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WORLD 8
SOUTH KOREAN ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENCY, POLICE DEBATE MEASURES TO DETAIN IMPEACHED PRESIDENT

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States dismiss HMPV scare, as cases rise



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amidst surge in the H1N1 virus, a new Metapneumovirus (HMPV) in neighbouring China, India on Monday confirmed three cases of pathogen — two in Karnataka and one in Gujarat. However, the Government and health officials have assured that there is no need to panic as it is not a new pathogen, adding that regular flu shots or even the three Covid vaccine doses makes one immune to this infection.

In Bengaluru, a three-month-old baby, who has been discharged, and an eight-month-old, who is recovering at a hospital, were the two cases. A two-month-old was also found infected in Ahmedabad in Gujarat with respiratory symptoms and subsequently tested positive for HMPV. All the cases have been detected in children, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said, adding that they were identified during routine surveillance for multiple respiratory viral pathogens. They had no international travel history, added the ICMR, ruling out exposure from other regions or countries.

Even as the number of reported cases climbed to three in the country, health experts and government officials have emphasised that there is no need for alarm, as HMPV has been circulating globally and in India for years where most of the population are immune to it. It recently gained attention after its outbreak was reported in China.

Union Health Minister JP Nadda on Monday said in a video message, that there is no need to panic as health experts have clarified that HMPV is not a new virus and it was first identified in 2001 and has been circulating in the entire world since many years.

Naxals blow up DRG vehicle, eight dead

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RAIPUR

In their biggest strike on security forces in Chhattisgarh in two years, Naxals blew up a vehicle using an improvised explosive device weighing 60 to 70kg, killing eight District Reserve Guard (DRG) jawans and their civilian driver in Bijapur district on Monday. Police suspect the powerful IED was planted long back along the route used by DRG, a state police unit involved in anti-insurgency operations.

The explosive device went off near Ambeli village under the Kutru police station area at around 2.15 pm when DRG

personnel from Dantewada district were returning in their Scorpio vehicle after an anti-Naxalite operation, Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) Sundarraj P said. Eight DRG jawans travelling in the SUV and the driver of the vehicle were killed on the spot, located around 70km from district headquarters Bijapur, the official added.

DRG draws its personnel mostly from local tribal population and ranks of surrendered Naxalites. Reinforcement was rushed to the spot and the bodies were being evacuated. A search operation was launched in the area by security forces to



Security personnel at the site following the death of eight jawans of District Reserve Guards (DRG) and a civilian driver after Naxals blew up their vehicle with an improvised explosive device, in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district

hunt down those responsible for the killings, the IPS officer informed. The DRG personnel targeted by Left-wing extremists were involved in an anti-Naxalite operation carried out for three days on the borders of

Narayanpur, Dantewada and Bijapur districts in the Bastar region by joint teams of security personnel, the IG said. Five Naxalites were killed in the three-day-long operation and one DRG head constable also lost his life, he said.

After the operation, DRG personnel from Dantewada were returning to their base in the vehicle when the attack occurred, Sundarraj added. "It seems the IED used in the attack weighed 60kg to 70kg. However, forensic experts are at the spot to gather exact details," Deputy Inspector General of Police (south Bastar) Kamlochan Kashyap said.

investigation suggests the IED was old and planted long ago as wires connected to it were buried deep in the ground and grass had grown on the layer of soil over the device, he said.

Kashyap admitted there were lapses which led to the tragic incident, but did not elaborate further. During an inspection of the blast site, around 150-metre-long wire connected to the trigger of the command IED was recovered, officials said. Visuals from the spot, around 400km from state capital Raipur, showed a huge crater, more than 10-feet deep, splitting the concrete road after the blast.

EC tightens scrutiny, as voter registration spikes in Delhi

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The announcement of the Mahila Samman Yojana by the ruling AAP doling out Rs 2100 to eligible women citizens has seen a 'sudden' spike in the electoral roll enrolment in the national Capital. The Election Commission (EC) has directed officials to scrutinize and verify each and every application for new voter registration to identify genuine people amid the ongoing war of words between the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) over the manipulation of voters list. The EC said it has received an unprecedented number of 5.1 lakhs form-6 for new enrolment in the last 20 days. The EC mandates strict verification processes including field checks and personal hearings to ensure authenticity. Notably, the gender ratio also increased from 855 per 1000 to 859 to 1000, an increase of 4 percent.

According to a statement from the office of Delhi Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), over 5.1 lakh applications for new voter registration were received in the last 20 days, during the revision period from October 29 to November 28, 2024, 1,35,089 new voters were registered,



69,177 names were deleted, and 83,825 corrections were made to the voter list. The number of voters registered in the national capital has 1,55,24,858 as compared to 1,53,57,529 as on October 29, 2024, marking a net increase of 1.09 percent. Of them, 83.49 lakh of them male, 71.73 lakh female and 1261 transgender. The Delhi electoral roll has witnessed a rise of 8,06,739 voters since the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. On January 22, 2024, before the Lok Sabha polls, the total number of voters in Delhi was 1,47,18,119. "Unprecedented rush of form-6 for new voter registration has been noticed since 16th

December, 2024; as over 5.1 lakhs form-6 have been received in Delhi since this date. This is after adding 3.08 Lakhs new voters since draft publication date 29.10.2024. This trend of unprecedented increase of form-6 and that too after 20 days of last date of receiving claims and objections as scheduled in SSR-2025 (28.11.2024), is unexpected and needs greater scrutiny," the Delhi CEO said. The Delhi CEO office said directions have been issued to all electoral registration officers to scrutinize each and every form strictly as per ECI guidelines.

"100% field verification shall be done by EROs and AEROs to identify the genuine eligible persons. EROs are also conducting personal hearing in doubtful cases as per ECI guidelines. Till now, eight FIRs have been filed against 24 people for submission of false/tampered documents for obtaining voter ID. EROs have been directed to take stringent action against the persons, who are submitting false claims and fake documents to get enrolment in the electoral roll," the CEO's office said. The poll officials have denied the claims, saying that all due processes are followed for addition and deletion of voters.



Congress takes on AAP, promises ₹2,500 to women

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Countering the guarantee of Rs 2,100 under 'Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana' by the AAP, the Congress on Monday announced 'Pyari Didi Yojana' for the women of Delhi, promising an assistance of Rs 2,500 if they win the Delhi assembly elections, with senior party leaders including Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar hitting out at the AAP for not fulfilling their poll promise made to the women in Punjab.

To announce the scheme in the Capital, the party brought in Shivakumar with the senior leaders boasting of the scheme rolled out in Karnataka by the Congress government.

Sensex slumps over 1,250 pts on earnings growth concerns

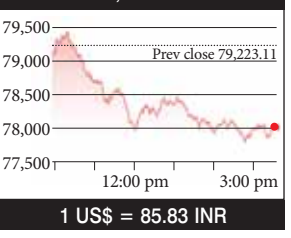
PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty crashed 1.6 per cent on Monday due to an across-the-board selloff, as concerns over third-quarter earnings growth and the continued flight of foreign capital sapped risk appetite.

Besides, traders said that the new HMPV scare, depreciating rupee and weak trend in Asian markets further weighed on sentiment.

Extending loss for the second straight session, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 1,258.12 points or 1.59 per cent to close below the 78,000 level at 77,964.99. During the day, it plunged 1,441.49 points or

MARKETS



1.81 per cent to 77,781.62. As many as 3,474 stocks declined, 656 advanced and 114 remained unchanged on the BSE. The NSE Nifty slumped 388.70 points or 1.62 per cent to 23,616.05.

"Emerging markets are undergoing consolidation due to uncertainties surrounding new US economic policies, the Fed's hawkish stance on future rate cuts, potential upward revision for CY25 inflation, and a strong dollar, all of which are negatively impacting market sentiment. The primary catalyst for a sharp sell-off in the domestic market appears to be concerns over the human metapneumovirus (HMPV). "Additionally, the initial Q3 consensus earnings estimate suggests a potential gradual recovery in domestic corporate earnings, which could explain the domestic market's underperformance compared to global markets led by premium valuation," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.



IMD issues fog alert, cold wave hit Delhi, Gurgaon

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Rain lashed several parts of the national capital and Gurgaon adding to the intense chill amid the cold wave conditions in the region. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday issued a yellow alert for fog for the next three consecutive days as the national capital continues to shiver under cold with a minimum temperature of 9.6 degrees Celsius.

The national capital experienced harsh weather and cold wave conditions early Monday morning, with dropping temperatures and biting winds. Moreover, several areas in the city received showers in the early morning hours following western disturbance, the IMD added. Before the rains, several areas were under the grip of a moderate and shallow fog that reduced the visibility affecting rail, air and road traffic. The fog cover thinned out, improving morning visibility. Najafgarh

WEATHER

AQI	335
MAX	16.9°C(-2.1)
MIN	9.6°C(+2.7)

recorded 2.5 mm of rainfall, Pitampura 2 mm, Palam 1 mm and Pusa 0.5 mm between 5:30 am and 8:30 am.

According to the IMD, the minimum visibility at Palam airport was recorded at 300 meters at 5:30 am. Despite the fog, flight operations at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport remained normal, with runway visibility between 1,000 and 2,000 meters. Low visibility procedures were in effect, as general visibility was recorded at 600 meters. Satellite imagery revealed fog over northwest and central India, with clouds forming over parts of Haryana, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh, indicating a possibility of rain.

TN Guv sulks, walks out of Assembly without addressing

KUMAR CHELLAPAN ■ CHENNAI



The face-off between the DMK Government and the Governor of the State, worsened on Monday as RN Ravi walked out of the Legislative Assembly without addressing the Budget Session 2025.

The Governor, a widely respected former Indian Police Service Officer, was upset over the non-playing of the national anthem at the beginning of the session. This is the fourth incident of such kind happening in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly since January 2022.

"The Constitution of Bharat and the National Anthem were once again insulted in the Tamil Nadu Assembly today. Respecting the National Anthem is the first Fundamental Duty as enshrined in our Constitution.

It is sung in all the State legislatures at the beginning and end of Governor's address. Today on arrival of the Governor to the House only Tamil Thaaai Vaazhthuwas sung. Governor respectfully reminded the House of its constitutional duty. He fervently appealed to the Hon'ble Chief Minister who is the Leader of the House and the Hon'ble Speaker for singing the National Anthem. However, they curiously refused. It is a matter of grave concern. Not to be a party to such brazen disrespect to the Constitution and the National Anthem, Governor in deep anguish left the House," said the Raj Bhavan in its post on X.

Members of the Congress (a partner of the DMK-led alliance) staged a walk out in protest against the Governor's action. Sources in Tamil Nadu Congress Committee said that the walk out by party MLAs followed a directive by the High Command in New Delhi. The refusal of Tamil Nadu Government to play national anthem has become a recurring point of contention between the Raj Bhavan and the government led by the DMK. The Dravidian major has made it known many times in the past that the party was against the post of Governor.

Trudeau resigns, amid rise in economic, political chaos

PTI ■ TORONTO

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau plans to announce his resignation Monday, an official said, in the face of rising discontent over his leadership, and after the abrupt departure of his finance minister signalled growing turmoil within his government.

The official said that Trudeau will stay on as prime minister until a new leader of the Liberal Party is chosen. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak ahead of an official announcement later in the day.

A different official familiar with the matter said Parliament, which had been due to resume Jan 27, will be suspended until March 24. The timing will allow for a Liberal Party leadership race. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak about the matter publicly.

It was not clear when nationwide elections would be held to pick a permanent replacement.

Trudeau came to power in 2015 after 10 years of Conservative Party rule, and had initially been hailed for returning the country to its liberal past. But the 53-year-old scion of one of Canada's most famous prime ministers became deeply unpopular with voters in recent years over a range of issues, including the soaring cost of food and housing, and surging immigration.

The political upheaval comes at a difficult moment for Canada



internationally. US President-elect Donald Trump has threatened to impose 25% tariffs on all Canadian goods if the government does not stem what Trump calls a flow of migrants and drugs in the US - even though far fewer of each crosses into the US from Canada than from Mexico, which Trump has also threatened.

Canada is a major exporter of oil and natural gas to the US, which also relies on its northern neighbour for steel, aluminum and autos.

Trudeau has kept publicly mum in recent weeks, despite intensifying pressure for him to step down. "His long silence following this political drama speaks volumes about the weakness of his current position," said Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal.

Police fight over jurisdiction as corpse lay on road for four hours

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

In a grim display of apathy, a 127-year-old accident victim's body lay on the road for over four hours as police from Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh argued over jurisdiction. The tragic incident unfolded on the border between the two states, leaving grieving family members and angry locals demanding accountability.

Rahul Ahirwar, a resident of Tikamgarh, Madhya Pradesh, was en route to Delhi to seek work as a laborer when tragedy struck. Around 7 PM, while crossing the road, he was hit by an unidentified vehicle. Residents rushed to the spot

and informed Harpalpur police in Madhya Pradesh. The officers arrived but refused to take action, claiming the site fell under Mahobkath police station in Uttar Pradesh's Mahoba district.

"When we called Harpalpur police, they came and said it was not their responsibility. They left, saying the area was under Uttar Pradesh police," said Ramdeen, a relative of the victim. "When we called Mahobkath police, they also refused to help, saying it was Madhya Pradesh's jurisdiction. Meanwhile, my cousin's body lay on the road, and we were left crying and

Delhi tops English proficiency, India above global average

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Pearson Global English Proficiency Report 2024 released on Monday put the national capital in the top in the list of English speaking, followed by Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana and Karnataka. India ranks above global average in speaking English, according to the report. Delhi led with the highest English speaking score (63) followed by Rajasthan (60), Punjab (58), Haryana (57), Karnataka, (57), Maharashtra (57), West Bengal (57) and Uttar Pradesh (57), Telangana (56) and Tamil Nadu (52).

The report cited that while India's average English skills score (52) is lower than the global average English skills score (57), the country's average English speaking score (57) is higher (54). The report also said India's average English writing score (61) is equivalent to the global average writing score (61).

The report provides invaluable insights into global English proficiency levels and



spotlights regional trends in the Middle East, India, the Philippines, Japan, Egypt, Colombia, and Europe.

According to the report, the Indian market has experienced significant growth in English skills in recent years, which is predicted to continue, with an emphasis on voice-based testing.

"Indian Business leaders know that accurately testing English skills reduces the cost of mis-hires and protects credibility, particularly when hiring at scale. India's average writing score is 61, matching the global average, reflecting

steady improvements driven by increased digital communication and the necessity for written English in global business contexts," it said. In India, the finance and banking sector leads with the highest speaking score of 63, surpassing the global average of 56, it said.

"Conversely, Healthcare has the lowest score (45), influenced by its rapid expansion and the focus on increasing access to jobs... Other sectors like Tech, Consulting and BPO show strong performance, consistently aligning with or exceeding global benchmarks," the report said.

"With the rise in global English language testing over the last eight years and proficiency levels holding strong, it's clear that both employers and employees believe English skills are key to thriving in the global workplace. To drive growth, robust English testing has to remain firmly at the top of the recruitment and L&D agenda," according to the report.

Governor highlights role of arts in cultural enrichment

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Governor Mangubhai Patel said that multi-faceted arts are an important source of cultural prosperity of the country. They awaken the soft feelings within us and teach us the lesson of humanity. Arts preserve and protect the specialties of our traditions, heritage, customs, rituals, religion, society, language etc. Governor Patel was addressing the closing ceremony of the National Art Festival organised at the Regional Institute of Education at Shyamla Hills Bhopal campus. On this occasion, he gave awards to the winning students from all over the country for their excellent performance in various forms of art and also honored

the judges of various forms of National Art Festival. Governor Patel also visited the art exhibition organised by NCERT. The National Art Festival was organised from January 3 to 6, 2025 in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Government of India and NCERT. About 600 participants from Kendriya Vidyalaya, Navodaya Vidyalaya and Eklavya Vidyalaya of India participated in the Art Festival. Governor Patel also congratulated NCERT for organising the National Art Festival in the state capital Bhopal. Governor Patel said that the Art Festival is an effective attempt to preserve and promote the heritage of country's art and culture in the

field of education. The National Education Policy is a project to prepare children as global leaders of the 21st century by enhancing their talent, skills and developing them holistically. It has been prepared with the aim of realising the concept of Developed India 2047, realising the immense potential of the children of the country. He also appealed to the participating students to take part enthusiastically in the Developed India Young Leaders Dialogue programme being organised on January 12. Governor Patel said that the future generation creates new values of their life in accordance with the form of their culture. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all of us to connect children with our

rich cultural diversity through experience-based education and to acquaint and inspire them with the glorious vision of Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat. Governor Patel said that keep a special place for art in life because art connects, inspires and strengthens us as a community. Therefore, try that this event of National Art Festival becomes not only a platform for showcasing various forms of art but also a powerful medium to make people aware about our culture and traditions and inspire them for preservation. Governor Patel was welcomed by presenting a shawl and a plant in the programme. A video message of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan was

broadcast in the programme. Secretary of the Central School Education and Literacy Department, Sanjay Kumar expressed his views on the introduction, types and utility of art. NCERT Director Prof Dinesh Prasad Saklani gave detailed information about the organisation of the Art Festival. National Coordinator Dr. Jyotsna Tiwari presented the annual report of 2024-25 of the Art Festival event. Dr. Deepak Paliwal proposed vote of thanks. Additional Secretary of Central School Education and Literacy Department Anand Rao Patil, art scholars, art gurus, participating students from various disciplines and parents were present at the closing ceremony of the National Art Festival.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav flags off 66 mobile medical units in 21 districts under PM Janman Yojana, at his residence in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

Women facing disconnection protest at electricity office

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A heated protest broke out at the Madhya Pradesh Electricity Board (MPEB) office in Eintkhedi after power connections to around 35 houses were disconnected due to unpaid electricity bills. Women from Parvakheda Chand Masjid area, accompanied by their children, surrounded the office on Monday afternoon, demanding the restoration of power supply. The women claimed their homes had been in darkness for days due to the disconnection. They raised slogans against the electricity department, alleging negligence and lack of responsiveness from officials. Junior Engineer (JE) Shishir Sharma of the Eintkhedi Circle clarified that the disconnection was due to non-payment of electricity bills. "The bills of about 35 houses in the area are

pending, with each household owing between ₹7,000 and ₹8,000. The power supply will be resumed only after the bills are cleared and the faulty transformer is repaired," he stated. The transformer reportedly failed on Sunday evening, disrupting power supply to the affected homes. JE Sharma emphasized that the department had informed the residents about the pending bills and necessary repairs. He also defended the department's position, stating, "This is not the proper way to address grievances. The system requires cooperation from the consumers." The women accused the officials of ignoring their calls and failing to address the issue promptly. They argued that the lack of electricity had brought daily life to a standstill, impacting essential activities and causing significant inconvenience.

The protest prompted swift action from the electricity department, with officials arriving on the scene to pacify the agitated crowd and explain the situation. However, they reiterated that the restoration of electricity would only be possible after the dues were cleared. The women continued to demand immediate action, citing the urgency of the situation and the hardship faced by their families. The MPEB officials have assured the residents of resolving the issue at the earliest, provided the outstanding bills are paid. Meanwhile, police have been informed about the incident, and steps are being taken to ensure the matter does not escalate further. The standoff highlights the ongoing challenges of balancing utility services and consumer compliance in addressing power supply issues in the region.

