddy (298 runs), KL Rahul (276 runs) and Pant (255 runs).

As much as one wants to take a nuanced view of Rohit and Kohli's poor form but it is undeniable that both veterans are finding it increasingly difficult to stem the rot that has set in their batting.

There are a few good youngsters in the fringes and the new World Test Championship cycle would demand that they be given a chance to develop over time.

While a tough call on Kohli and Rohit is awaited, the BCCI brass also needs to seriously look at whether coach Gautam Gambhir is the right man to be in-charge across formats.

Under Gambhir, India have lost six Tests out of 10 during the season going by apart from being defeated in an ODI series in Sri Lanka.

If you have commitment towards red ball, play domestic cricket, says Gambhir

PTI ■ SYDNEY

India head coach Gautam Gambhir said on Sunday that struggling stars Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli "still have the hunger to excel" but urged all senior players, including the duo, to play domestic games and show their "commitment" towards red-ball cricket.

Known for his plain speak, the two-time World Cup hero also didn't give any assurances on whether Rohit or Kohli will be a part of the Test set-up moving forward.

Both the stars were woefully out of form during the just-concluded Test series against Australia that the visitors lost 1-3 to surrender the Border-Gavaskar Trophy as well as a spot in the World Test Championship final.

"It's not the right moment right now for me to talk about where we are going to be after

five months. A lot of things change in sport. Forms change, people change, attitude changes, everything changes in sport. And we all know that five months is a long time," Gambhir said at the post-series press conference.

"So let's see before the England series (in July) what's going to happen. But whatever will happen, will happen for the best interest of Indian cricket," asserted the former opener.

Rohit scored 31 runs in five innings before dropping himself from the playing eleven and Kohli managed 190 in nine knocks, including a second innings century after India had taken a lead of more than 300. A glaring failure for Kohli was his inability to avoid being dismissed on deliveries that were bowled outside the off stump.

Asked if he would like the seniors to play at least one round, if not two, of Ranji Trophy starting January 23, Gambhir sent across a clear message.

"I would always like everyone to play post-series domestic cricket. That is how much importance domestic cricket needs to be given. Not only one game, if they are available and they have the commitment to play red-ball cricket, everyone should play domestic cricket," Gambhir said.

"As simple as it can get. If you don't give importance to domestic cricket, you will never get the desired players that you want in Test cricket," he explained.

Kohli last played a Ranji Trophy match in 2012 while Rohit's most recent domestic red-ball game was in the 2015-16 season.

The 'Ro-Ko' Dilemma The tough-talking former



player refused to be drawn into a discussion on the much-speculated future of Kohli and Rohit, insisting that they are the best judge when it

can say is that they still have the hunger, they're still people and hopefully they can continue to take Indian cricket forward," he said.

"...Ultimately whatever they plan, they will plan for the best interest of Indian cricket."

He wants the star duo to do some soul searching as to where they stand. "First of all, every individual knows where their game and hunger is. That is the most important thing for any sport and any profession."

"It is not just about the sport, how hungry you are, how passionate you are and whether the team is moving forward with your contributions or not," he pointed out.

I need to be fair to everyone Gambhir, in his pre-match press conference, spoke about honesty in the dressing room.

He reiterated the position on Sunday, saying that his responsibility is to be fair to everyone irrespective of their experience and stature.

"If I am fair with only two or three individuals and not with others, then I am being dishonest to my job," he said.

"So, whether it is a player who has not made a debut yet or a player who has played 100 Test matches, the simple aim of my job is that I have to be absolutely fair and equal to everyone," he added.

During his days in Kolkata Knight Riders and Lucknow Super Giants, Gambhir often stressed about the need for a happy dressing room. He said that philosophy holds good for the India set-up too.

"If you're committed to what we are doing with honesty, I think that should be fine. And more importantly, to keep the dressing room happy, I have to be absolutely honest and

equal and fair to everyone in that dressing room."

Rohit has shown accountability Gambhir lauded Rohit for opting out of the fifth Test due to poor form.

"If a leader has taken this decision, I don't think there is any problem. We talked about accountability and that starts from the top and Rohit Sharma started that in the last match," the 43-year-old said.

"I am the first one to accept mistakes" When asked if there is an acceptance of everything that has gone wrong on the tour, Gambhir was quick to declare that he never runs from accountability.

"The first thing is that the person sitting here will accept the mistakes first. So, don't worry about the fact that the mistakes will not be accepted here," he replied.



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पीएम जनमन योजना अंतर्गत

21 जिलों में

66 मोबाइल मेडिकल यूनिट

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शुभारंभ



डॉ. मोहन यादव, मुख्यमंत्री



नरेन्द्र मोदी, प्रधानमंत्री

मुख्यमंत्री डॉ. मोहन यादव

द्वारा

6 जनवरी, 2025 | मुख्यमंत्री निवास, भोपाल

मोबाइल यूनिट में सुविधाएं

- 21 जनजातीय बहुल जिलों के 87 विकासखण्डों के तीन लाख से अधिक लोगों को मिलेगा लाभ।
- निःशुल्क चिकित्सीय परामर्श, 14 विभिन्न जांच सुविधाएं एवं 65 दवाइयां होंगी उपलब्ध।
- सिकल सेल, टीबी, एनीमिया की जांच तथा मातृ स्वास्थ्य सेवाएं।



सीधा प्रसारण

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