Dense fog, cold wave grip MP; fatal accident in Bhind

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The Meteorological Department has issued a dense fog warning for several districts of Madhya Pradesh, including Gwalior, Datia, Bhind, Morena, Sheopur, Singrauli, Sidhi, Rewa, Maunji, Satna, Chhatrapur, Tikamgarh, Niwari, and Maihar. Shallow to moderate fog is also expected in Mandsaur and Neemuch districts. The reduced visibility has already led to a tragic accident in Bhind, where a tractor collided with a tree, claiming one life. The accident occurred in Umri, Bhind, when Rinku Yadav, a resident of Chhaikur Ka Pura village, lost control of his tractor due to dense fog. The vehicle collided with a tree at around 4 a.m. before falling into a ditch. Yadav died on the

spot, highlighting the dangerous road conditions caused by poor visibility. A Western Disturbance active in North India is pushing cold winds into Madhya Pradesh, resulting in a sharp drop in temperatures. The Meteorological Department predicts that the cold wave could persist for 20-22 days, forcing school closures in Gwalior and Morena and adjusted timings in Bhind to protect students from the severe cold. Temperatures in many cities across the state dropped below 10 degrees Celsius over the weekend. Jabalpur recorded the lowest temperature among major cities at 8°C, followed by Gwalior at 9.2°C, Bhopal at 9.6°C, Indore at 12.8°C, and Ujjain at 11.5°C. Smaller towns and districts reported even colder conditions, with

Nowgong recording 8°C and Mandla at 8.8°C. Dense fog has significantly reduced visibility in several regions. On Monday morning, Rewa airport reported a minimum visibility of 50 meters, while Khajuraho airport recorded 100 meters. Gwalior airport experienced visibility of 200 meters, and other areas such as Satna, Damoh, and Sidhi saw visibility ranging from 50 to 1,000 meters. Maunji district recorded a mere 20 meters of visibility, severely affecting transportation and daily activities. The weather department forecasts light rain in some districts starting January 12 due to the continuing impact of the Western Disturbance. Meanwhile, snowfall in northern states, including Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, is

intensifying the cold wave across Madhya Pradesh. The cold conditions and fog have brought life to a standstill in many parts of the state. Dense fog was reported in Bhind, Morena, Gwalior, Datia, Niwari, North Chhatrapur, Satna, Rewa, and Maunji. Moderate fog conditions were observed in districts like Neemuch, Mandsaur, Agar, North Ratlam, Shivpuri, Ashoknagar, Tikamgarh, Damoh, Maihar, Katni, South Chhatrapur, Sidhi, and Singrauli. The authorities have urged residents to exercise caution while traveling and to ensure adequate heating arrangements at home. Efforts are being made to mitigate the impact of the severe weather, but the situation underscores the challenges posed by dense fog and the ongoing cold wave.

CCTV footage shows, masked burglars

Bhopal: During investigation, CCTV footage has surfaced showing masked burglars fleeing after a burglary at the residence of a radio branch inspector in Danish Hills View Colony, Kolar, Bhopal. The incident occurred on December 31 and involved the theft of jewellery worth Rs 20 lakh and ₹20,000 in cash. In the video, three individuals wearing monkey caps are seen escaping from the colony with a polythene bag containing the stolen items. The police are analyzing the footage and working to identify the culprits based on their appearance. Inspector Narottam Chauhan, posted in the radio branch, and his family live in house number 4/166 in Danish Hills View Colony. However, due to his job obligations, Chauhan resides in a government-provided residence in Radio Colony, Bhadbhada, and visits his private residence during holidays. The burglary was discovered when the family returned to their private residence on Saturday evening. They found the main gate lock broken and the cupboard locker inside the house forced open. Gold and silver jewellery, along with cash, were missing. Evidence collected from the scene includes boxes and polythene bags that were left behind by the thieves. The family promptly reported the incident to the Kolar police, who registered an FIR and initiated an investigation. The Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) team also inspected the crime scene. The colony where the theft occurred is considered a posh area of Bhopal, but it becomes deserted during the evenings, making it a target for burglars. Police are exploring prior cases of theft in the locality as part of their investigation. The incident highlights concerns about security in residential areas and the growing audacity of criminal elements in targeting unoccupied homes. Police have intensified patrolling and are urging residents to remain vigilant.



Madhya Pradesh Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Chairman of the visitors committee Kailash Vijaywargiya presents a memento to the Deputy Speaker of Haryana Legislative Assembly Kishan Lal Midha during a joint meeting of the Local Bodies and Panchayati Raj Institutions Committee of Madhya Pradesh and Haryana Legislative Assembly at the State Assembly in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

AIIMS Bhopal introduces specialized Gastrointestinal Oncosurgery clinic

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The Department of Surgical Gastroenterology of AIIMS Bhopal is taking a significant step towards enhancing cancer care services by launching a new GI (Gastrointestinal) Oncosurgery Special Clinic in the New Year. This initiative has been started with the aim of benefiting the people of Central India, offering specialized care for patients suffering from cancers of the gastrointestinal tract, pancreas, liver, gallbladder, and bile duct system. The clinic will operate every Monday from 2 PM to 4 PM in the Gastro Surgery OPD. Its goal is to improve patient outcomes through early diagnosis and specialized treatment. Executive Director of AIIMS Bhopal Prof Ajai Singh highlighted the importance of this new clinic, saying, "Facilities at AIIMS Bhopal are growing rapidly. The institution is already offering radiation oncology, medical oncology, and palliative care services, and this specialized GI cancer clinic will be extremely beneficial for patients." Dr Vishal Gupta,

The clinic will operate every Monday from 2 PM to 4 PM in the Gastro Surgery OPD

Additional Professor of the Department of Surgical Gastroenterology, emphasized the need for this facility, saying, "We see many patients suffering from cancers of the esophagus, stomach, pancreas, gallbladder, bile duct, and large intestine. Many of these patients seek consultation late due to misconceptions, lack of awareness, issues with access to healthcare services, neglect of symptoms, and financial difficulties. Now, this facility will allow patients to receive timely and accurate diagnosis and treatment." In addition to surgical management, this clinic will focus on patient education, prehabilitation, and rehabilitation, ensuring comprehensive and better care throughout the cancer treatment journey. This special service is an important step towards strengthening the cancer care infrastructure in Central India.

35 Pigeons, including champion flier, stolen

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Leaving a bird keeper deeply disheartened, thieves decamped with 35 homing pigeons, including a prized champion flier, from the house of a hobby pigeoneer in the state capital. Thieves struck the Gautam Nagar house of Junaid Qureshi and took flight with the pigeons, as well as birding paraphernalia, which included the doves. Qureshi used to keep the pigeons. He says that since the robbery—on the intervening night of Friday-Saturday—he has been visiting all the bird markets in the city in search of the missing birds. Qureshi and his hobby made newspaper headlines last year when a pigeon in his flock emerged victorious at a local championship by flying for nearly 12 hours. The theft has left the city police flummoxed, as they are not quite sure how to deal with the incident, which requires them to attempt recovering the pigeons. Investigating Officer Bhupendra Ojha said the police are trying to locate the stolen flock, but CCTV scans from the area have not yet resulted in any significant discoveries.

SISTec opens Student Branch with 'Skyward Sparks: Advancing tech with IEEE'

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Sagar Institute of Science & Technology (SISTec) Ratibad celebrated a landmark event with the inauguration of the IEEE Student Branch during 'Skyward Sparks: Advancing Tech with IEEE.' This new chapter underscores the institute's dedication to fostering innovation, collaboration, and technological advancement among its students. The inauguration ceremony commenced with a welcoming address from Branch Counsellor and HOD of Electrical engineering department Dr. Ashish Singhal, who underscored the importance of the IEEE Student Branch in promoting innovation and connecting students with a global network of technologists and engineers. The ceremonial lighting of the lamp by esteemed dignitaries symbolized the dissemination of knowledge and enlightenment. Esteemed guests, including Prof. (Dr.) G.S. Tomar, Director Rajkiya Engineering College Sonbhadra & Chairperson, IEEE Madhya Pradesh Section. Chairman and Managing Director Artech

PIEMR joins hands with Indore Climate Mission

PNS ■ INDORE

In a landmark initiative to promote environmental sustainability and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the Prestige Institute of Engineering, Management, and Research (PIEMR) has partnered with the Indore Climate Mission. This collaboration aims to position Indore as a global leader in climate sensitivity and green practices. Davish Jain, Chairman of the Prestige Education Foundation, announced the partnership, calling it a "milestone in Indore's journey towards a greener future." He added, "This mission reflects our commitment to creating a sustainable and eco-friendly environment. Together, we will set an example of how collective efforts can drive impactful change for the environment." The Indore Climate Mission, a joint initiative by the Indore

Davish Jain announced the partnership, calling it a 'milestone in Indore's journey towards a greener future'

Municipal Corporation and the Energy Swaraj Foundation, seeks to significantly reduce the city's greenhouse gas emissions over the next 100 days. One key target is to achieve a 20% reduction in electricity consumption between January and March 2025 compared to the same period in 2024. Highlighting the mission's objectives, Professor Chetan Solanki, renowned as "India's Solar Man," said, "This initiative is a testament to Indore's commitment to fighting climate change. We

aim to inspire other cities to follow in our footsteps through integrated and innovative efforts." The agreement was formalized by senior representatives from Prestige Institutes, including Dr. Manoj Kumar Deshpande (Senior Director) and Dr. Deepali Sarvate. Mr. Himanshu Jain, PIMR Group Director Dr. Sher Singh Bhaker, Colonel Raman Iyer, and Dr. Rajeev Raghuvanshi were also attending. Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargava honored the collaboration by presenting certificates of participation to Prestige Institutes, acknowledging their significant role in the mission. This partnership between Prestige Education Group and the Indore Climate Mission is expected to create a positive environmental impact, setting the stage for Indore to emerge as a beacon of sustainability and innovation on the global map.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav plays a shot during the inauguration of 30th inter-press cricket tournament, at old campion ground in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

Sports activities bring positivity: Chief Minister

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav highlighted the importance of sports in fostering positivity and energy in life, emphasizing India's rich cultural tradition in sports. He noted that under the new education policy provisions have been established to obtain degrees based on sports and enables sports teachers to advance till the

positions like assistant professors and vice-chancellors. He affirmed that sports are a powerful way to showcase an individual's efficiency, ability, and competence and reiterated the state government's commitment to promoting sports at all levels. Yadav praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for creating a system that nurtures talent and promotes all sports across the country. Its results are also visible in national and inter-

national competitions. He also announced plans to work towards developing a better cricket stadium in Bhopal. Yadav was addressing the inaugural function of the 30th Inter Press Cricket Tournament-2025, organized by the Sports Journalists Association of Bhopal, at the Old Campion Ground. He marked the opening by batting and expressed his best wishes for the tournament's success.

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Youth power will develop progressive India: Vishwas

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Vishwas Kailash Sarang said that under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, efforts are being made continuously to encourage our youth power. Today's youth is not only the present power of the nation but also the leader of tomorrow. The dream of a developed India 2047 will be realised only when our youth will use their energy, determination and creativity in the national interest. Shri Sarang said that the youth will have to be aware of their duties along with their rights. The feeling of dedication towards the country and the sense of duty is the basis that can make our youth unique. Sarang was addressing the inauguration of the 28th State Level Youth Festival (Yuva Mahotsav)

at Taty Tope Stadium in Bhopal on Monday. On this occasion, he also visited the science exhibition. This festival will continue till January 8. Around 350 young participants in the age group of 15 to 29 years from 10 divisions of the state are participating in this. The winners of this state level youth festival will take part in the National Youth Festival to be organised on 11-12 January in New Delhi under the chief hospitality of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Sarang appealed to the youth to give their best for building the society and the nation, so that mankind will always remember them. One is not youth because of age but becomes young by passion. Youth power establishes new dimensions in the country. Youth has a pivotal role in the building of society and nation.

Sarang also gave the message of saving environment, water and electricity to the youth. He said that success can be achieved only with hard work and dedication. Along with honesty and discipline, restraint is also needed. To discharge one's duties is responsibility. It is very important for the youth to have a sense of duty. Strong and cultured youth should become the identity of Madhya Pradesh and the country. The three-day state level youth festival will conclude on January 8 under the chief hospitality of Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav. The winners of the competitions will be felicitated in the closing ceremony, who will represent Madhya Pradesh in the 28th National Youth Festival organized in New Delhi on January 12.

The 28th National Youth Festival is being organised this year from 10 to 12 January 2025 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. About 7500 participants from 15 to 29 years from all over the country will participate in it. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will himself be present at this festival and will interact with the youth. This year the National Youth Festival is being organised to commemorate 'Panch Pran' and 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'. Its objective is to provide a strong platform to the young talents of the country, where they can showcase their art and skills. Efforts are being made to bring the youth to the national stage through these competitions organised at the district, division and state level. The main objective of this festival is to

provide a strong platform to the young talents and motivate them to contribute to the progress of the nation. In this event, state level competitions are being organised in 7 disciplines like group folk song, group folk singing, painting, speech, science fair, story writing and poetry writing. The winners of the state level Youth Festival will leave for New Delhi from Bhopal on the night of January 8, where they will participate in the National Youth Festival organised till January 12. Additional Chief Secretary Manu Shrivastava said that Youth Festival will prove to be helpful in honing talents. The spirit of Youth Festival among the youth should not be limited to the festival only but should always remain in life with energy and enthusiasm.



Artists perform during 28th State level Yuva Utsav at TT Nagar Stadium in Bhopal on Monday.

Pioneer photo



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav offers prayers on the occasion of the 358th birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, at Gurdwara Nanaksar in Bhopal on Monday.

Pioneer photo

Life of Guru Gobind Singh is inspirational

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has said that the entire nation bows down to the sacrifice of four Sahibzadas and family made by Guru Gobind Singh to protect the pride of the country and religion and to establish the original religion. The life journey of Guru Ji, who sacrificed his family against foreign invaders for the self-respect and culture of the country, is inspirational for all. Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa Panth and told that it is necessary to fight bravely by taking up arms for the country and culture. His efforts to save religion, culture and history are effective, incomparable and wonderful example

before the whole world. His martyrdom will be remembered in every era and every period. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav was addressing devotees after paying obeisance at Gurdwara Hamidia Road on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the 10th Guru of the Sikhs and founder of the Khalsa Panth. Yadav said that Guru Gobind Singh was fortunate in the sense that even the smallest child of his family had a feeling of pride for the country, religion and culture and was ready to sacrifice for his religion and life values. Guru Gobind Singh tried to find answers to many spiritual questions. He gave the form of a guide to Guru Granth Sahib by collecting the holy sayings of all the Gurus.

Lady bank manager digitally arrested for an hour

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Cyber fraudsters targeted Pranali Tikekar, an assistant manager at the Bank of India, in a chilling incident of cybercrime in the Kolar area of Bhopal on Sunday. The criminals kept Tikekar under "digital arrest" for an hour in her home, threatening her with allegations of money laundering involving Rs 2.56 crore. The incident unfolded around 4:30 p.m. when Tikekar received a call from an unknown number. The caller, posing as an officer from the Crime Branch in Delhi, claimed that transactions amounting to Rs 2.56 crore had been carried out through her Aadhaar card, PAN card, and ATM card. Despite her denial of any involvement, the caller escalated the situation by demanding she join a video call.

During the video call, individuals dressed as police officers appeared, adding a layer of intimidation. They informed Tikekar that her statement was required for an ongoing investigation and warned her not to leave her house, claiming she was under "digital arrest." Under duress, Tikekar locked herself in her room while the fraudsters recorded her statement, asserting that it would be submitted in court. Tikekar's ordeal lasted for nearly an hour until her mother-in-law, sensing something amiss, alerted a relative about the situation. The relative promptly contacted the Kolar police station and accompanied officers to Tikekar's residence. The police intervened, bringing an end to the harrowing episode. According to authorities, Tikekar was coerced into com-

pliance by the sophisticated tactics of the fraudsters, who exploited fear and confusion. The case underscores the increasing prevalence of cybercrime and the advanced methods used by criminals to manipulate their victims. The Kolar police are investigating the incident and working to trace the origin of the call. Residents are urged to exercise caution and report any suspicious activities to the authorities. The police have reiterated the importance of verifying any claims made over the phone, particularly when they involve allegations of criminal activity or demands for personal information. This incident serves as a stark reminder of the need for heightened awareness in an era of increasingly sophisticated cyber threats.

Wireless communication training gets underway at MANIT

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A five-day training programme on wireless communication technologies: 5G and beyond, got underway at Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology (MANIT) in the state capital on Monday. The training, titled Wireless Communication Technologies: 5G and Beyond, is being held by the technology institute in collaboration with the E&ICT Academy. A total of 52 participants are attending the training, which will cover areas such as cell-free massive MIMO, 5G beamforming, Bharat 6G - India's path to innovation and collaboration in next-generation wireless technology, 6G communications at the terahertz band, visible light communication, and other related top-

The training, titled Wireless Communication Technologies: 5G and Beyond, is being held by the technology institute in collaboration with the E&ICT Academy

ics. With this Faculty Development Programme, the participants will learn the evolution of 5G technology, its use cases in various sectors of the economy, and its socio-technical impacts. They will be able to apply their knowledge in creating enabling policies for the proliferation of 5G and its use cases in their respective fields. 5G will provide new opportunities, enabling us to deliver groundbreaking solutions that reach across society. The Faculty Development Programme is being coordi-

nated by RN Yadav, Gaurav Upadhyay, and Lalita Gupta. Scheduled for January 6-10, the training programme was inaugurated by Prof Karunesh Kumar Shukla, who presided over the opening session. The Vice Chancellor of RGPV, Prof Rajeev Tripathi, was also present as the guest of honour, while Prof Aditya Trivedi of ABV IITM Gwalior delivered the expert lecture on wireless communication technologies. SPS Rajput, Dean (ID & IR), welcomed the guests, including Deans, Heads of Departments, and faculty members.

3-day Urdu Fest at Gauhar Mahal Concludes

Bhopal: The three-day Jashn-e-Urdu festival, organised by the Madhya Pradesh Urdu Academy under the Culture Council, concluded with an award ceremony conducted by the Culture Minister and a performance by renowned Kathak exponent Shinjini Kulkarni. The event was wrapped up by Culture Minister Dharmendra Bhav Singh Lodhi, who presented awards to the competition winners and honoured the volunteers with certificates. Minister Lodhi expressed his joy about the festival, which embodied the philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is one family), a core aspect of Indian culture. He congratulated Nusrat Mehdi, Director of the Urdu Academy, for organising the event. The third day began with a discussion on "Urdu Literature and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam." Manoj Srivastava,

Commissioner of the Madhya Pradesh State Election Commission, emphasised that literature should not be confined to religion and highlighted that Urdu literature has always transcended religious boundaries. Mohd Nauman Khan spoke on the universality of Urdu literature, noting its influence across various languages. Abbas Raza Nayar discussed how Urdu poetry promotes humanity and unity, free from communal divisions. The event concluded with a Kathak performance by Shinjini Kulkarni, the ninth generation of the renowned Kalka Bindadin Gharana. Recent performances by Kulkarni, granddaughter of the legendary Pandit Birju Maharaj, suggest that the dance is preparing to take Kathak to global audiences in a befitting tribute to the lineage she represents.



Indian classical dance artist Shinjini Kulkarni, granddaughter of Kathak legend Pandit Birju Maharaj performs a solo surti recital 'Rags-e-Ras' during a programme 'Jashn-e-Urdu' organised by MP Urdu Academy at Gauhar Mahal in Bhopal on Monday.

Pioneer photo

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, QUIDE JOHAR GUDIYALI holding Indian Passport No: Z5562181 issued at DUBAI on 15/03/2022, Permanent Resident of DAULAT GANJ MANDSAUR MANDSAUR PIN 458001 MADHYA PRADESH INDIA, presently residing at DUBAI UAE do hereby change my name from QUIDE JOHAR GUDIYALI to QAUID JOHAR (Given name) GHADIYALI (Surname) with immediate effect.

PD(1202)C

Encroachments removed from Prabhat Square

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The district administration on Monday pulled down nearly 25 encroachments in the congested Prabhat Square area of the state capital. The removal of encroachments paves the way for a three-tier transit system, including vehicular traffic and metro rail tracks. Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Ravish Srivastava led the joint operation carried out by Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) and Public Works Department (PWD) workers, in the presence of a large police contingent led by Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (ADCP) Manpreet Brar. Srivastava said that nearly 25 encroachments were removed by the administration to clear

the way for the proposed Rs 44.10 crore flyover project. The flyover is designed to connect Lajpat Nagar to Kali Mandir via the Prabhat intersection—one of the busiest traffic junctions in the city. PWD officials said that an additional 70 encroachments in the area will also be removed in the near future. Encroachers have already been notified of the demolition plans. Minister Vishwas Sarang, who recently visited the area to call for the early commencement of work, has said that the flyover will be completed in under a year to clear the decks for metro construction. Sources say a committee has been constituted to coordinate the multi-pronged infrastructure project and ensure its timely completion.



BMC employees remove encroachments during a drive near Prabhat petrol pump square in Bhopal on Monday.

Pioneer photo

168 transgenders in fresh electoral count in Bhopal district

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

As per the fresh electoral rolls for the district released on Monday, there are a total of 168 transgender voters in the state capital. The inclusion underscores the growing representation and participation of the third gender in the democratic process. The total voter count in Bhopal stands at an impressive 2,118,364, comprising 1,086,676 male voters, 1,031,520 female voters, and 168 transgender voters. Among constituencies, Bhopal (Madhya) leads in transgender voter count with 106, reflecting proactive registration efforts. In contrast, the Berasia

assembly segment records the lowest transgender voter count at just four individuals. Female representation across Bhopal shows a gender ratio of 950 females per 1,000 males. Bhopal-North boasts the highest gender ratio at 992 females per 1,000 males, showing near parity. The Narela constituency, however, registers the lowest gender ratio at 937 females per 1,000 males. Despite this, it holds the second-highest total voter count in the district, reflecting significant participation. The Govindpura assembly seat leads in overall voter count with 399,835 registered voters. Meanwhile, the Bhopal (South West) seg-

ment records the lowest total voter count at 233,236, highlighting variations in constituency sizes. Polling stations in Bhopal total 2,029, ensuring accessibility. Govindpura has the highest number with 363 stations, while Bhopal (North) features the fewest at 232 stations. Voters aged 80 and above total 28,901, reflecting the active participation of the aging electorate. Govindpura again leads this category with 6,252 senior voters, while Bhopal (South West) has the lowest count at 3,082. The district's Elector-to-population (EP) ratio averages 69.15%. Govindpura tops the chart with a 76.30% EP ratio, indicating efficient voter reg-

istration processes in this constituency. Conversely, Bhopal (Madhya) shows the lowest EP ratio at 59.52%, suggesting scope for improved voter outreach and registration initiatives in this area. Service voters, including armed forces personnel, total 1,557 in Bhopal. Govindpura leads with 421 service voters, while Bhopal (North) records the lowest at 129 voters. Persons with Disabilities (PWD) voters total 9,337 across the district. Berasia has the highest count with 2,558 PWD voters, underscoring accessibility efforts. Bhopal (South West) records the lowest with 732 PWD voters. Gender disparities in voter

participation emerge in some constituencies. For instance, the Narela constituency has the second-highest voter count but the lowest gender ratio, signalling a need for gender-specific voter drives. Inclusivity efforts for transgender voters reflect progress. Bhopal (Madhya) leading in transgender voter count indicates successful outreach, but Berasia's (149) low numbers highlight areas requiring focused initiatives. The Electoral Department's 2025 publication highlights both achievements and areas for growth in voter inclusivity, accessibility, and participation. These efforts contribute to a stronger democratic foundation in Bhopal.

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
 Government of India, Ministry of Finance
 Department of Finance, Services, (Banking Division)
 797-II, Shantikunj, South Civil Lines, Jabalpur 482001 (M.P.)
CASE NO.: RC 534/2020 IN O.A. NO. 323/2019
BANK OF BARODA vs ARUN JAINARAYAN OJHA
E-Auction No. 351/2024
 Under mentioned properties will be sold by "on line E-auction" through Website: <https://www.bankauctions.com> for recovery of a sum of Rs. 35,82,745.70 (Rupees Thirty Five Lakh Eighty Two Thousand Seven Hundred Forty Five and Seventy Paise Only) payable by you/him in respect of Recovery certificate in O.A. No. 323/2019 issued by the Presiding Officer, Debts Recovery Tribunal, Jabalpur with interest at 10.00% p.a. with simple interest from 26-02-2019 and costs payable as per recovery certificate till realization.
Date and Time of E-auction: 07.02.2025 Between 12.00 Hours and 13.00 Hours
SPECIFICATION OF THE PROPERTIES PUT FOR SALE
 Diverted Agricultural Land of Survey No. 1209/1, situated at inside Muzalpur Road, Ward No. 23, PH.No. 75, Tehsil & District-Guna (M.P.), area 1400 sq.ft.; belonging to Deceased Shanti Devi Ojha.
Upset Price: Rs.19,00,000.00 (Rupees Nineteen Lakh only)
Conditions of Sale:
 1. Intending bidders must hold a valid digital signature certificate. For details contact M/s. C-1 India Pvt. Ltd., Website : <https://www.bankauction.com>; Helpline No. 0124-4302020/21/22/23/24, for help a bidder in e-auction contact to Mr. Mithalsh Kumar on Mob. No. 7080804466; E-mail id : mpeg@c1india.com or E-mail id : support@bankauctions.com
 2. Intending bidders are advised to go through website: <https://www.bankauction.com> for auction bid form and details, terms and conditions of sale before submitting their bids.
 3. Bids should be submitted only online in the prescribed form along with a copy of identity document as an attachment to the bid form (refer detailed terms and conditions). Bidder should satisfy them self with regard to correctness, measurement, encumbrances etc. by their own sources (Govt. Office) also later on DRT will not be responsible for this.
 4. 10% of the upset price i.e. EMD/Bid price Rs.1,90,00,000 (Rupees One Lakh Ninety Thousand only) must be remitted towards EMD through RTGS/NEFT/Money Transfer to the credit of Account No. 5692799461 in the name of Recovery Officer, E-auction account, DRT Jabalpur with Central Bank of India DHOBIGHAT, Branch Jabalpur (IFSC Code: CBIN0281618) and the remittance must be clearly mentioned in the bid form.
 5. Bids should be submitted on or before 17.00 hours on 05.02.2025 online.
 6. A copy of the bid form along with its enclosure submitted online should be sent to Recovery Officer, DRT, Jabalpur, 797-II Shantikunj, South Civil Lines, Jabalpur so as to reach at the earliest.
 7. Online bidding will commence from the highest bid quoted among the bids and the minimum increase for each bid will be Rs. 20,000.00 (Rupees Twenty Thousand only); in case of bid received before closure of Auction window, there shall be an automatic extension of 5 minutes in Auction time by the system.
 8. The refund of EMD of the unsuccessful bidders will be remitted to the same account from which the payment has been made and no inquiry in this regard will be entertained. After deposit of EMD by intending bidder they cannot withdraw the EMD amount until they are declared as "Unsuccessful bidder" otherwise the amount will be forfeited.
 9. In the case of immovable property listed in the schedule below, the successful bidder shall remit 25% of the bid amount (less EMD) on the next day on declaration. If the sale is knocked down in his/her favour, through RTGS/NEFT/Money Transfer to the Account No. 5692799461 mentioned in SL. no. 4 and in default of such deposit, the property shall forthwith be put up again and resold and amount deposited as EMD will be forfeited.
 10. The successful bidder shall remit balance 75% of the sale amount along with postage of 1% of sale amount plus Rs.10/- for each property separately within 15 days of auction, to the Account No. 5692799461 mentioned at SL. no. 4 through RTGS/NEFT/Money Transfer, exclusive of such day, or if the 15th day is a Sunday or other holiday, then on the first office working day after 15th day. In default of payment within the period mentioned above, the property shall be resold after the issue of a fresh proclamation of sale. The deposit will be forfeited to the Government and the defaulting purchaser shall forfeit all claims to the property or to any part of the sum for which it may subsequently be sold.
 11. Property will be sold "As is where is and No Complaint basis".
 12. The properties can be inspected on 30.01.2025 between 12.00 hours and 16.00 hours.
 13. Properties will not be sold below the upset price.
 14. Recovery Officer have the absolute right to accept or reject the bid or postpone/cancel the sale without assigning any reason.
 15. Intending bidders are advised to peruse copies of the title deed available with the Shri Ashok Tiwari, Chief Manager, Mob. No. 78801-53116 and also check the identity and correctness of the property details and encumbrances etc. from their own sources also. DRT will not be responsible for correctness etc.
 16. Details regarding e-Auction shall be obtained from M/s. C-1 India Pvt. Ltd., Website: <https://www.bankauctions.com>; Helpline No. 0124-4302020-21/22/23/24, for help a bidder in e-auction contact to Mr. Mithalsh Kumar on Mob. No. 7080804466; E-mail id : mpeg@c1india.com or E-mail id : support@bankauctions.com
 17. Further property details if any required shall be obtained from Shri Ashok Tiwari, Chief Manager, Mob. No. 7880153116.
 18. The bidders may participate in the e-auction by quoting / bidding from their own offices / places of their choice. Internet connectivity shall have to be ensured by each bidder himself. DRT/Bank/Service Provider shall not be held responsible for the internet connectivity, network problems, system crash down, Power failure etc.
Place : Jabalpur
Date : 09.12.2024
SEAL
PRITI DESAI
Recovery Officer-II

Nitish rules out quitting NDA



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Monday ruled out the possibility of quitting the NDA, pointing out that his ties with the BJP went back a long way. The JD(U) supremo, who termed as a "mistake" his two short-lived alliances with the RJD-Congress combine, fondly recalled the backing he had always received from former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. "It was respected Atal ji who made me a Union minister. He used to shower so much of affection on me. I never faced any difficulty in getting my proposals cleared," Kumar told reporters in Vaishali district, which he toured as part of the state-wide 'Pragati Yatra'. The longest-serving chief min-

ister of the state also recalled that it was Vajpayee's wish that "I become the CM" when the NDA first won assembly polls in Bihar in 2005. "So, why would I not stay (with the BJP)? A couple of times the people in my party committed a mistake (by pressing for an alliance with the Congress-RJD combine). I rectified it both times," said the JD(U) president. Kumar was responding to queries about speculations in the political circles, triggered by Union Home Minister Amit Shah's equivocal stance on his projection as chief ministerial candidate in the assembly polls due in less than a year. The speculations grew stronger after RJD president Lalu Prasad recently said he was keeping his "doors open" for arch-rival Kumar. Meanwhile, Kumar inaugurat-

ed and laid foundation stones for 344 developmental projects worth Rs 276.80 crore in Vaishali during his visit to the district on Monday. "He chaired a meeting to review the ongoing developmental schemes of the state government in the district... The CM was briefed about the ongoing schemes, including Bihar Student Credit Card Scheme, Chief Minister Nishchay Self Help Allowance Scheme, tap water to every house and their maintenance, Chief Minister Rural Solar Street Light Scheme, irrigation water to every farm, Chief Minister Agricultural Electricity Connection Scheme in the district...", a statement issued by the CMO said. Kumar also announced that four new power substations will be opened in four blocks of the district.

SC orders foreigners to stay in India for criminal proceedings

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said a foreigner should not be allowed to leave India if required to answer a criminal charge. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said while granting bail to a foreign national, the court should issue a direction to the state or the prosecuting agency, to immediately inform about its order to the registration officer concerned under the Registration of Foreigners Rules, 1992. "When a foreigner's presence is required in India to answer a criminal charge, permission to leave India must be refused. Under the Order (1948 order), the civil authority can impose restrictions on the movements of a foreigner," the bench said. The bench said the registration officer should then communicate the bail order to all relevant agencies, including the civil authority. SC's order came in a case where it had decided two main issues concerning bail conditions imposed on a Nigerian national in a drugs case in July, 2024. The top court had held the bail conditions, which allowed an investigating agency to continuously track the movements of an accused, violated the right to privacy guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution. In its order passed on Monday,

the bench referred to the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946, and said according to clause 5(1)(b) of the Foreigners Order, 1948, no foreigner should leave India without the leave of the civil authority having the relevant jurisdiction. Once a foreigner was released on bail, the top court said, they couldn't leave India without the permission of the civil authority under clause 5 of the 1948 order. It said if such information was furnished, it would enable the authorities under the Act, the rules and the order, to take appropriate legal steps. The bench directed a copy of its order to be forwarded to registrar generals of all the high courts, who in turn would forward it to all the criminal courts in the respective states. The top court was dealing with the question whether it was necessary to implead a foreign registration officer appointed under rule 3 of the Registration of Foreigners Rules, 1992, in the bail application filed by a foreigner within the meaning of the 1946 Act. The bench said the authorities under the law and the 1948 order have no locus to oppose the bail application filed by a foreigner unless the bail was sought where the allegation was of the offence punishable under Section 14 of the Act. Section 14 deals with penalty for contravention of the law's provisions, etc.



Om Birla honours women at Panchayat Se Parliament 2.0

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla Monday underscored the transformative role of women leadership in strengthening Indian democracy. He said that the inclusion and empowerment of women, especially from rural and tribal communities, are pivotal for the socio-economic change. Highlighting the Government's commitment to fostering gender equality, Birla cited the Nari Shakti Vandan Act as a testament to India's progressive vision for women's leadership. Birla was speaking at the 'Panchayat Se Parliament 2.0'

programme in the historic Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan, organized by the Parliamentary Research and Training Institute for Democracies (PRIDE) of Lok Sabha Secretariat in collaboration with National Commission for Women and Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Union Minister for Tribal Affairs Jual Oram, Union Minister for Women and Child Development Annapurna Devi, Minister of State for Women and Child Development Savitri Thakur and Chairperson, National Commission for Women Vijaya Rahatkar were among the dignitaries present on the occasion.

The event, which saw the participation of more than 500 tribal women representatives from Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) from 22 states and Union Territories, served as a platform to reaffirm India's commitment to women led development and grassroots empowerment. Acknowledging the invaluable contributions of women in India's democratic and developmental journey, the Speaker paid heartfelt tributes to the 15 women members of the Constituent Assembly whose contributions continue to inspire the movement for women's empowerment in India.

Yemen court's sentence on nurse pending Presidential ratification



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The capital punishment handed to Indian nurse Nimisha Priya by a Yemeni court has not been ratified by President Rashad al-Alimi, the West Asian nation's embassy said on Monday. The embassy issued the clarification to a media outlet following its report on the case. The Yemeni government emphasises that the entire case has been handled by the Houthi militias, and therefore, Rashad Al-Alimi, Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council, Yemen has not ratified this judgment, the mission said. Priya, hailing from Kollengode in Kerala's Palakkad district, has been found guilty of mur-

dering a Yemeni citizen in July, 2017. The 37-year-old nurse is presently lodged in a jail in Sana'a, the Yemeni capital city that is under the control of Iran-backed Houthis. According to reports, Priya was handed capital punishment by a trial court in 2020 while Yemen's Supreme Judicial Council upheld the verdict in November 2023. Last week, India said it is closely following the developments in the case. External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the government is extending "all possible" help in the matter. "We are closely following the developments around the sentencing of Nimisha Priya. The government is extending all possible help in the matter," he said on Friday.

Court to hear pardon plea in multi-crore DHFL loan scam case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court is likely to hear on January 13 applications moved by five accused in multi-crore bank loan scam case involving Dewan Housing Finance Ltd's former promoter Kapil Wadhawan, seeking pardon and turning approver in the case. Special Judge Ashwani Kumar Sarpal posted the applications filed by accused persons -- Vivek Jayesh Thar, Malav Mehta, Gopal Dalvi, Rajen Vasant Kumar Dhruv and Arvind Kayan -- seeking pardon and for becoming prosecution witness for the next date, while directing them to provide additional documents to substantiate their claims. "Put up this application on January 13, 2025 for further consideration," the judge said in an order passed on January 4. The judge said mere fact that the prosecution has given no objection itself was not sufficient to allow the applications. The judge further clarified that the statement given by the accused in support of their applications will not be used for any other purpose except for disposal of this pleas for the time being. In case the appli-

cation of the accused is allowed and he is granted pardon, the statement filed alongwith the application can be used during inquiry or trial, he added. The FIR in the case was based on a complaint made by the Union Bank of India. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has alleged in the FIR that Dewan Housing Finance Ltd (DHFL), its then CMD Kapil Wadhawan, then director Dheeraj Wadhawan and other accused persons entered into a criminal conspiracy to cheat the consortium of 17 banks led by the Union Bank of India. The accused and others induced the consortium to sanction huge loans aggregating Rs 42,871.42 crore. Much of that amount was allegedly siphoned off and misappropriated by alleged falsification of the books of DHFL and dishonest default in repayment of the legitimate dues of the consortium banks, the CBI claimed. The complainant alleged that a wrongful loss of Rs 34,615 crore was caused to the consortium banks in as much as such was the quantification of the outstanding dues as on July 31, 2020. The CBI had in October 2022 filed a charge sheet against more than 70 accused people, including the Wadhawans.

CJI Sanjeev Khanna recuses from sports constitution cases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Sanjeev Khanna on Monday recused himself from hearing two separate pleas pertaining to finalisation of the constitutions of the Indian Olympic Association and the All India Football Federation, both framed by former apex court judge Justice L Nageswara Rao. The CJI, who was sitting on the bench with Justice Sanjay Kumar, said he would not be part of the bench to hear these cases as he had earlier taken up one of the pleas in Delhi High Court. "Let the pleas come before another bench headed by Justice PS Narasimha on February 10. I remember hearing this in Delhi High Court," CJI Khanna said. The pleas were last taken up on March 19, 2024, by a bench headed by the then CJI DY Chandrachud. The bench had then permitted the All India Football Federation (AIFF) to file its objections to the draft constitution proposed by Justice Rao. "The amicus curiae will update the existing chart to reflect the objections of the AIFF," the bench had said. It had also said that it would decide the issues raised about the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and the



AIFF constitutions on the next date of hearing. While dealing with the pleas on the AIFF's constitution, the bench had said the report submitted by Justice Rao would be circulated by Gopal Sankarnarayanan, the amicus curiae -- friend of court appointed to assist the court in the matter -- to all the parties wanting to secure soft copies. It had directed that the objections to the AIFF's draft constitution also be filed. Prior to this, the top court had extended the time for filing objections to the draft constitution of the IOA. It had

also made it clear that the pendency of pleas related to the IOA would not preclude high courts from continuing with hearings on pending petitions linked to other sports bodies. The IOA's draft constitution was adopted at the special general body meeting in Delhi. While the IOA adopted the draft constitution, framed under the supervision of the Supreme Court and the International Olympic Committee (IOC), several members said they were forced into adopting it after the apex court made it mandatory. The

top court had also urged Justice Rao to prepare a comprehensive report on finalising the AIFF constitution after taking note of the objections to a draft document by various stakeholders, including FIFA, the apex global body that governs football. It had said the voluminous objections to the draft constitution by various stakeholders could be taken care of by Justice Rao, who had finalised the IOA constitution on the top court's orders. The apex court had decided to hear the pleas related to the IOA and the AIFF together.

Setting up AFT benches in J&K, Shimla will reduce pendency: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday called for setting up Armed Forces Tribunal benches in Jammu and Kashmir, and Himachal Pradesh, to deal with the growing pendency of defence-related cases. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh said at present AFT, Chandigarh, was burdened by a huge backlog from these states and setting up circuit benches at Jammu and Kashmir, Shimla and Dharamshala, would help in speedy disposal of cases. Refusing to blame the Centre alone for delay in filling of the vacancies in the AFTs, the bench told attorney general R Venkataramani to explore the possibilities of having circuit benches. "There are sitting judges of this court who head committees. Even I head some of the committees which look after the appointment of members of the tribunals. Sometimes the workload is so much that the process gets delayed. We have to devise a mechanism so that a process



for filling of the vacancies gets started six months before the prospective vacancy arises in a tribunal," said Justice Surya Kant. The top court asked the Centre to collate data of the total sanctioned strength of tribunals and vacancies in these quasi judicial bodies, and furnish suggestions on systematically filling these posts. The Centre was further directed to furnish the details of the ongoing processes for filling the posts in the tribunals within four weeks. The top court was hearing an application for a direction to the Centre to expeditiously appoint members of the AFT. Senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for an intervenor,

said one of the members was transferred from Chandigarh to Kolkata, and the position was lying vacant. Venkataramani said the chairman of AFT, Chandigarh, could decide on setting up of circuit benches and informed the process of filling posts in tribunals happened round the year. He said the vacancy in AFT, Chandigarh, would be filled soon. On the challenge to the Tribunal Reforms Act of 2021, senior advocate Arvind Datar said the provisions of 2017 Finance Act related to service conditions of members of tribunals which was struck down by this court and was reproduced in subsequent legislations.

SC quashes cheating case against Goa MLA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday quashed a cheating case against a Goa MLA accused of land grabbing and fraudulent sale of property. A bench comprising Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan allowed the appeal of MLA Jit Vinayak Arolkar challenging a March 2023 Bombay High Court verdict dismissing his plea to quash the FIR. The case involved allegations under Section 420 (cheating) of the IPC, registered on October 26, 2020, at the Pernem Police Station, and then transferred to the special investigation team of the economic offences wing. The FIR accused Arolkar of fraudulently selling a property in Dhargalim Village, Pernem, Goa, without the consent of all legal co-owners. The property -- "Capnivoril Guera" or "Kapni Varil Ghera" -- came under dispute after the complainant, who filed 12 civil suits in 2018, claimed ownership. The complainant alleged Arolkar sold portions of the land in his capacity as the



constituted attorney of two co-owners, Vidhya Natekar and Sanjay Natekar, without the consent of other stakeholders. The MLA's counsel argued the sales only transferred the ownership rights of the individuals he represented and did not encroach on the complainant's rights. The complainant however filed a police complaint alleging fraudulent sale without the consent of the co-owners, resulting in the FIR. Justice Oka, who authored the judgment, said the dispute was primarily civil in nature, and did not justify invoking criminal law. "The appeal succeeds. The

impugned judgment and the order dated March 1, 2023, is set aside, and FIR.....And proceedings based thereon are hereby quashed and set aside only as against the appellant," held the bench. The judgment clarified of not making any adjudication on the merits of the pending civil dispute between the parties. The complainant acknowledged the co-ownership of the vendors in the property and filed the civil suits two years before registering the FIR, the bench said, and found no evidence to prove Arolkar deceived the complainant or caused harm to his property or reputation.

Over 33 lakh users from 183 countries visit Maha Kumbh website: UP Govt

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

People from 183 countries across the world are actively seeking information about the Maha Kumbh through various websites and portals, the Uttar Pradesh government said on Monday. The official website of Maha Kumbh, <https://kumbh.gov.in/>, has emerged as the primary source for reliable information, witnessing significant traffic from millions of users worldwide, it said in a statement. "According to the data of the website, as of January 4, over 33 lakh visitors from 183 countries accessed the portal to gather details about Maha Kumbh. This includes visitors from across continents, such as Europe, America, and Africa, showcasing the event's global appeal," it said. A representative from the technical team managing the website confirmed that, as of January 4, a total of 33,05,667 users have visited the official Maha Kumbh portal. These users belong to 183 countries, with visits recorded from as many as 6,206 cities worldwide, it added.

India remains the top country for website visits, followed closely by significant traffic from the United States, Britain, Canada, and Germany. Visitors have not only accessed the website but have also spent considerable time exploring its content, according to the statement. "The technical team noted a substantial surge in traffic since the website's launch, with the number of daily users now reaching millions as the event draws closer," it added. The Uttar Pradesh government is presenting the Maha Kumbh as a 'Digital Maha Kumbh'. Several digital platforms have been developed to ensure the convenience of devotees. Among these is the official website of Maha Kumbh, which was launched by CM Yogi Adityanath in Prayagraj on October 6, 2024. The website provides detailed information about the Maha Kumbh, ensuring devotees have easy access to details about the traditions associated with Kumbh, its spiritual significance, and the studies conducted on Kumbh.

PM Modi virtually inaugurates multiple railway projects, boosting connectivity across India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU/NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday virtually inaugurated a slew of railway projects, including the Jammu railway division, the Charlapalli terminal station in Telangana, besides laying foundation for the Rayagada railway division building in Odisha under the East Coast Railway zone. Lauding the country's fast-paced progress in connectivity, the prime minister said since the beginning of 2025, India has been accelerating its initiatives with its metro rail network expanding to over 1,000 kilometres. He also mentioned the recent inauguration of the Namo Bharat train in Delhi-NCR along with the launch of Delhi Metro projects. Today's event is a further testimony to the fact that the entire nation is moving forward together, step by step, as projects launched in Jammu and Kashmir, Odisha and Telangana mark a major leap in modern connectivity for the north, east and southern regions of the country, he said. He also reiterated that the mantra of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka



Vikas' is helping turn the vision of a developed India into reality while congratulating the people of these states and all citizens of India on the new developments. According to Modi, all these initiatives are generating millions of new employment opportunities in the railway sector. Keeping in mind the special skills related to the

railways, the country's first Gati-Shakti University has also been established, he added. Highlighting the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail line, he said that Jammu and Kashmir is achieving new milestones in railway infrastructure. The Railway Board appointed E Srinivas as the first Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) of the Jammu Rail Division soon after its



inauguration by PM. According to the prime minister, the completion of the Chenab bridge, the world's highest railway arch bridge in J-K, will play a key role in connecting the region with the rest of India, providing convenience to the people of Leh-Ladakh. "The Chenab bridge and the Anji Khad bridge are unparalleled examples of engineering

leading to economic progress in the region and promoting prosperity," he said. Laying foundation for the divisional railway manager (DRM) building for the Rayagada division in Odisha, Modi highlighted the state's abundant natural resources and a large coastline, which, according to him, hold significant potentials for international trade.

MP Chief Minister urges residents to take concerns on toxic waste disposal to court

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Monday urged the residents of Pithampur in Dhar district to present their concerns in court regarding the disposal of toxic waste from the Union Carbide factory. The appeal comes after the Madhya Pradesh High Court on Monday granted the State government six weeks to ensure the waste is disposed of in compliance with safety guidelines. While talking to media persons here on Monday, Yadav emphasized that the High Court's decision aligns with the State government's expectations, reiterating their commitment to adhering to judicial directives. He expressed confidence in the judiciary, stating, "The decision has come in accordance with our expectations. We have full faith in the court." The High Court also directed the media to refrain from disseminating inaccurate reports concerning the waste disposal issue. The Union Carbide pesticide factory in



Bhopal was the site of one of the world's worst industrial disasters when, on the night of December 2 and 3, 1984, methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas leaked from the facility. The tragedy claimed at least 5,479 lives and left thousands more with severe health complications and long-term effects. On January 2, 2025, the waste, packed in 12 sealed containers, was transported from the defunct factory in Bhopal to a disposal site managed by Ramky Enviro Engineers Limited in Pithampur, Dhar district. This action followed the High Court's December 3, 2024, order, which mandated the removal of the waste within

four weeks to avoid contempt proceedings. The transfer of the waste has sparked widespread protests in Pithampur, located about 50 kilometers from the Dhar district headquarters. Demonstrators argue that the incineration of the hazardous waste poses significant risks to human health and the environment. On January 3, tensions escalated when two protesters allegedly attempted self-immolation during a demonstration. Despite the unrest, the Chief Minister maintained that the State government has strictly followed the High Court's directives.

Dense fog causes chaos: 60 flights delayed at Kolkata airport due to poor visibility



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Around 60 flights were delayed at the Kolkata airport on Monday due to poor visibility, an official said. Due to dense fog, low visibility procedures (LVP) had to be implemented at the airport from 7 am, he said. The ATC declares LVP when visibility falls below 800 metres. It is also activated when the cloud ceiling is below 200 feet. According to the Director of

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport (NSCIB), Pravat Ranjan Beuria, no traffic movement took place from 7.10 am to 9 am, and around 30 flight arrivals and 30 departures were delayed, the airport director said. The visibility had dropped below the permissible limit for commercial aircraft operations on Monday morning, he said. The Kolkata airport is equipped with CAT-III B Instrument Landing System

(ILS), which allows compatible aircraft and CAT III B trained pilots to operate with visibility up to 50 metres. However, the visibility at Kolkata airport turned close to zero on Monday morning, which ruled out operations completely till 9 am, the official said. The last flight departed from the airport at 3.35 am after which the visibility dropped. In addition, seven flights to Kolkata were diverted to other airports such as Bhubaneswar, Raipur, Hyderabad and Nagpur, he said. All arrangements were made to facilitate the stranded passengers in the airport terminal, Beuria said. He said that visibility conditions improved after 9 am, and the first flight to arrive at the airport was from Dubai at 9.04 am. The initial delays on Monday, both incoming and outgoing, will have a consequential effect throughout the day, airport sources said.

Jan Suraaj founder Prashant Kishor arrested amid fast unto death over Bihar PSC exam controversy



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA

Jan Suraaj founder Prashant Kishor, who had been on a fast unto death at Gandhi Maidan here to press the demand for cancellation of a Bihar PSC exam, was arrested early on Monday, a top official said. Police personnel removed him and his supporters from the protest site. According to supporters of Kishor, the police took him to Patna AIIMS for a medical examination. Talking to PTI,

Patna, District Magistrate (DM), Chandrashekhar Singh, said, "Yes, Kishor and his supporters sitting on dharna at Gandhi Maidan, were arrested by the police on Monday morning. They will now be produced before a court." Their dharna was "illegal," he said, adding they were holding the sit-in near the restricted site, he added. The Patna Police had registered a case against Kishor for holding the fast unto death at Gandhi Maidan, a restricted site near

Mahatma Gandhi statue, another official said. Kishor began his fast unto death on January 2 in support of the civil service aspirants who have been demanding the cancellation of Bihar Public Service Commission (BPS) examination held on December 13 last year. However, the BPS had ordered the retest for a select group of candidates who had appeared in the December 13 exam, which was embroiled over allegations of question paper leak. The retest was held on Saturday at 22 centres here. Of 12,012 candidates, around 8,111 aspirants had downloaded their admit cards for the re-exam. However, 5,943 candidates appeared for the retest on January 4. The retest was held peacefully at all centres without report of any misconduct and malpractices, the BPS said in a statement issued on Saturday.

Chhattisgarh journalist murder: Main accused Suresh Chandrakar held in Hyderabad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RAIPUR

Suresh Chandrakar, the prime accused in the murder of a journalist in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, has been taken into custody by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) from Hyderabad, a police official said on Monday. The accused, a contractor by profession, was absconding since the murder of journalist Mukesh Chandrakar came to light on January 3, he said. The SIT, which was constituted to conduct the probe into the case, rounded up Suresh Chandrakar from Hyderabad late Sunday night, the official said. His brothers Ritesh Chandrakar and Dinesh Chandrakar and supervisor Mahendra Ramekhe have already been arrested in the case, he said. Mukesh Chandrakar (33), a

freelance journalist, went missing on January 1. His body was found on January 3 in a septic tank on a property owned by Suresh Chandrakar at Chhattanpara Basti in Bijapur town, police earlier said. A news report highlighting alleged corruption in a road construction work in Bijapur, that was shown on NDTV on December 25, is being discussed as the motive behind Mukesh Chandrakar's murder. The said construction work was linked to contractor Suresh Chandrakar. Chhattisgarh Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma had claimed that Suresh Chandrakar was a Congress leader. The opposition party, however, claimed the accused joined the ruling BJP recently.

Assam CM urges tycoons not to take illegal Bangladeshis for cheap labour

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI

Industrialists have to look beyond "cheap labour", and perform a "national duty" by not giving any jobs to illegal Bangladeshi migrants, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Monday. Addressing a press conference here after meeting representatives of India Inc, including from the Tatas, Adani Group and Mahindra, Sarma regretted that Indian businessmen are hiring middlemen to get cheap labour from Bangladesh, where textile units are shutting down. "Who gets the cheap labour



into India? It is our own industry," he said adding, it is a national duty not to encourage the hiring of illegal Bangladeshi migrants. "If Bangladeshis get

employment, people will keep coming. Our industry, our trade, and business have to resolve not to give any jobs to Bangladeshis where will they come? If we have to strike, we have to strike at the roots," the Chief Minister said. He said simple enquiries would reveal that the Bangladeshi workers are coming to India after closer of textile units in the neighbouring country. When asked if the issue featured during his discussions with industry captains over the weekend, Sarma said there is no need to "re-emphasise" an issue on

which Assam has been fighting since 1979. The northeastern state is looking at investment commitments of Rs 1 lakh crore from the central government and entities allied with it over a five-year horizon at the upcoming "Advantage Assam 2.0" investment summit to be held in Guwahati next month, he said. This will be in addition to the over Rs 1 lakh crore of projects in the roads and railways sectors underway in the state, he added. Attracting investments in sectors such as tourism,

semiconductors and defence is the other focus area of the summit to be held on February 25-26, he said. He said the Tata group's mega Rs 27,000-crore investment for a semiconductor assembly plant is on schedule, and the first phase will be inaugurated in either November or December this year. Apart from that, the Tatas have also evinced interest in setting up a 500 MW solar capacity in the state, he said, adding that an industrial policy is in the works where fallow land being held by tea estates can be converted into solar power parks.

Three tigers and leopard die of avian flu at rescue centre in Nagpur, zoos on alert

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NAGPUR

Three tigers and a leopard died of avian influenza at an animal rescue centre in Maharashtra's Nagpur, prompting the authorities to put zoos on alert, an official said on Monday. Following the deaths that occurred at the end of last month, the Central government has issued an advisory, directing zoos to take precautionary measures, the official said. Shatanik Bhagwat, divisional manager of the Gorewada project, said the animals had been relocated to Gorewada Rescue Centre from Chandrapur following incidents of man-



animal conflict. He said the big cats died at the centre at the end of December. Bhagwat said the tigers were brought to the rescue centre in the second week of December, while the leopard had been housed there since May. The animals showed different

symptoms but limped and suffered from fever in the third week of December, he said, adding that their samples were sent to Bhopal for testing, and the test reports that arrived on January 2 confirmed they were positive for the H5N1 virus.

Mumbai: over 2000 autos fined for violations during two-day drive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI

More than 2,000 autorickshaws were found flouting rules during a drive conducted by the police and transport authorities in the eastern suburbs here, and Rs 24.53 lakh has been collected in fines, an official said on Monday. The joint drive, conducted by the Mumbai police and Wadala Regional Transport Office (RTO) on December 30 and 31, found that 40 per cent of autorickshaws operating in the eastern suburbs were violating rules. A senior RTO official said 2,130 out of 5,425 autorickshaws were operating beyond their service age and did not have valid fitness

certificates, insurance, PUC certificates, or public service permits. As many as 261 autorickshaws were impounded for plying without a valid fitness certificate, a public service vehicle permit, or both, he said. "We found two autorickshaws that had exceeded their age limit but were still ferrying passengers illegally," the RTO official said, adding that some drivers were found without valid licences, badges or uniforms. Another RTO official said the fine for plying an autorickshaw without a valid permit is Rs 10,000, and the fine for operating without a fitness certificate is Rs 2,000 for the first-time offence.

Minister 'Jija' and MLA 'Saali' clash over promotion in polytechnic

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

The ongoing controversy over promotions to the posts of department heads in polytechnic institutions has escalated into a direct confrontation between Uttar Pradesh's Minister of Technical Education Ashish Patel and Samajwadi Party (SP) rebel MLA Dr. Pallavi Patel, who happens to be Jija and Saali. Responding sharply to Ashish Patel's recent statements, Pallavi accused him of betraying the Patel community, likening him to the historical figure Jai Chand. She declared that Rajbahadur Patel, the former Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to the minister, is the



true descendant of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel for courageously exposing alleged corruption despite facing harassment. Pallavi asserted that Rajbahadur Patel has been consistently targeted by the

minister for raising concerns about irregularities in promotions. After being removed from his OSD post, Rajbahadur was transferred to the Directorate of Technical Education and later shifted to Rampur.

Recently, he was issued a show-cause notice and transferred again on January 1, which Pallavi labeled as retaliation for his whistleblowing. Addressing the media, Pallavi alleged that the minister is persecuting Rajbahadur for revealing corruption in the department. She warned that if the harassment does not stop, under her leadership, would take to the streets in protest. Pallavi further claimed that threats have been issued to Rajbahadur's family, and accused the government of suppressing dissent. She challenged the administration, stating that any oppression of backward communities would lead to

severe consequences for the government. In response, Minister Ashish Patel took to social media attacking Pallavi without directly naming her. He alleged that a "sponsored conspiracy" was being orchestrated against him, driven by individuals working under ulterior motives. Referring to Rajbahadur, the minister claimed that his former OSD had been colluding with conspirators aiming to defeat NDA candidate Anupriya Patel in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. He warned his critics not to provoke him into crossing the limits of decency, as the consequences could be far-reaching. Meanwhile, Rajbahadur

Patel, speaking to journalists, provided a detailed account of the alleged irregularities in the promotion process. He stated that during his tenure as OSD, he had informed the minister about financial improprieties both orally and in writing. However, instead of addressing the issue, he faced harassment, forcing him to resign. Rajbahadur alleged that officials in the department, under undue pressure from the minister, violated rules to advance the promotion process. He warned that if the promotions were not annulled and direct recruitment initiated for the posts, he would approach the court for justice.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

E-student visa initiative

Special visa categories for international students would make it easier for them to pursue their education in India

India has taken a significant step to attract international students by introducing two special visa categories: the e-student visa and the e-student-x visa. This initiative not only streamlines the process for students seeking education in India but also demonstrates the country's commitment to becoming a global hub for higher education. The e-student visa is designed specifically for foreign learners registered on the "Study in India" portal. This platform facilitates admissions for international students into a variety of Indian institutions offering long-term and short-term courses. The e-student-x visa, on the other hand, caters to dependents of these students, ensuring families can stay together during their academic journey. To apply for these visas, students need to secure admission to a partner institution listed on the 'Study in India' portal. Once the admission is confirmed, they can use their 'study in India' identification number to authenticate their identity and complete the visa application process at the official portal. These visas are valid for up to five years, depending on the duration of the chosen course.



By welcoming a diverse cohort of international students, Indian universities can elevate their global reputation, fostering cultural exchange and enhancing their academic standing on the world stage. Increased enrollment of international students contributes to revenue generation, which can be reinvested in research, infrastructure, and faculty development. The influx of students from different countries enriches the campus environment, promoting global perspectives and intercultural dialogue. With a range of courses across disciplines, international students can find programmes tailored to their interests and career aspirations. Studying in India provides an unparalleled opportunity to experience its rich cultural heritage, traditions and diversity. Globally, countries like the US and the UK have long-established student visa frameworks that have attracted millions of international learners. The US for example offers the F-1 visa for academic students and the M-1 visa for vocational or technical students. These visas allow students to work part-time on campus and participate in Optional Practical Training (OPT) programmes, enabling them to gain work experience in their field of study. The UK's Tier 4 student visa permits full-time study and part-time work during term time. Post-study work options, such as the Graduate Route, allow students to stay and work in the UK for two years after graduation. India's introduction of specialised student visa categories is a strategic move to position itself as a global education hub. By simplifying the visa process, the country is poised to attract a significant number of international students. With affordable fee structure, India can attract good number of students from across the world. However, a lot more needs to be done in terms of quality of education and infrastructure. University campuses that are foreign student friendly will go a long way in making India an international education hub.

PICTALK



Flocks of pelicans and cormorants congregate at Man Sagar Lake, in Jaipur

Gandhi's arrest: A turning point in the global fight for freedom



RAJDEEP PATHAK

His arrest, far from quelling resistance, galvanised the nation, showcasing the power of non-violence as a tool for liberation and freedom

On January 4, 1932, Mahatma Gandhi was arrested after the Congress Party had decided to resume a civil disobedience movement in the wake of emergency measures imposed by the British government. The arrest marked a pivotal juncture in India's struggle for independence and left an indelible impact on global movements for justice and equality. Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence and civil disobedience not only reshaped India's freedom struggle but also served as a blueprint for resistance movements worldwide.



The Civil Disobedience Movement, initiated by Mahatma Gandhi in 1930, was a landmark moment in the Indian nationalist struggle. It was launched with the historic Salt March (Dandi Yatra) - where Gandhi defied British-imposed salt taxes, a symbol of colonial exploitation - foot-marching from Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat to the river Dandi, a journey of 241 miles. This movement aimed to undermine British authority through non-violent means such as boycotting British goods, refusing to pay taxes, and disobeying oppressive laws.

India's moral and political conscience, galvanising people from all walks of life to resist British rule. Women, in particular, stepped into leadership roles during this period. Kasturba Gandhi, Gandhi's wife and Sarojini Naidu led marches and protests, ensuring that the movement did not lose steam.

By the early 1930s, the movement had gained mass participation but faced severe repression from the British administration. Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy of India, adopted a policy of suppression, seeing Gandhi's leadership as a threat to the stability of British rule in India. On January 4, 1932, Gandhi was arrested under the 'Defence of India Act' for his role in perpetuating 'civil disobedience' - after it was decided by the Congress Party to resume a 'civil disobedience' movement in the wake of emergency measures imposed by the British government in the form of a series of Viceroy's ordinances. The arrest of Gandhi had immediate repercussions in India, sparking a wave of protests and acts of defiance. Historian Bipan Chandra in his book 'India's Struggle for Independence' (Penguin Books, 1989), writes that Gandhi's detention was a "turning point that revitalized the waning momentum of the movement". The arrest was perceived as an attack on

Acts of civil disobedience, such as the refusal to pay land revenue and the boycott of British institutions, intensified across the country. The arrest also amplified the moral and symbolic power of Gandhi's leadership. His willingness to endure imprisonment demonstrated his steadfast commitment to non-violence and truth. The Indian masses responded with unprecedented solidarity, reinforcing the idea that freedom could be achieved through peaceful resistance.

Gandhi's arrest in 1932 was widely reported in the global press, drawing attention to the Indian struggle for independence. In Britain, the arrest sparked wide debate. While the colonial government justified the move as a necessary measure to maintain law and order, prominent intellectuals like Bertrand Russell and George Orwell criticized the repression. Orwell in his book 'As I Please: Essays' (1943); Tribune Publishing remarked, "The



GANDHI'S ARREST BECAME A BEACON FOR OPPRESSED PEOPLES WORLDWIDE, INSPIRING MOVEMENTS FOR FREEDOM AND JUSTICE. NELSON MANDELA, WHO WOULD LATER LEAD THE ANTI-APARTHEID STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA, CREDITED MAHATMA GANDHI AS THE PIONEER OF NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE

paradox of Gandhi's imprisonment lay in the fact that a man advocating peace was treated as a threat to the empire". The arrest also resonated with leaders of other anti-colonial and 'civil rights movements'. Years later, Martin Luther King Jr. would cite Gandhi's arrest as an example of how moral authority could triumph over systemic oppression. King said, "Gandhi's life and sacrifices teach us that non-violence is not only a method but a philosophy of life", adding, "The non-violent resistance of Gandhi was the guiding light of our struggle for justice in America".

Gandhi's arrest became a beacon for oppressed peoples worldwide, inspiring movements for freedom and justice. Nelson Mandela, who would later lead the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, credited Mahatma Gandhi as the pioneer of non-violent resistance. In his autobiography "Long Walk to Freedom", Mandela wrote, "The spirit of defiance Gandhi embodied in India was equally relevant in South Africa's fight against apartheid".

Historians and political theorists have studied Gandhi's detention in 1932 as a case study in the dynamics of resistance and power. British historian Judith M. Brown, in her seminal work "Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope" (1989) also

points out that Gandhi's imprisonment highlighted the moral contradictions of British colonialism. "By incarcerating Gandhi, the British sought to delegitimise him, but instead they exposed their own vulnerability to ethical critique". International British historian Erik Hobsbawm situates Gandhi's arrest within the broader context of anti-colonial movements. In "The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, (1914-1991)", Hobsbawm notes that "The imprisonment of Gandhi was not merely an Indian event; it marked the erosion of imperial authority on a global scale".

Today, as the world grapples with challenges like systemic injustice, racial inequality, and climate change, Gandhi's principles of civil disobedience remain a guiding light. Some movements such as 'Extinction Rebellion' (a UK-founded global environmental movement and 'Black Lives Matter' draw on the strategies of non-violent protest that Gandhi exemplified. Mahatma Gandhi's example serves as a reminder that moral courage and non-violent resistance are humanity's most potent tools for building a just and equitable society.

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RSS CHIEF ROOTS FOR UNITY

Madam — Apropos of the article 'Bhagwat champions unity as path to India's Vishwaguru vision' (Jan 6), the Mahakumbh at Prayag is the biggest manifestation of glamour, valour and cultural prosperity of the Sanatan with no discrimination of caste, sects, beliefs, regions and religions. What else is required to prove inclusivity, tolerance and omnipresence of the Sanatan? Sikhs are mainstream Hindus and calling them a minority is anti-thesis of both the religious faiths. Sikhs never claim any minority status and both Hindus with Sikh brethren visit temples and Gurdwaras with the strongest faith and devotion. The political conundrum and vote bank politics are hell-bent upon dividing Hindus on caste lines so much so that even a caste census is demanded in utter disregard to the Sanatan and Hindu beliefs.

The main problem of the explicit divide in Hindus, Muslims and Christians is propelled by the Hindu politicians always craving for power on caste and religious divisions and provoking the Muslim fundamentalist leaders to widen such divide. I bet if Hindu politicians adhere to the Sanatan values, there is absolutely no reason for confrontation in different religions and the fundamentalists of any religion will not dare to surge. The current controversies of the excavation of mosques built upon temple remnants and ruins are also the result of oppression of Hindus and discrimination even after seven decades of independence. RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat's message is loud and clear and shows tolerance among hundreds of disputes. However, it is true that local Hindus are aggrieved by the loss of their temples during their lifetime and in the ages of their forefathers. How can they be pacified? It is a very difficult problem and looks unstoppable. The illegal occupation of temples was a deliberate act to humiliate the Hindus in a colonial mindset and such illegal occupations should be surrendered voluntarily.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

A Journey from poverty to prosperity



The SBI Research report unveils a transformative narrative of India's poverty eradication journey, with the poverty rate falling below 5 per cent in 2024. This milestone reflects not just economic progress but a holistic reconstruction of India's socio-economic fabric under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. Rural poverty has significantly declined from 25.7 per cent

in 2012 to 4.86 per cent in 2024, showcasing the impact of government schemes. Initiatives like MGNREGA provided consistent rural employment, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana ensured safe housing, and the Ujjwala Yojana improved women's health and energy efficiency through free LPG connections. Rural India, the nation's backbone, has played a pivotal role in this success. Urban poverty, too, witnessed a dramatic drop from 13.7 per cent in 2012 to 4.09 per cent in 2024. Revolutionary measures like Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and Jan Dhan Yojana eliminated corruption, enhancing financial inclusion and enabling direct cash benefits for millions.

R K Jain | Barwani

JUSTICE FOR MUKESH CHANDRAKAR

Madam — It is sad that the new year began on a tragic note for India's media fraternity, as a young journalist Mukesh Chandrakar was found murdered, with his body seen lying in a septic tank in Bijapur. The journalist was allegedly killed for his ground reporting of the Maoist conflict in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region. It was reported that Mukesh, a seasoned journalist and the creator of the popular YouTube channel Bastar Junction, garnered millions of views for his investigative reports. The global toll of journalist fatalities reached 179 in 2024, spanning 25 countries. India reported four journalist killings last year, all from central India, a region fraught with challenges for the press. Mukesh Chandrakar's untimely death has once again spotlighted the perils faced by journalists in conflict zones and the urgent need for stronger protections for media professionals in India. But every attack on the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression only adds to the strength of the Fourth Estate in our country.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

HEALTHCARE SYSTEM NEEDS ATTENTION

Madam — Health services, once considered a noble and selfless profession, have now largely turned into a business, making the situation worse than before. Citizens, especially the poor, find themselves unable to access even basic services, including in government hospitals. The inexplicable anguish caused by long queues, deplorable conditions, and unprofessional behaviour of some practitioners leaves a lasting stigma on healthcare. While people place their hopes on free medicines to alleviate their suffering, hospitals often provide only cheaper medicine and for expensive medicines, patients are compelled to visit private pharmacies, forcing them to spend beyond their means. As a result, the poor are often left to endure prolonged illness and deteriorating health. This issue needs attention, as healthcare should be accessible and equitable for all, irrespective of financial status.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Resilience redefined: The art of bending without breaking

Far from avoiding pain, resilience teaches us to embrace it as a catalyst for self-discovery and renewal



KAVITA KABIR

Resilience is often misunderstood as an unshakable strength, but its true essence lies in flexibility and growth. It is not about avoiding pain or adversity but learning to navigate them with courage and purpose. Resilience is the whisper within us that says, "You can rebuild."

Take Priya (name changed), a 36-year-old software engineer whose life unravelled after an unexpected layoff. "I thought I had lost everything—my confidence, my identity," she admitted. Beneath her professional stress lay years of self-worth tied to external validation. Through journaling and cognitive reframing, Priya discovered her worth extended beyond achievements. The layoff became not an ending, but an opportunity to redefine herself.

Psychologist Ann Masten calls resilience "ordinary magic," highlighting that it is not an extraordinary trait but a skill we can all cultivate. In today's unpredictable world, resilience is no longer optional—it is essential. **The Building Blocks of Resilience**



Resilience is not about bouncing back but about moving forward, transformed by challenges. Its foundation rests on four key elements: 1. Self-Trust: Believing in your ability to navigate life's storms. 2. Emotional Agility: Acknowledging and processing emotions without being consumed by them. 3. Relational Anchors: Relying on meaningful connections for support and safety. 4. Hopeful Realism: Balancing acceptance of hardship with faith in better outcomes. Consider Rohan (name changed), a 50-year-old attorney overwhelmed by work stress. Grounding techniques like mindful breathing helped him regain

clarity. "It reminded me that even in chaos, I could find stillness," he shared. These elements are accessible to everyone. Resilience is not about extraordinary strength; it's about ordinary choices made consistently.

Practical Tools for Resilience Building Resilience starts with small, intentional actions. Journaling allows us to process emotions and uncover patterns. Prompts like "What does my fear want me to learn?" or "What would I tell my younger self about this moment?" can reframe challenges into opportunities for growth. Mindfulness anchors us in the present. Aditi (name changed), a single mother, found solace in a simple prac-

tice: placing her hands over her heart and repeating, "I am safe. I am enough." Creative expression, like art or movement, helps release emotions that words cannot. Samaira (name changed), a 19-year-old dancer, choreographed a piece to process grief after losing a loved one. "It became a way for my body to tell the story I couldn't speak," she reflected.

The Gift of Resilience Resilience is deeply human. It is found in the small decisions to try again, the connections that remind us we are not alone, and the ability to see hope in uncertainty. As Viktor Frankl observed, "When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves." Resilience is not about being unbreakable—it is about learning to bend without breaking and trusting that, no matter how many times we fall, we can rise again.

(The writer is a psychologist specialising in trauma and inner child healing. She writes and speaks extensively about mental health and resilience; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF YOGA

Hatha Yoga emphasises holistic well-being, nurturing the body, mind and spirit in harmony



RAVI VALLURI

Hatha Yoga lays emphasis on the overall well-being of the body while nurturing the mind and spirit of the seeker. The bedrock of this yogic technique is strongly based on the traditional eight limbs of yoga as expounded by Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras. These are 10 quotes on yoga by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar which help one to appreciate the depth of yoga.

1. "Like a flower bud, human life has the potential to blossom fully. Blossoming of human potential to fullness is yoga." Yoga is a discipline that is both gentle and powerful for uniting body, breath and mind in awareness. It integrates elements from all the different paths of yoga where you get a glimpse of Raj Yoga, Ashtanga or Hatha Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga as well Gnana Yoga making the yogic experience wholesome.
2. "Yoga brings knowledge, passion and action together." Yoga is not just doing some body-twisting postures – it is experiencing the union of the body, mind and breath.
3. "Yoga is a study of life, study of your body, breath, mind, intellect, memory and ego; study of your inner faculties." The practice of yoga has been known for centuries to produce benefits in the areas of health, mental clarity and spiritual connection.
4. "Withdraw your senses from the object to its source, then the union happens, then the yoga happens." One must learn the correct way of doing asanas and pranayama.
5. "Peace is our very nature, and yoga leads you to inner peace." Yoga teaches one how to pay attention to what one experiences inside and what is the state of mind. Declutter the mental chatter.



6. "The purpose of yoga is to stop suffering even before it arises." Yoga is a holistic way of energising and integrating mind, body and spirit.
7. "Yoga is not just weight-loss programme; it is a science to make one feel lighter. It helps to lose the mental stuff of anger, jealousy, hatred, greed, etc." During the Sri Sri Yoga basic programme that is taught in 10 to 12 hours at the Art of Living Retreat, certified teachers help to experience the real depth of yoga that brings benefits not just at the physical level but at the mental, emotional and spiritual level too.
8. "One of the rules of yoga is to cultivate the practice of being happy." Everybody ultimately wants to be happy. But what is real happiness? The wise say that shifting gears from the pursuit of happiness to being happy makes happiness a journey rather than the destination, which is the key.
9. "The wisdom of yoga transforms one from arrogance to self-confidence; meekness to humility; from dependence to a realisation of interdependence." One may wonder if yoga is a self-help programme. Taught at various levels, yoga programmes connect one with ancient wisdom and nourish one's inner beauty as a human being.
10. "The wisdom of yoga transforms one from craving freedom to recognition of the 'unboundedness', from limited ownership to oneness with the whole." Does it seem incredulous? But yes, this is indeed the real potential of yoga. Simple yogic postures, rejuvenating breathing techniques, and blissful meditations integrated with the invaluable ancient wisdom of yoga put one on the path of genuine life transformation. As a yoga explorer with over a decade and a half of experience, I can state that all fellow explorers can dive deeper and experience what it takes to be a real yogi (or yogini).

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living)

Turning Canada's crisis into India's opportunity



DINESH SOOD

India holds the potential to become a global talent powerhouse by addressing skill gaps and aligning training programs with international demands



For years, Canada has been a top destination for Indians, especially Punjabis, seeking quality education and better employment opportunities. However, as Canada grapples with various socio-economic challenges, the situation has created a ripple effect with unforeseen opportunities for India. While the crisis in Canada poses significant concerns, it also presents a moment for introspection and action for India's young workforce. India stands at a unique vantage point, with its burgeoning youth population and a growing demand for skilled workers across key sectors like IT, hospitality, transportation, beauty and wellness, and retail.

The current global workforce shortages highlight India's potential to bridge these gaps while empowering its workforce to meet domestic and international demands. With over 65 per cent of its population under 35, India boasts one of the world's youngest and most vibrant workforces. This demographic advantage positions the country as a potential global talent hub. However, the critical challenge lies in transforming this potential into a skilled, job-ready workforce. While India's youth are ambitious and eager, many lack access to industry-relevant skills and training. Bridging this skills gap is crucial for ensuring employability and driving economic growth. Canada's challenges serve as a wake-up call for India to accelerate its focus on skill development, especially in sectors that align with global demand.

Global Demand Beyond Canada
While Canada's crisis has brought attention to the workforce, opportunities extend far beyond North America. Countries in Europe, as well as South Asian nations like Taiwan and Vietnam, are also facing workforce gaps and require skilled, hardworking individuals. With its demographic advantage and growing focus on skill development, India is well-positioned to fill these gaps. By aligning training programs with the specific needs of these markets, India can



WHILE INDIA'S YOUTH ARE AMBITIOUS AND EAGER, MANY LACK ACCESS TO INDUSTRY-RELEVANT SKILLS AND TRAINING. BRIDGING THIS SKILLS GAP IS CRUCIAL FOR ENSURING EMPLOYABILITY AND DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH

cement its reputation as a global supplier of talent. Bridging the Skills Gap with Policy Support India has already made strides in skill development through initiatives like Skill India, Digital India, and the National Skill Development Mission. However, these efforts must be scaled and aligned with global standards to capitalise on emerging opportunities, and the private sector truly should be able to design certification programmes that meet international benchmarks. Hands-on training, internships, and industry-specific curricula ensure that Indian workers are both employable and competitive globally. Equitable access to skill development programmes is critical. Government subsidies, partnerships with educational institutions, and digital learning platforms can make high-quality training accessible even in rural areas. Technology can be a game-changer in India's skill development journey. Online learning platforms, virtual reality simulations, and AI-driven personalised training modules can revolutionise how skills are imparted. These tools make training accessible to even the country's remotest corners, enabling millions to participate in the economic mainstream. Skill development should focus on employment and fostering entrepreneurship. For instance, a trained beauty and wellness professional could start a salon, or a logistics expert could launch a delivery service. With mentorship and financial support, such ventures can create jobs and spur regional economic growth.

Key Sectors with Growing Opportunities

1. Information Technology (IT): India's IT sector is already a global leader, but the rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and cyber secu-

rency require a highly skilled workforce. As digital transformation reshapes industries worldwide, there is a pressing need for talent proficient in emerging technologies. Training programmes should focus on data analytics, AI applications, and cyber security protocols to meet global standards.

2. Hospitality and Tourism: With increasing international and domestic travel, the hospitality and tourism sectors demand professionals with strong soft skills, cultural competence, and customer service excellence. Vocational training in these areas, coupled with language enhancement programs, can help Indian youth secure lucrative positions both at home and abroad.

3. Transportation and Logistics: The transportation industry is a vital economic pillar, requiring skilled personnel for logistics management, safety protocols, and infrastructure operations. By offering targeted training in these areas, India can create a workforce ready to address the growing demand in this sector.

4. Beauty and Wellness: Often overlooked, the beauty and wellness industry has witnessed exponential growth globally. This sector offers immense opportunities, from cosmetology to spa therapies and holistic wellness. By blending traditional Indian practices with modern techniques, India can produce skilled professionals catering to diverse cultural needs worldwide.

5. Retail: The rise of e-commerce and the evolution of traditional retail have created a demand for skilled workers in inventory management, customer relations, and digital marketing. Training programmes focused on these areas can help India's youth tap into this dynamic sector.

A Collaborative Effort Capitalising

on these opportunities requires a coordinated effort between the government, private sector, and educational institutions. Policies should focus on creating industry partnerships, providing financial incentives for skill development, and ensuring that training programs are aligned with market demands.

At the same time, private enterprises must invest in upskilling initiatives and collaborate with training institutes to design job-ready curricula. International partnerships can also be vital in providing Indian workers with exposure to global best practices. Seizing the Moment India's youth stand at the cusp of a transformative moment. By equipping them with the right skills, the nation can address unemployment, meet global workforce demands, and drive economic growth. The current challenges faced by countries like Canada remind us of the interconnectedness of global economies and the opportunities that lie within crises. This is an opportunity for India to fill workforce shortages in other nations and elevate its standing as a global talent powerhouse. By focusing on skill development today, India can ensure a brighter, more prosperous tomorrow for its young generation and the nation.

As the world navigates economic uncertainties, it is not the crises that define us but how we respond to them. This is a moment for India to turn challenges into opportunities and empower its youth to shine within the country and on the global stage.

(The writer is co-founder and MD of Orane International, a training partner of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and a network Member of India International Skills Centres, an initiative of GoI. The views expressed are personal)

Cooperative entrepreneurship: A pathway to inclusive growth and social justice

By fostering self-reliance, financial inclusion and social equity, cooperatives have the potential to drive sustainable development

Cooperative entrepreneurship is emerging as a transformative mechanism to address social and economic challenges, especially for marginalised communities. By integrating economic activities with social objectives, it fosters self-reliance, financial inclusion, and social equity, making it a key pillar for sustainable development.



BINOD ANAND

where socio-economic disparities hinder development. By aligning member incentives with enterprise goals, cooperatives drive regional economic growth and nurture local entrepreneurship. Worker cooperatives and employee-owned businesses exemplify how collective ownership transforms workplaces. Through reinvesting profits locally and prioritising social

objectives over profit maximisation, cooperatives contribute to community development and social impact. Eastern India can draw inspiration from dairy cooperatives like Amul and the Amreli Model, which have uplifted rural communities by ensuring fair pricing, market access, and technological support. The historical evolution of cooperatives highlights their relevance in modern economies. Grounded in principles of democratic governance, voluntary participation, and equitable resource distribution, cooperatives ensure equal decision-making power for all members, irrespective of socio-economic status. This inclusivity can significantly impact Eastern India by

bridging developmental gaps and fostering socio-economic resilience. Research underscores how cooperative structures promote innovation through shared ownership and long-term perspectives. Their resilience during economic downturns, supported by collective decision-making, creates an environment conducive to entrepreneurial activities. Innovations in worker cooperatives worldwide, such as those studied by Virginie Pérotin, offer replicable models for Eastern India to boost creativity and efficiency in community-driven enterprises. Cooperatives integrate economic, social, and environmental objectives, aligning closely with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By addressing socio-econom-



ic disparities and promoting equitable wealth distribution, cooperatives serve as engines of inclusive growth. Policy recommendations advocate for robust frameworks to amplify their impact on sustainable development. In Eastern India, cooperatives can tackle regional challenges like agricultural inefficiencies and lack of industrialisation, fostering local enterprises and generating jobs. A recent government decision to extend

PM Fasal Bima Yojana benefits to Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) marks significant progress in financial inclusion and risk mitigation for marginalised groups. This initiative ensures access to crop insurance, protecting vulnerable farmers from losses due to unpredictable weather patterns. In Eastern India, where agriculture forms the backbone of rural livelihoods, this extension can stabilise incomes and encourage cooperative farming ventures. Historical evidence shows that regions with robust cooperative farming models have achieved significant socio-economic upliftment. Cooperatives enable collective bargaining for better input prices and market access, while

providing small and marginal farmers with resources to modernise agricultural practices. Eastern India can build on these successes by developing region-specific cooperative frameworks to address local agricultural challenges and enhance farming resilience. Amul Dairy Cooperative in Gujarat serves as an exemplary model, organising millions of dairy farmers to ensure fair prices and market access while uplifting rural communities. Another noteworthy example is the Lijjat Papad Cooperative, run by economically disadvantaged women, showcasing how small-scale production can evolve into a globally recognised enterprise. Cooperatives are crucial for fostering social justice in

Eastern India by addressing systemic inequities and promoting inclusive growth. They enhance financial inclusion by offering microfinance options, enabling marginalised groups to access entrepreneurial capital. By eliminating middlemen, cooperatives ensure fair pricing for products and services, advancing economic equity. Their governance structures also help members develop leadership skills, strengthening their role in community affairs. Women-centric cooperatives, in particular, provide financial independence, leadership opportunities, and platforms to address gender-specific challenges.

(The writer was the member of the MSP committee formed by the central government; views are personal)

S Korean anti-corruption agency, police debate measures to detain impeached president

PTI ■ SEOUL

South Korea's anti-corruption agency and police debated on Monday more forceful measures to detain impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol after their previous attempt was blocked by the presidential security service last week.

The discussions highlighted the obstacles facing the criminal investigation into Yoon's Dec. 3 martial law decree, which led to his impeachment on Dec. 14. The one-week detention warrant was set to expire at midnight, but the agency requested a new court warrant to extend the timeframe for taking Yoon into custody.

The Seoul Western District Court last week issued a warrant to detain Yoon and a separate warrant to search his residence after he defied authorities by refusing to appear for questioning over his brief power grab. Executing those warrants is complicated as long as Yoon remains in his official residence.

Yoon has described his power grab as a necessary act of governance against a liberal opposition bogging down his agenda with its legislative majority and has vowed to "fight to the end" against efforts to oust him. While martial law lasted only several hours, it set off turmoil that has shaken the country's politics, diplomacy and financial markets for weeks and exposed the fragility of South Korea's democracy while society is deeply polarized.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials, which leads a joint investigation with police and military investigators, revealed Monday it had asked police to take over efforts to detain Yoon, following its prominent role in Friday's failure.

However, the anti-corruption agency backtracked hours later after the police stated it could be legally problematic for them to be entirely responsible for

Yoon's detention, given that the warrants had been obtained by the agency.

The agency, which has faced questions about its competence after failing to detain Yoon, said the efforts to execute the warrants would be carried out under the authority of the joint investigation team but did not clarify whether its approach would change.

Police vow more forceful efforts to detain Yoon: Police

available options" were being reviewed. If investigators manage to detain Yoon, they will likely ask a court for permission to make a formal arrest. Otherwise, he will be released after 48 hours.

Meanwhile, the agency has urged the country's acting leader, Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok, to instruct the presidential security service to comply with the execution of the detention warrant. Choi

Oh Dong-woon, and six other anti-corruption and police officers for orchestrating Friday's detention attempt, which they claim was illegal.

The lawyers also filed complaints against the country's acting national police chief, the acting defense minister and two Seoul police officials for ignoring the presidential security service's request to provide additional forces to block the detention attempt. The lawyers



Protesters demanding the arrest of impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol attend a rally near the presidential residence in Seoul on Monday. AP/PTI

say they plan to make a more aggressive effort to detain Yoon at the official residence, where members of the presidential security staff were seen installing barbed wire near the gate and along the hills leading up to the building.

A police official, who spoke on condition of anonymity per department rules, told reporters there were discussions with the anti-corruption agency on whether to arrest members of the presidential security staff if they forcefully obstruct efforts to detain Yoon.

When asked about the possibility of deploying police special task forces, the official said "all

has yet to publicly comment on the issue. Yoon's lawyers argued the detention and search warrants against the president 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 delegate police to detain Yoon.

Yoon's lawyers file complaints: Yoon's lawyers on Monday filed complaints with public prosecutors against the anti-corruption agency's chief prosecutor,

said they also plan to file complaints against some 150 anti-corruption and police investigators who were involved in Friday's detention attempt.

The anti-corruption agency has been weighing charges of rebellion after Yoon declared martial law and dispatched troops to surround the National Assembly. Lawmakers who managed to get past the blockade voted to lift martial law hours later.

His fate now lies with the Constitutional Court, which has begun deliberations on whether to formally remove Yoon from office or reinstate him.

S Korea's military says North Korea fired missile into eastern sea

PTI ■ SEOUL

North Korea on Monday fired a ballistic missile that flew 1,100 kilometers (685 miles) before landing in waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan, South Korea's military said, extending its heightened weapons testing activities into 2025 weeks before Donald Trump returns as US president.

The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the midrange missile was fired from an area near the North Korean capital of Pyongyang and that the launch preparations were detected in advance by the US and South Korean militaries. It denounced the launch as a provocation that poses a serious threat to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

The joint chiefs said the military was strengthening its surveillance and defense posture in preparation for possible additional launches and sharing information on the missile with the United States and Japan.

Japan's Defence Ministry said the missile landed outside its exclusive economic zone and that there were no reports of



A TV screen shows a file image of North Korea's missile launch during a news program at Seoul Railway Station in Seoul on Monday. AP/PTI

damage to vessels or aircraft.

The launch came as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was visiting Seoul for talks with South Korean allies over the North Korean nuclear threat and other issues.

Blinken's visit comes amid political turmoil in South Korea following President Yoon Suk Yeol's short-lived martial law decree and subsequent impeachment by parliament last month, which experts say puts the country at a disadvantage in getting a steady footing with Trump ahead of his return to the White House.

In a news conference with South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul, Blinken said they condemn North Korea's latest launch, which violates UN Security Council resolutions against the North, and reiterated concerns about the growing alignment between Pyongyang and Moscow over Russian President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine.

According to US, Ukrainian and South Korean assessments, North Korea has sent more than 10,000 troops and conventional weapons systems to support Moscow's war against Ukraine. There are concerns that Russia could transfer North Korea advanced weapons technology in return, which could potentially enhance the threat posed by leader Kim Jong Un's nuclear-armed military.

Blinken described the military cooperation between Russia and North Korea as a "two-way street," saying Russia has been providing military equipment and training to the North and "intends to share space and satellite technology."

Blinken and Cho both dismissed concerns about damage to the US-South Korea alliance in the aftermath of the political turmoil in Seoul.

Experts had warned that Yoon's martial law decree — which lasted only hours but has rattled politics, high-level diplomacy and financial markets for weeks — exposed the fragility of South Korea's democratic system in a divided society.

Prime Minister until a new leader is selected.

The Liberal Party national executive, which decides on leadership issues, plans to meet this week, likely after the caucus session, the report said.

On Friday, The Globe reported that Trudeau's advisers are looking at how he can remain Prime Minister while a new Liberal leader is selected.

A source said on Sunday they believed that Trudeau would stay in his position until a new leader was chosen.

The party has two options: appoint an interim leader on the recommendation of the national caucus or hold a shortened leadership contest. A leadership contest would require the Prime Minister to request that Governor-General Mary Simon prorogue Parliament, which constitutional experts say is not guaranteed, the paper said.

Another source said it makes sense for Trudeau to remain as Prime Minister until a leader is

Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal issues second arrest warrant against ex-PM Hasina

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh's International Criminal Tribunal (ICT) on Monday issued arrest warrants against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 11 others, including former military generals and an ex-police chief, for their alleged role in incidents of enforced disappearances.

This was the second arrest warrant by the ICT against Hasina, who fled to India after her Awami League regime's toppling following unprecedented anti-government protests in August last year. The tribunal has so far recorded three cases against her.

"Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mojumdar, chairman of the tribunal, issued the arrest warrant after hearing a prosecution plea," an ICT official said.

The Inspector General of Police was ordered to arrest the twelve people, including Hasina, and produce them before the tribunal on February 12 in the case filed over complaints of

enforced disappearances of several hundred people.

The deposed premier's then-defence adviser Major General (ret'd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique and former IGP Benazir Ahmed are among those named in the case. While Siddique is currently under custody, Ahmed is believed to be on the run. ICT Chief Prosecutor Mohammad Tajul Islam did not disclose the names of most of the accused "in the interest of investigations and their arrest."

"The next hearing for this case is also scheduled for February 12. The tribunal has instructed that the investigation report be submitted on that day if completed," Islam later told reporters. He, however, said if the investigation report could not be submitted by then, the law enforcement agencies would have to provide a progress report on the arrests.

Islam told the tribunal that the ousted regime had established a culture of enforced disappearances under state sponsorship.



The chief prosecutor alleged that those involved in carrying out these disappearances were rewarded. He added that agencies like the elite anti-crime Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), the police's Detective Branch (DB), the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit, and the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) were most frequently used for the purpose. "Over the past 15 years,

a culture of fear was established in Bangladesh through enforced disappearances and crossfires. Thousands of people were abducted by various forces, either in plainclothes or in uniform. Most of them never returned," Islam told journalists.

Last month, Dhaka officially sought Hasina's extradition from India. While New Delhi acknowledged the receipt of the letter, it refrained from commenting on it.

The ICT issued the first arrest warrant against the ex-premier on October 17 on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity committed during the July-August protests and uprising.

After the fall of the Awami League government, at least 60 cases or complaints of enforced disappearances, killings, genocide, and crimes against humanity were lodged at the ICT, accusing Hasina, leaders of her party and its allies, and senior officials of different law enforcement agencies.

Trudeau likely to resign as Liberal Party leader this week: Report

PTI ■ OTTAWA

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is expected to resign as the leader of the Liberal Party this week amid internal party dissent and low public opinion ratings, according to a media report.

The Globe and Mail newspaper citing sources said it is unclear when exactly Trudeau, who has been Canada's prime minister since 2015, will step down, but a resignation is expected to come before a national caucus meeting on Wednesday.

One of the sources, who spoke recently to the Prime Minister, said Trudeau, 53, realises he needs to make a statement before he meets the Liberal caucus so it doesn't look like he was forced out by his own MPs. The sources said they are unsure about what the Liberal Party's national executive plans to do to replace Trudeau as leader. They said it remains unclear whether he will leave immediately or stay on as

chosen so he can deal with the incoming US administration of Donald Trump and his threat of 25-per-cent tariffs.

A Liberal Party source said a leadership race would take at least three months, although the party constitution requests at least four months.

The news of resignation comes as Trudeau's popularity continues to dwindle in Canada, which should hold an election by late October.

Public opinion polls show that his party will likely be swept out of power by Pierre Poilievre's Conservatives.

According to Canadian pollster Angus Reid, Trudeau has a disapproval rate of around 68 per cent as of December 24.

Trudeau faced a difficult few months in politics. His own party members are calling for his resignation. In September, he faced a no confidence vote in parliament that later failed, despite efforts from the Conservative Party to remove him from office.

On December 16, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland announced that she was stepping down from Trudeau's cabinet, dealing a significant blow to the prime minister.

Later in December, one of Trudeau's key allies, New Democratic Party leader Jagmeet Singh, said that he planned to present a formal motion of no-confidence against him.



Pope Francis names first woman to head major Vatican office

PTI ■ ROME

Pope Francis on Monday named the first woman to head a major Vatican office, appointing an Italian nun, Sister Simona Brambilla, to become prefect of the department responsible for all the Catholic Church's religious orders.

The appointment marks a major step in Francis' aim to give women more leadership roles in governing the church. While women have been named to No. 2 spots in some Vatican offices, never before has a woman been named prefect of a dicastery or congregation of the Holy See Curia, the central governing organ of the Catholic Church.

The historic nature of Brambilla's appointment was confirmed by Vatican Media, which headlined its report "Sister Simona Brambilla is

the first woman prefect in the Vatican".

The office is one of the most important in the Vatican. Known officially as the Dicastery for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, it is responsible for every religious order, from the Jesuits and Franciscans to smaller newer movements.

In an indication of the novelty of the appointment, and the theological implications involved, Francis simultaneously named as a co-leader, or "pro-prefect," a cardinal: Angel Fernández Artime, a Salesian. But the appointment, announced in the Vatican daily bulletin, lists Brambilla first as "prefect" and Fernández second as her co-leader, which theologians say is necessary since the prefect must be able to celebrate Mass and perform other sacramental functions that current-

ly can only be done by men.

Brambilla, 59, is a member of the Consolata Missionaries religious order and had served as the No. 2 in the religious orders department since last year. She takes over from the retiring Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz, 77.

Francis made Brambilla's appointment possible with his 2022 reform of the Holy See's founding constitution, which allowed laypeople, including women, to head a dicastery and become prefects.

Brambilla, a nurse, worked as a missionary in Mozambique and led her Consolata order as superior from 2011-2023, when Francis made her secretary of the religious orders department.

Her appointment is the latest move by Francis to show by example how women can take leadership roles within the Catholic hierarchy, albeit with-



out allowing them to be ordained as priests.

Catholic women do much of the church's work in schools, hospitals and passing down the faith to future generations. But they have long complained of second-class status in an institution that reserves the priesthood for men.

Francis has upheld the ban on

female priests and tamped down hopes that women could be ordained as deacons.

But there has been a marked increase in the percentage of women working in the Vatican during his papacy, including in leadership positions, from 19.3% in 2013 to 23.4% today, according to statistics reported by Vatican News. In the Curia

alone, the percentage of women is 26%.

Among the women holding leadership positions are Sister Raffaella Petri, the first-ever female secretary general of the Vatican City State, responsible for the territory's health care system, police force and main source of revenue, the Vatican Museums, which are led by a laywoman, Barbara Jatta.

Another nun, Sister Alessandra Smerilli, is the No. 2 in the Vatican development office while several women have been appointed to under-secretary positions, including the French nun, Sister Nathalie Becquart, in the synod of bishops' office.

Pope wraps up busy Christmas season by calling for culture of welcome in Christian communities: Pope Francis wrapped up a busy Christmas season on Monday by calling for the faithful to promote a culture of welcome

and integration in their communities and reject discrimination.

Francis presided over Mass in St. Peter's Basilica to mark Epiphany.

According to the Bible, the feast marks the day that three wise men guided by a star came to visit the newborn Jesus. Francis said the star, in guiding humanity to God, doesn't discriminate among ethnic, linguistic or national groups and is there for all.

"We do well to meditate on this today, in a world in which individuals and nations are equipped with ever more powerful means of communication, and yet seem to have become less willing to understand, accept and encounter others in their diversity!" he said in his homily.

God, he said, calls on Christians to reject anything that discriminates or excludes

and discards people. He called instead for promoting "a strong culture of welcome, in which the narrow places of fear and denunciation are replaced by open spaces of encounter, integration and sharing of life; safe spaces where everyone can find warmth and shelter."

Francis has long preached the Gospel-mandated need to welcome the stranger, applying it to migrants in particular.

The Epiphany Mass marked the end of a particularly busy Christmas season for Francis that also coincided with the start of the 2025 Holy Year. The once-ever-quarter-celebration of Christianity is expected to bring more than 30 million pilgrims to Rome over the next 12 months.

The 88-year-old pope has a daunting schedule ahead greeting and ministering to them, alongside his other papal duties.

Starmer slams 'lies and misinformation' after attacks from Elon Musk

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Monday condemned "lies and misinformation" that he said are undermining UK democracy, in response to a barrage of attacks on his government from Elon Musk.

The billionaire Tesla CEO has taken an intense and erratic interest in British politics since the centre-left Labour Party was elected in July. Musk has used his social network, X, to call for a new election and demand Starmer be imprisoned. On Monday he posted an online poll for his 210 million followers on the proposition: "America should liberate the people of Britain from their tyrannical government."

Asked about Musk's comments during a question session at a hospital near London, Starmer criticised "those that are spreading lies and misinformation as far and as wide as possible," particularly opposition Conservative politicians in Britain who have echoed some of Musk's claims.

Musk often posts on X about the UK, retweeting criticism of Starmer and the hashtag TwoTierKeir -- shorthand for an unsubstantiated claim that Britain has "two-tier policing" with far-right protesters treated more harshly than Palestinian or Black Lives Matter demonstrators. Recently Musk has focused on child sexual abuse, particularly a series of cases that rocked northern England towns in

which groups of men, largely from Pakistani backgrounds, were tried for grooming and abusing dozens of girls. The cases have been used by far-right activists to link child abuse to immigration, and to accuse politicians of covering up the "grooming gangs" out of a fear of appearing racist.

Musk has posted a demand for a public inquiry into the cases. An inquiry was held under the previous Conservative government, though many of the recommendations it made in 2022 have yet to be implemented.

Musk also has accused Starmer of failing to bring perpetrators to justice when he was England's director of public prosecutions between 2008 and 2013.

Answering questions after a

speech near London, Starmer defended his record as chief prosecutor, saying he had reopened closed cases and "changed the whole prosecution approach" to child sexual exploitation.

He also condemned language used by Musk about Jess Phillips, a government minister responsible for combating violence against women and girls. Musk called Phillips a "rape genocide apologist" and said she deserved to be in prison.

"When the poison of the far-right leads to serious threats to Jess Phillips and others, then in my book, a line has been crossed," Starmer said. "I enjoy the cut and thrust of politics, the robust debate that we must have, but that's got to be based

on facts and truth, not on lies." Musk has also called for the release of Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, a far-right activist who goes by the name Tommy Robinson and is serving a prison sentence for contempt of court.

Starmer said people "cheerleading Tommy Robinson... are trying to get some vicarious thrill from street violence that people like Tommy Robinson promote."

Starmer largely avoided mentioning Musk by name in his responses, likely wary of giving him more of a spotlight — or of angering Musk ally Donald Trump, who is due to be inaugurated as US president on Jan 20.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, another target of the X

owner's ire, has taken a similar approach. Scholz said he is staying "cool" over critical personal comments made by Musk, but finds it worrying that the US billionaire makes the effort to get involved in a general election by endorsing the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party.

Starmer said the main issue was not Musk's posts on X, but "what are politicians here doing to stand up for our democracy?"

He said he was concerned about Conservative politicians in Britain "so desperate for attention they are amplifying what the far right are saying."

"Once we lose the anchor that truth matters... then we are on a very slippery slope," he said. While some Conservatives,

including party leader Kemi Badenoch, have echoed Musk's points, the main UK beneficiary of his interest has been Reform UK, the hard-right party led by Nigel Farage that has just five seats in the 650-seat House of Commons but big expansion plans. Farage said last month that Musk was considering making a multi-million-dollar donation to the party.

But Farage is critical of Tommy Robinson, refusing to let him join Reform, and on Sunday Musk posted: "The Reform Party needs a new leader. Farage doesn't have what it takes."

Farage tweeted in response: "Well, this is a surprise! Elon is a remarkable individual but on this I am afraid I disagree."

Congo will execute over 170 people convicted of armed robbery

PTI ■ KINHASA (CONGO)

More than 170 inmates from Congo's capital to a high-security prison in the north where they will be executed, Congolese authorities said.

Seventy of the convicts were transported on Sunday, Congolese Minister of Justice Constant Mutamba said, adding to 102 other prisoners who have already been sent to Angenga prison in the northern Mongala province. The men have been convicted of armed robbery and are locally known as "Kulunas" or "urban bandits". They're aged between 18 and 35, Mutamba said in a statement. He did not say when the executions would take place.

Some have welcomed the measure as a means of restoring order and security in the cities, while others are concerned about the risks of abuse and human rights violations. "We welcome this decision because it will help put an end to urban crime. From 8 pm onwards, you can't move around freely because you're afraid of running into a Kuluna," said Fiston Kakule, a resident of the eastern city of Goma. Espoir Muhinuka, a human rights activist, warned of the possibility of extrajudicial executions and called for a strict respect for judicial procedures and fundamental guarantees. He fears that political pressure could lead to unjust convictions and arbitrary executions.

China protests US sanctions for its alleged role in hacking, complains of foreign hacker attacks

PTI ■ BANGKOK

China has slammed a decision by the US Treasury to sanction a Beijing-based cybersecurity company for its alleged role in multiple hacking incidents targeting critical US infrastructure, while the Chinese cyber security agency complained Monday of attacks on Chinese networks.

Asked about the sanctions against Beijing-based Integrity Technology Group, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said the country has cracked down on cyber attacks and that Washington was using the issue to "defame and smear China."

"For some time now, the US side has been playing up so-called Chinese cyber attacks and has even initiated illegal unilateral sanctions against China," Guo said. "China firmly opposes this and will take necessary measures to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests."

Integrity Technology Group said the move by Washington had "no factual basis."

"The company firmly opposes the US Treasury Department's unwarranted accusations and illegal unilateral sanctions on the company," the company, also known as Yongxin

Zhicheng Technology Group, said in a statement Monday to the Shanghai Stock Exchange. The China National Cyber Security Information Center said it had discovered attacks from various malicious websites and foreign IP addresses, including some in California and Florida. It also reported attacks from the Netherlands, Singapore, Mexico, Turkey and Vietnam using Trojan programs, botnets, phishing, theft of intellectual property and violations of privacy.

"They pose a major threat to China's domestic networked units and internet users and some activities have been suspected of criminal offenses," the center said in a notice on its WeChat social media site.

On Friday, the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control hit Integrity Technology with sanctions that block access to US property and bank accounts and prevent the targeted people and companies from doing business with Americans. It cited alleged multiple hacks against US victims, including incidents attributed to Flax Typhoon, a Chinese state-sponsored campaign that targets US critical infrastructure.

The sanctions did not appear to be related to an incident in which the Treasury

Department reported that Chinese hackers had remotely accessed several of its workstations and unclassified documents in a major breach of cybersecurity.

The Treasury Department said it learned of that problem on Dec. 8, when a third-party software service provider, BeyondTrust, flagged that hackers had stolen a key "used by the vendor to secure a cloud-based service used to remotely provide technical support" to workers.

US officials are grappling with the fallout from a massive Chinese cyberespionage blitz known as Salt Typhoon that they say gave officials in Beijing access to private texts and phone conversations of an unknown number of Americans.

Late last month, officials said at least eight telecommunications companies, as well as dozens of nations, had been affected by Salt Typhoon.

Integrity Technology said the sanctions would not adversely affect its business since it does not operate in the US and has no assets there. It added that it abides by all laws and regulations and that it "has always adhered to the corporate vision and mission of bringing a sense of security to the world."

Austria far right gets mandate to try to lead govt for first time since World War II

PTI ■ VIENNA

The leader of Austria's Freedom Party received a mandate Monday to form a new government, which would be the first headed by the far right since World War II if he succeeds.

The Freedom Party, led by Herbert Kickl, won Austria's parliamentary election in September, taking 28.8% of the vote and beating outgoing Chancellor Karl Nehammer's conservative Austrian People's Party into second place.

But in October, President Alexander Van der Bellen gave Nehammer the first chance to form a new government after Nehammer's party said it wouldn't go into government with the Freedom Party under Kickl and others refused to work with the Freedom Party

at all. Those efforts to form a governing alliance without the far right collapsed in the first few days of the new year and Nehammer said Saturday that he would resign.

The People's Party then signaled that it might be open to working under Kickl. Van der Bellen said after meeting Kickl for about an hour at the presidential palace Monday that he had tasked the Freedom Party leader with holding talks with the People's Party to form a new government.

"I did not take this step lightly," the president told reporters. "I will continue to take care that the principles and rules of our constitution are correctly respected and adhered to."

The far right and the conservatives have governed together before, but on previous occasions with the Freedom Party

as the junior partner. Most recently, they ran Austria from 2017 to 2019 in a government in which Kickl — a 56-year-old with a taste for provocation — served as interior minister. It collapsed in a scandal surrounding the Freedom Party's leader at the time.

Coalition talks between the far right and conservatives aren't guaranteed to succeed, but there are no longer any other realistic options in the current parliament and polls suggest that a new election soon could strengthen the Freedom Party further.

In its election programme titled "Fortress Austria," the Freedom Party has called for the "remigration of uninvited foreigners," for achieving a more "homogeneous" nation by tightly controlling borders and suspending the right to asylum via an

emergency law.

The Freedom Party also calls for an end to sanctions against Russia, is highly critical of Western military aid to Ukraine and wants to bow out of the European Sky Shield Initiative, a missile defense project launched by Germany. Kickl has criticised "elites" in Brussels and called for some powers to be brought back from the European Union to Austria.

Van der Bellen noted that the new government won't face an easy task.

"The economic environment is difficult. Austria is in a persistent recession, unemployment is rising; at the same time our state budget must be restructured," he said. "It's not likely that all the measures will be popular, but they will have to be implemented."

Russia claims it captured another town in Ukraine

PTI ■ KYIV

Russian troops in eastern Ukraine have captured the stronghold of Kurakhove after a month-long battle, Russia's Defence Ministry claimed Monday, adding the wrecked town to the Kremlin's list of conquests in the partially occupied Donetsk region during the almost three-year war.

The claim, which drew no response from Ukrainian authorities, came a day after the Russian Defense Ministry said Ukrainian forces had launched a new thrust in Russia's Kursk border region.

The inauguration in two weeks' time of US President-elect Donald Trump has brought a new element of uncertainty into the conflict and triggered an apparent effort by both sides to establish battlefield gains before any possible peace talks are held.

Trump hasn't detailed his plans for accomplishing his goal of ending the fighting, but his presence in the White House is likely to significantly affect how the war plays out.

Kurakhove is a key stronghold for the Ukrainian army on the

eastern front line. It has an industrial zone, a thermal power plant and a reservoir. It also sits on a highway running between eastern and southern Ukraine.

In November, The Associated Press reported from the town that some 7,000-10,000 people likely remained in Kurakhove. Its prewar population was about twice that. The town has been under relentless attacks from artillery, multiple rocket launchers, powerful guided bombs and drones that have shattered buildings.

Ukrainian officials usually comment on major battlefield defeats only days after Russia announces them.

Russia has this year been driving westward in a slow and costly effort to capture all of Donetsk. Ukraine is short of troops on the front lines and is straining to hold back the bigger Russian army.

Russian forces are trying to close in on nearby Pokrovsk, which is a key road junction and a rail distribution center, furnishing supplies to a broad span of the Ukrainian front line.

Trump's lawyers ask judge to halt sentencing in hush money case

PTI ■ NEW YORK

President-elect Donald Trump asked a judge Monday to halt this week's sentencing in his hush money case while they appeal his recent rulings upholding the verdict.

Trump's lawyers said they plan to ask a state appeals court to reverse Judge Juan M. Merchan's decision last week, which set the case for sentencing on Friday — little over a week before he's sworn in for his second term. In a pair of rulings in recent weeks, Merchan rejected Trump's bid to throw out the verdict and dismiss the indictment on presidential immunity grounds and because of his impending return to the White House.

In a decision last week, the judge signaled he is not likely to sentence Trump, a Republican, to any punishment for his historic conviction on 34 felony counts of falsifying business records.

Acknowledging the demands of the transition process, he had given Trump the option to attend in person or appear virtually by video.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I Roop Narayan Garg S/O Shri Jagdish Prashad, R/O H. No. 316/1, Mohalla Purani Mandi, Narnaul, Haryana declare that I am the sole owner of Flat No. 9-0, Pocket 2, Kondli Gharoli, New Delhi. The original Demand letter of above property has been lost/misplaced somewhere in Delhi. An FIR has been lodged at Police Station Crime Branch, Delhi vide LR No: 1214163/2023 on 08/12/2023.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client that Mrs. Vandana Lakha & Mr. Suresh Kumar Lakha are claiming to be the owners of Residential Plot bearing No. 058, area measuring 109.50 sq. mtrs., situated in Block-B, of Sector 49, Noida, District Gautam Budh Nagar UP; vide Transfer cum Sale Deed dt. 19/04/2018 executed by the Transferor vide Doc. No.1552. The above owners have informed that original documents of the said property like Allotment Letter, Possession Letter, Lease Deed dt. 04.01.2000 (Doc.No.32/24), Regd. G.P. dt. 04.01.2000, ATs dt. 04.01.2000, Regd. Will dt. 04.01.2000, Transfer Memorandum dt. 05.12.2003 and Transfer Deed dt. 05.12.2003 (Doc. No.13225) are lost & not traceable. All persons are hereby informed that above mentioned owners want to mortgage the said property to our client. If anybody has any objections on the ownership of above owner over the said property, its sale/mortgage/transfer, etc. and any other objections, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 7 days of the present.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that Mrs. Harjinder Kour is the GPA Holder of Built-Up First Floor Front Side without roof right, with two bike parking space at ground floor. Built on Property bearing plot No. 2, area measuring 50 Sq. Yds. and Khasra No. 58/15, situated at village Hahnda, Delhi, Colony Shree Vinay in Block-B, Mohan Garden Ext, Uttar Nagar, New Delhi - 110059. She is in possession through Notarised GPA, ATs & Will dated 19.09.2024 Mrs. Priyanka Meena Alias Mrs. Harjinder Kour in favour of Mrs. Harjinder Kour in respect of the said floor.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Reg: First Floor Front side without roof rights referred to as "said floor" of part of Property bearing No. 1-121, area measuring 82.7739 sq mtrs. i.e. 99 sq yds. out of 150 sq yds., falling in Khasra No. 16/16. Situated in the area of Village Mirzapur, Delhi State, Delhi Colony known as Mahavir Enclave, New Delhi. Hereinafter referred to as "said property".

PUBLIC NOTICE

M/S SIGNATURE GLOBAL HOMES PRIVATE LIMITED (CIN: U70100DL2008PTC176641)

Registered Office: 13th Floor, Dr. Gopal Das Bhawan, 28, Barakhamba Road, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001, Phone: 0124-4908200, 011-49281700

Email: Compliance@signatureglobal.in

Whereas M/s Signature Global Homes Private Limited (hereinafter referred as "Company") is in the process of developing of an Independent Residential Floors namely: "Signature Global Park-III Ext. (Phase-II)" situated at village- Dhuneta, Sector-36, Sohna, District- Gurugram, Haryana over an area measuring 3.35 Acres under License No. 130 of 2019 dated 07.12.2019 granted by Director, Town and Country Planning, Haryana and having RERA Registration No. 06 of 2021 Dated 29.01.2021, Extn. No. 03 of 2024 Dated 13.05.2024.

PUBLIC NOTICE

In the matter of **Goldenbridge Global Trade Private Limited** having its registered office at 3rd Floor, Orchid Centre, Near Ilim Institute, DLF QE, Gurgaon, Haryana-122002, seeking confirmation of alteration of the Memorandum of Association of the Company in terms of the special resolution passed at the Annual General Meeting / Extra ordinary general meeting held on **13/09/2024** to enable the company to change its Registered office from "State of Haryana" to "State of Delhi", the Registered office at **Unit No. 302, 3rd Floor, Living Style Mall, Jasola, Sector-6, Kalindi Kunj Road, New Delhi-110025** within **Fourteen days** from the date of publication of this notice.

PUBLIC NOTICE

E-Tender Notice No. KIR/Engg/56 of 2024 Dated: 30-12-2024. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: **Tender No. 1. Brief Description of work: Kumedpur-Malda Town & Eklakhi-Balughat- Provision of track machine siding - 2 & 3 stations respectively. Tender Value: ₹6,56,32,288.73/-, Bid Security: ₹4,78,200/-**. **Tender No. 2. Brief Description of work: Hatwar-Kumedpur - Provision of track machine siding-5 stations. Tender Value: ₹6,21,65,317.01/-, Bid Security: ₹4,60,800/-**. **Date & Time of closing of Tender: 15.00 hrs. on 29-01-2025 & opening at 15.30 hrs. of 29-01-2025.** The complete information of the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto **15.00 hrs. of 29-01-2025** in the website **www.ireps.gov.in**

PUBLIC NOTICE

M/S SIGNATURE INFRABUILD PRIVATE LIMITED (CIN: U70100DL2013PTC247676)

Registered Office: 13th Floor, Dr. Gopal Das Bhawan, 28, Barakhamba Road, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001, Phone: 0124-4908200, 011-49281700

Email: Compliance@signatureglobal.in

Whereas M/s Signature Infrabuild Private Limited (hereinafter referred as "Company") is in the process of developing of an Independent Residential Floors namely: "Signature Global City 92-II" situated at village- Wazirpur, Sector-92, District- Gurugram, Haryana over an area measuring 7.806 Acres under License No. 12 of 2021 dated 12.03.2021 granted by Director, Town and Country Planning, Haryana and having RERA Registration No. 39 of 2021 Dated 27.07.2021, Extn. No. 04 of 2024 Dated 13.05.2024.

PUBLIC NOTICE

M/S SIGNATURE INFRABUILD PRIVATE LIMITED (CIN: U70100DL2013PTC247676)

Registered Office: 13th Floor, Dr. Gopal Das Bhawan, 28, Barakhamba Road, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001, Phone: 0124-4908200, 011-49281700

Email: Compliance@signatureglobal.in

Whereas M/s Signature Infrabuild Private Limited (hereinafter referred as "Company") is in the process of developing of an Independent Residential Floors namely: "Signature Global City 92-III" situated at village- Wazirpur, Sector-92, District- Gurugram, Haryana over an area measuring 2.4950 Acres under License No. 12 of 2021 dated 12.03.2021 granted by Director, Town and Country Planning, Haryana and having RERA Registration No. 10 of 2023 Dated 13.01.2023.

PUBLIC NOTICE

M/S SIGNATURE BUILDERS PRIVATE LIMITED (CIN: U70101DL2011PTC220275)

Registered Office: 13th Floor, Dr. Gopal Das Bhawan, 28, Barakhamba Road, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001, Phone: 0124-4908200, 011-49281700

Email: Compliance@signatureglobal.in

Whereas M/s Signature Builders Private Limited (hereinafter referred as "Company") is in the process of developing of an Independent Residential Floors namely: "Signature Global City 93" situated at village- Wazirpur, Sector-93, District- Gurugram, Haryana over an area measuring 9.304 Acres under License No. 210 of 2022 dated 22.12.2022 granted by Director, Town and Country Planning, Haryana and having RERA Registration No. 26 of 2023 Dated 30.01.2023.

PUBLIC NOTICE

M/S SIGNATURE FRONTIER RAILWAY

Registered Office: 13th Floor, Dr. Gopal Das Bhawan, 28, Barakhamba Road, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001, Phone: 0124-4908200, 011-49281700

Email: Compliance@signatureglobal.in

Whereas M/s Signature Frontier Railway (hereinafter referred as "Company") is in the process of developing of an Independent Residential Floors namely: "Signature Global City 92-IF" situated at village- Mewka, Wazirpur, Sector-92, District- Gurugram, Haryana over an area measuring 2.4950 Acres under License No. 12 of 2021 dated 12.03.2021 granted by Director, Town and Country Planning, Haryana and having RERA Registration No. 10 of 2023 Dated 13.01.2023.

PUBLIC NOTICE

M/S SIGNATURE INFRABUILD PRIVATE LIMITED (CIN: U70100DL2013PTC247676)

Registered Office: 13th Floor, Dr. Gopal Das Bhawan, 28, Barakhamba Road, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001, Phone: 0124-4908200, 011-49281700

Email: Compliance@signatureglobal.in

Whereas M/s Signature Infrabuild Private Limited (hereinafter referred as "Company") is in the process of developing of an Independent Residential Floors namely: "Signature Global City 92-IF" situated at village- Mewka, Wazirpur, Sector-92, District- Gurugram, Haryana over an area measuring 2.4950 Acres under License No. 12 of 2021 dated 12.03.2021 granted by Director, Town and Country Planning, Haryana and having RERA Registration No. 10 of 2023 Dated 13.01.2023.

PUBLIC NOTICE

M/S SIGNATURE INFRABUILD PRIVATE LIMITED (CIN: U70100DL2013PTC247676)

Registered Office: 13th Floor, Dr. Gopal Das Bhawan, 28, Barakhamba Road, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001, Phone: 0124-4908200, 011-49281700

Email: Compliance@signatureglobal.in

Whereas M/s Signature Infrabuild Private Limited (hereinafter referred as "Company") is in the process of developing of an Independent Residential Floors namely: "Signature Global City 92-IF" situated at village- Mewka, Wazirpur, Sector-92, District- Gurugram, Haryana over an area measuring 2.4950 Acres under License No. 12 of 2021 dated 12.03.2021 granted by Director, Town and Country Planning, Haryana and having RERA Registration No. 10 of 2023 Dated 13.01.2023.

OFFICE OF THE NAGAR PALIKA PARISHAD HATTA -DIST DAMOH
(Fourth Call)
Notice Inviting e-Tenders

NIT No. 1146 Dated: 06-01-2025

Online lumpsum bids for the following works under "sbm (u) -2.0" (estimated on uddr issr (w.e.f. -02.08.2021) are invited from registered contractors and firms of repute fulfilling eligibility criteria

Tender ID	Scope of the work	Probable amount of contract (Rs. in Lacs)	Estimated Money (EMD) (In Rs)	Cost of Bid Document (In Rs)	Time of Completion including rainy season
2025_UAD_393470_1	1. Design and build sewage treatment plant of installed capacity 3.60 MLD and all appurtenant structures and allied works; 2. Survey, review the designs, redesign where necessary, and diversion works of Nallahs with interception sewer of about 1.10 Km length including survey, design, construction of 2 No. of Pumping stations and all appurtenant structures and allied works; and 3. Operation & maintenance of the complete works of sewage treatment plant, intercepting sewer and/or interception & diversion works of Nallahs and pumping stations for a period of 05 years after completion of works, including defect liability period (DLP) of 5 years, starting from the date of commission of the project	690.75	345373/-	20000/-	12 months

1. Interested Bidder can view the NIT on website www.mptenders.gov.in and www.mpurban.gov.in
2. The Bid Document can be purchased only Online from 10:30 Hrs of 07-01-2025 to 17:30 Hrs. of 27-01-2025.
3. Amendment to NIT, if any, would be published on web site only, and not in Newspaper.
4. GST shall be payable extra as per Govt. rules.

CHIEF MUNISPAL OFFICER
NAGAR PALIKA PARISHAD HATTA
DIST DAMOH

Market crash makes investors poorer by Rs 10.98 lakh cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth tumbled Rs 10.98 lakh crore on Monday as markets crashed due to across-the-board selloff amid concerns over third-quarter earnings growth and foreign fund exodus.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 1,258.12 points or 1.59 per cent to close below the 78,000 level at 77,964.99. During the day, it plunged 1,441.49 points or 1.81 per cent to 77,781.62.

The NSE Nifty slumped 388.70 points or 1.62 per cent to 23,616.05.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms dived Rs 10,98,723.54 crore to Rs

4,38,79,406.58 crore (USD 5.11 trillion).

From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Tata Steel, NTPC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Power Grid, Zomato, Adani Ports, IndusInd Bank, Asian Paints, ITC and Reliance Industries were among the biggest laggards.

Titan, HCL Tech and Sun Pharma were the gainers.

"The Indian equity markets are witnessing a sharp decline today, with both Nifty and Bank Nifty slipping below their 200-day moving averages (DMA). The sell-off can be attributed to a rise in Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) selling and concerns surrounding the upcoming Q3



earnings season.

"Additionally, fears related to the new HMPV have added to the bearish sentiment, triggering fresh rounds of selling after the recent counter-trend pullback rally," Santosh Meena, Head of Research at Swastika Investment, said.

FIIs offloaded equities worth Rs 4,227.25 crore on Friday after a day's breather, according to exchange data.

The BSE smallcap gauge cracked 3.17 per cent and midcap index fell by 2.44 per cent.

"Indian equities faced intense selling pressure amid concerns regarding the outbreak of HMPV virus and sharp fall in banking stocks post lacklustre

quarterly updates," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management at Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

All BSE sectoral indices ended lower, with utilities tumbling 4.16 per cent, power (3.73 per cent), services (3.45 per cent), metal (3.15 per cent), oil & gas (3.15 per cent), energy (3.03 per cent), industrials (2.97 per cent) and commodities (2.74 per cent).

As many as 3,474 stocks declined while 656 advanced and 114 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"Emerging markets are undergoing consolidation due to uncertainties surrounding new US economic policies, the

Fed's hawkish stance on future rate cuts, potential upward revision for CY25 inflation, and a strong dollar, all of which are negatively impacting market sentiment. The primary catalyst for a sharp sell-off in the domestic market appears to be concerns over the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV).

"Additionally, the initial Q3 consensus earnings estimate suggests a potential gradual recovery in domestic corporate earnings, which could explain the domestic market's underperformance compared to global markets led by premium valuation," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

RBI adds eight tons gold to its reserves in Nov 2024: WGC

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Central banks around the world collectively, in November 2024, added 53 tonnes of gold to their reserves, of which the Reserve Bank of India's addition was 8 tonnes, the World Gold Council (WGC) said in a report on Monday.

In 2024, central banks - mostly those from emerging markets - remained keen buyers of gold, driven by the need for a stable and secure asset amid global economic uncertainties.

"Assessing the final act of 2024, central banks around the world continued to play a leading role in the demand for gold. November represented another solid month of gold buying as central banks collectively added a net 53 tonnes to global official holdings," WGC said in a report - Central bank gold statistics November 2024. The gold price dip in November, following the US election, may have provided some central banks with added impetus to accumulate, WGC said.

WGC further noted that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) continued with its 2024 buying streak, adding a further 8 tonnes to its gold reserves in November.



This lifted the year-to-date buying to 73 tonnes and total gold holdings to 876 tonnes, maintaining its position as the second largest buyer in 2024, after Poland.

According to WGC, the National Bank of Poland (NBP) was a major buyer in November increasing its gold reserves by 21 tonnes in November, taking its total year-to-date purchase to 90 tonnes and the total holding to 448 tonnes.

The Central Bank of Uzbekistan's gold reserves rose

by 9 tonnes during the month - the first monthly addition since July. The bank's year-to-date net purchases amounted to 11 tonnes and total gold holdings amounted to 382 tonnes, said the report.

Meanwhile, the National Bank of Kazakhstan increased its gold reserves by 5 tonnes, the second successive month of buying as a result, the bank has flipped to being a net purchaser with a total gold holdings of 295 tonnes.

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) had resumed gold purchases after a six-month hiatus, adding 5 tonnes of gold to its reserves, increasing its year-to-date net purchases to 34 tonnes and its total reported gold holdings to 2,264 tonnes (5 per cent of total reserves), the report said.

Data published by the Central Bank of Jordan showed its gold reserves rose by over 4 tonnes in November - the first monthly increase since July. The country's year-to-date net purchases now total nearly 2 tonnes, lifting gold holdings to 73 tonnes, it

added.

The Central Bank of Turkey increased its gold reserves by 3 tonnes during November 2024, and also entered into reverse swap agreements (gold for lira) with domestic commercial banks to manage liquidity.

Gold reserves held by the Czech National Bank rose by almost 2 tonnes in November - the 21st consecutive month of buying, it said, adding the Czech National Bank's year-to-date net purchases now total almost 20 tonnes, lifting total gold holdings to just above 50 tonnes.

The Bank of Ghana continued its gold accumulation as part of its domestic gold purchase programme, adding 1 tonne in November, taking its year-to-date net purchases to a total of 10 tonnes, lifting total gold holdings to 29 tonnes.

The bank also launched a Ghana Gold Coin to the public during the month as part of its efforts to stabilise the economy and promote investment in Ghana's gold reserves, WGC stated. Meanwhile, the Monetary Authority of Singapore was the month's largest seller, reducing its gold reserves by 5 tonnes, bringing the year-to-date net sales to 7 tonnes and overall gold holdings to 223 tonnes, it added.

ICICI Securities pays Rs 40.2 lakh to settle case with SEBI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Brokerage firm ICICI Securities on Monday settled a case pertaining to the alleged violation of stock brokers rules with capital markets regulator Sebi, after paying Rs 40.2 lakh towards settlement charges.

The order came after ICICI Securities proposed to settle the matter without "admitting or denying the facts and conclusions of law", through a settlement order. "In view of the acceptance of the settlement terms... The adjudication proceedings initiated against applicant (ICICI Securities) vide show cause notice (SCN) dated May 17, 2024 is disposed of in terms of the settlement regulations," Sebi's adjudicating officer Amit Kapoor said.

The order came after the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) initiated adjudication proceedings against ICICI Securities for the alleged violation of Stock Brokers regulations.

Thereafter, a show cause notice was issued by the markets watchdog to the applicant on May 17, 2024 for the alleged violation.



The SCN alleged that applicant had failed to monitor its authorised person (AP), as trading terminals of five users, allocated to the AP were being operated from unknown places, which were not reported to the exchange.

Further, Sebi also observed that ICICI Securities allegedly did not have systems to monitor the trading practices of its authorised person, as the AP was using login credentials of the clients for online trading. Additionally, the SCN had

alleged that the applicant did not ensure that only the approved users operate the trading terminal allocated to them.

Pursuant to the receipt of the application, ICICI Securities filed revised settlement terms, which was approved by Sebi's High Powered Advisory Committee (HPAC).

Thereafter, ICICI Securities remitted the settlement amount of Rs 40.2 lakh which was confirmed by the regulator and the case was settled with Sebi.

India's services sector growth hits four-month high in Dec on new biz orders



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's services sector growth touched a four-month high in December, supported by new business inflows on strong demand conditions and easing inflationary pressures, a monthly survey said on Monday.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Services Business Activity Index, rose from 58.4 in November to 59.3 in December, highlighting the strongest rate of expansion in four months.

In the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

According to the survey, demand buoyancy continued to drive new business inflows higher, which in turn supported output growth and prompted firms to recruit additional workers.

"India's services companies expressed strong optimism in December as business activity growth surged to a four-month high. Forward-looking indicators such as new business and future activity suggested that the strong performance will likely continue in the near future," Ines Lam, Economist at HSBC, said.

On the price front, there was a softer increase in cost burdens, though panellists continued to report greater outlays on food, labour and materials. Selling price inflation also eased in December.

"The easing of input price inflation in the month also sup-

ported business sentiment. Strength in the services PMI stands in contrast with the growing signs of a slowdown in the manufacturing industry," Lam noted.

India's manufacturing sector growth fell to a 12-month low in December, as new business orders and production expanded at softer rates.

Service providers remained confident that output would increase over the course of the coming 12 months. The overall level of positive sentiment fell from November's six-month high but remained above its long-run average.

The combination of new business growth, upbeat forecasts and rising capacity pressures created another round of job creation across the service economy.

"The rate of employment growth softened from November, but was sharp and among the strongest seen since data collection began in December 2005," the survey said.

Meanwhile, private sector companies in India posted a faster increase in output at the end of the calendar year. At 59.2 in December, up from 58.6 in November, the HSBC India Composite Output Index signalled the strongest rise for four months.

Composite PMI indices are weighted averages of comparable manufacturing and services PMI indices. Weights reflect the relative size of the manufacturing and service sectors, according to official GDP data.

Rupee falls 4 paise to close at new record low of 85.83 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee declined 4 paise to settle at a fresh record low of 85.83 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, amid a steep fall in domestic equity markets and unabated outflow of foreign capital.

Forex traders said the surging US bond yields and concern over HMPV virus outbreak triggered a US dollar chase due to its safe-haven appeal.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 85.77 and touched the lowest-ever level of 85.84 against the greenback in intraday trade. The unit finally settled at its record low closing level of 85.83 (provisional), registering a fall of 4 paise from its previ-



ous close. On Friday, the rupee depreciated 4 paise to close at 85.79 against the dollar.

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset

Sharekhan, said the rupee touched a fresh record low amid weak tone in the domestic markets and persistent FII outflows, while rising US bond yields and worries over HMPV virus scare also weighed on the rupee.

"However, a soft US dollar and any further intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may support the rupee at lower levels. Traders may take cues from services PMI and factory orders data from the US, Choudhary said and projected the USD-INR spot price "in a range of 85.65 to 86.10".

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.33 per cent lower at 108.44.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.31 per cent to USD 76.27 per barrel in futures trade.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex crashed 1,258.12 points, or 1.59 per cent, to settle at 77,964.99 points, while the Nifty tanked 388.70 points, or 1.62 per cent, to 23,616.05 points.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded Rs 4,227.25 crore in the capital markets on a net basis on Friday, according to exchange data.

The country's forex reserves dropped by USD 4.112 billion to USD 640.279 billion during the week ended December 27, the Reserve Bank said on Friday.

Government mulls mandatory hallmarking for silver jewellery

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi on Monday asked the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to consider implementing mandatory hallmarking for silver and silver artifacts following consumer demands.

"There is a demand from consumers for mandatory hall-marking of silver. You (BIS) can deliberate and take a call," Joshi said at the 78th BIS Foundation Day event.

The work in this direction has already begun and the government will take a decision after completion of stakeholder consultations and feasibility assessment by BIS, the minister told reporters on the sidelines of the event.

"I have asked BIS to work out feasibility and take reactions from consumers and ornament dealers. We will consult all stakeholders and start the process," he added.

Silver hallmarking, which certifies the purity of the white metal, is currently voluntary. BIS Director General Pramod Kumar Tiwari told PTI that the Bureau could be ready to implement mandatory silver hallmarking within 3-6 months, adding that the stake-



holder discussions were underway.

"Several rounds of discussions were held with stakeholders and they are in favour of it. The discussion on printing a unique six-digit alphanumeric code is going on," Tiwari said.

The move follows successful implementation of mandatory gold hallmarking introduced in June 2021, which now covers 361 districts.

The existing system includes a unique six-digit alphanumeric code (HUID) certifying gold purity.

According to the minister, about 90 per cent of jewellery being purchased is now hall-

marked. More than 44.28 crore gold jewellery items have been hallmarked with unique IDs since the launch.

Stakeholders from Gujarat, Karnataka and other states have requested the extension of mandatory hallmarking to silver, the minister added.

BIS, established under the BIS Act in 1986, is an autonomous national body responsible for setting quality standards for products and services.

Listing out upcoming focus areas, the minister said the BIS is also developing standards for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and is at the forefront of shaping the future of innovation and technology.

Trade Unions demand hike in minimum EPFO pension to Rs 5K

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Trade Unions on Monday pressed for increasing minimum EPFO pension 5 times to Rs 5,000 per month, immediate constitution of the 8th Pay Commission and higher taxes on super rich in the upcoming 2025-26 Budget.

In their customary pre-budget meeting with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, trade union leaders also demanded an increase in income tax exemption limit to Rs 10 lakh per annum, social security scheme for gig workers, and restoration of old pension scheme (OPS) for government employees.

The Budget for 2025-26 will be presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1.

Talking to reporters after the meeting TUCC National General Secretary S P Tiwari said the government should stop all privatisation and corporatisation of PSUs and impose an additional 2 per cent tax on super rich to fund social security for informal workers.



Tiwari also demanded that agriculture workers be extended social security and their minimum wages should also be fixed.

Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh Organising Secretary (Northern Zone) Pawan Kumar said that the minimum pension under EPS-95 should be increased from Rs 1,000 per month to Rs 5,000 monthly as a first step and subsequently linked to the VDA (Variable Dearness Allowance).

He also suggested that the threshold for Income Tax exemption be raised to Rs 10 lakh. Also, income from pension should be exempted from tax. Kumar also demanded that the 8th Pay Commission to revise salary structure of government employees be constituted immediately.

The Design Clinic Facility unveiled at the 71st Foundation Day of NRDC



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Design Clinic Facility was unveiled at the 71st Foundation Day of the National Research Development Corporation (NRDC) at its headquarters in New Delhi. Dr. N. Kalaiselvi, Secretary of DSIR and Director General of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), presided over the event and inaugurated the Design Clinic Facility in partnership with the National Institute of Design, Madhya Pradesh.

This state-of-the-art center is designed to support startups, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and foster design innovation across industries. During the ceremony, CMD, Amit Rastogi (Retd.), of NRDC, shared the Corporation's rich legacy of fostering technological excellence and driving India's self-reliance by promoting innovation and supporting the start-up ecosystem.

Paris Saint-Germain beat Monaco 1-0 to win Champions Trophy

AP ■ PARIS
Ousmane Dembélé scored a stoppage-time winner as Paris Saint-Germain beat Monaco 1-0 to win the Champions Trophy. The France winger was unmarked at the back post to meet a low cross from the left by Fabian Ruiz in the second minute of added time on Sunday. PSG won the trophy, also known as the French Super Cup, for the third straight time and a record-extending 13th overall. PSG won the league and cup double last season, with Monaco finishing second in the league. "The result reflects our domination," PSG coach Luis Enrique said, while Monaco coach Adi Hütter conceded PSG played better. "A goal in the last minute always feels like a knife in the back," Hütter said. "PSG deserved to win if we're being honest, they had more chances." The match took place at Stadium

974 in Doha, Qatar, with PSG owned by Qatar-based QSI since 2011. Désiré Doué hit the crossbar early on for PSG and Monaco goalkeeper Philipp Köhn made several saves. Monaco improved after the break and hit the post through Eliesse Ben Seghir and Brazilian defender Vanderson. Although Köhn made a fine save to deny Achraf Hakimi in the 74th minute, he failed to properly read Ruiz's cross and Monaco missed out on winning the trophy for the first time since 2000. Marseille marches on Marseille strengthened its grip on second place in the French league, moving three points ahead of third-place Monaco after routing Le Havre 5-1 at home. Ghana's Andre Ayew was on the wing for Le Havre against his former club. He scored 60 goals in 209 games for Marseille from 2007-15 and won two League Cups. His brother, Jordan Ayew,



and his father — Abedi Pele — both played for the club. Marseille opened the scoring against 17th-place Le Havre in the 25th minute when midfielder Valentin Rongier drilled a low shot into the left corner from 20 meters out. Rongier's rare strike was followed by a first league goal for midfielder Bilal Nadir, who turned neatly before arrowing a shot in off the left post in the 39th. It was a special moment for Nadir, who ruptured his left ACL one year ago and was given a new contract by the club as a show of faith. Moments before halftime, striker Neal Maupay headed in from close range and Mason Greenwood broke down the right to set up substitute Elye Wahi midway through the second half. Ulisses Garcia added the fifth goal for coach Roberto De Zerbi's side. Home fans at Stade Velodrome chanted Ayew's name after he headed in a consolation goal in

the 85th. Ayew applauded the fans back when he went off moments later. PSG is seven points ahead of Marseille after 16 rounds. Toulouse climbed up to eighth place with a 1-0 win at seventh-place Lens, which leads Toulouse on goal difference. Striker Zakaria Aboukhhal scored a penalty in the 73rd. The goal came shortly after Lens midfielder David Pereira da Costa was shown a second yellow card following a video review and was sent off. Angers beat Brest 2-0, and Strasbourg rallied to win 3-1 at home to Auxerre and move into 10th spot. Esteban Lepaul scored early on for Angers and fellow striker Ibrahima Niane, who replaced Lepaul in the 75th, wrapped up the win in stoppage time. Strasbourg's goals came from captain Habib Diarra, Félix Lemarechal and forward Emanuel Emegha, after Hamed Traore gave Burgundy side Auxerre an early lead in Alsace.

Focus on Satwik-Chirag as Indians look for strong start at season-opening Malaysia Open

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR
India's doubles duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will aim for a strong result. Lakshya Sen will look to build on his recent form and HS Prannoy will hope to shake off rust after a lengthy break at the season-opening Malaysia Super 1000 tournament starting here on Tuesday. For Satwik and Chirag, seeded seventh, this USD 1.45 million event marks the start of a new season like it did in 2024. Last year, although they narrowly missed out on the title, the pairing went on to reach three more finals, winning two of them. The Asian Games gold medalists in exceptional form and will be hoping to replicate that success this year. Having reunited with Malaysian coach Kim Tan Her, the former world number ones are determined to go the



distance, but they face a tough challenge ahead. The high calibre of opponents in their draw will make the path to victory anything but easy. Satwik and Chirag, who reached the semifinals of the 2024 China Masters in their last event, will open their campaign against the pair of Ming Che Lu and Tang Kai Wei from Chinese Taipei. If they progress, they are likely to face a quarterfinal clash

he will aim to make a deep run in the Super 1000 event. Prannoy, on the other hand, will be returning to action after a five-month hiatus following his prequarterfinal exit at the Paris Olympics. The 32-year-old, who had to take a break due to chikungunya and to regain his fitness, will be hoping to shake off any rust. His first test will be against Canada's Brian Yang in the opening round. Priyanshu Rajawat, who has shown flashes of brilliance but has struggled with consistency, will face seventh-seeded Chinese player Li Shi Feng in his opening match. In men's singles, two-time Olympic medalist PV Sindhu will be missing from the tournament, having recently got married. In her absence, other Indian players — Malvika Bansod, Aakarshi Kashyap, and Anupama Upadhyaya will look to make their mark.

Odisha government announces three-year sponsorship for Indian kho kho team

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR
The Odisha government on Monday announced a three-year sponsorship deal for the Indian national kho kho team, marking a significant step forward in promoting indigenous sports in the country. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said the state will invest Rs 5 crore annually from January 2025 to December 2027, with funding provided through the Odisha Mining Corporation. The total sponsorship package of Rs 15 crore demonstrates Odisha's continued commitment to sports development, following its successful partnership with Indian hockey. This initiative aims to elevate Kho Kho's status and provide essential support to the national team. "This is a watershed moment for Kho Kho in India. By supporting our indigenous



sports, we are not only preserving our cultural heritage but also creating new opportunities for our athletes," said Majhi. "Just as we transformed Indian hockey, we envision a similar renaissance for Kho Kho, positioning Odisha as a catalyst for sporting excellence." Sudhanshu Mittal, President of the Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI), welcomed the announcement, as the country prepares to host the sport's

Kiran Jadhav wins air rifle gold in Lakshya Cup

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Kiran Jadhav of Navy Koutclassed fancied names in the fray to bag the 10m air-rifle gold in the 15th Lakshya Cup invitational tournament here. The 29-year-old Jadhav totalled 251.7 points to emerge victorious for the first time after consistently making the final every year since 2018. Jadhav pipped Gajanan Khandagale of Maharashtra, who tallied 250.9, to the second place while Mohit Gowda, also of Maharashtra, finished third with 229.3 points. Paris Olympics finalist Arjun Babuta of Railways was the favourite to win the title here but he ended up at fourth with 208.2 points. However, reigning men's women's national air rifle champions, Shahu Mane and Ananya Naidu, failed to qualify for the finals.

Asian Games gold winner Bahadur Sagoo to succeed Sumariwalla as AFI chief

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH
Asian Games gold medallist shot putter Bahadur Singh Sagoo will be elected unopposed as the president of Athletics Federation of India (AFI) at its Annual General Meeting (AGM) here on Tuesday, succeeding the long-serving Adille Sumariwalla for the top post. The 51-year-old Sagoo won a shot put gold in the 2002 Busan Asian Games and also took part in 2000 and 2004 Olympics. He is a member of the outgoing executive council as an Athletes Commission representative. He is also a member of the senior selection committee. Sagoo is the lone candidate left in the fray after incumbent senior vice president Anju Bobby George opted out of the race for the top post. Anju will, however, remain as the senior vice president for a second term. The first agenda item of the two-day AGM is the appointment of the new AFI office bearers for the next four



years. Sagoo had won the men's shot put gold in the 2002 Asian Games with a throw of 19.03m. He has a lifetime best of 20.40m, and is also a Padma Shri recipient. There will also be no elections for the remaining posts, just like it happened during the last AGM in 2020. Delhi unit's top official Sandeep Mehta will be elected unopposed as the AFI secretary. He was the senior joint secretary in the outgoing executive council. Jyotirmoyee Sikdar, who won 800m and 1500m gold in the

Indonesia fires head coach Shin Tae-yong

AP ■ JAKARTA
Indonesia has dismissed Shin Tae-yong as head coach of its national team, the country's federation announced on Monday. "This decision was made based on long and mature considerations and evaluations carried out by as a whole regarding the team's performance and the long-term goals that the Indonesian National Football Team wants to achieve" the Indonesian federation, known locally as PSSI, said in a statement. Appointed in 2020, the South Korean boss had led Indonesia to the third round of qualification for the 2026 World Cup for the first time. In November, the team defeated Saudi Arabia 2-0 to move into third place in the six-team group with four games remaining. At a press conference in Jakarta, PSSI chairman Erick Thohir, who handed Shin a contract extension to 2027 last June, explained the decision.



"The dynamics of the national team need special attention from us," Thohir said. "We see the need for a leader who can better implement strategies agreed upon by the players, good communication and better implementation." There was no announcement of a replacement, though there is speculation that the new boss could be European. The national team's recent success has been driven by the naturalization of players of Indonesian heritage, born and raised in Europe. Of the team that started November's victory over Saudi Arabia, only Marselino Ferdinan, who scored both goals, was born in the Southeast Asian nation.

Mandhana to lead India women in home ODIs against Ireland

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Prolific opener Smriti Mandhana was on Monday named captain of the Indian women's cricket team for this month's three-match home ODI series against Ireland after regular skipper Harmanpreet Kaur was rested. Also given a break was pacer Renuka Singh Thakur, the BCCI announced in a press release. The short series against Ireland will begin on January 10 at Rajkot and all three games will be played at the same venue. Harmanpreet had injured her knee during the home series against the West Indies last month, forcing her to sit out of the last two T20Is before returning to play three ODIs. Before that, the 35-year-old had sustained a neck injury during the match against Pakistan in the Women's T20 World Cup in October last year. Lead pacer Renuka was the player of the series in the ODIs against the West Indies



after taking 10 wickets from three matches. In the past, a stress fracture of the back had troubled her. The move to rest her for the series against Ireland could be to ease her workload. The Indian women's team will enter the games against Ireland on a high after recording its first home T20 International series triumph in five years by beating the West Indies 2-1 last month. It then went on to blank the travelling side 3-0 in the ODIs that followed. The 28-year-old Mandhana was in scintillating form during the assignment, notching up three consecutive half centuries in the T20 Internationals. She also scored two fifties during the ODIs.

Diallo goal seals 2-2 draw for Manchester United against Liverpool

AP ■ LIVERPOOL
Amad Diallo came back to haunt Liverpool with a late equalizer that secured a 2-2 draw for Manchester United against Premier League leader Liverpool. The forward turned home Alejandro Garnacho's cross in the 80th minute at Anfield after Mohamed Salah's penalty had looking like giving Liverpool the win on Sunday. Diallo struck at the end of extra time as United beat Liverpool 4-3 in a dramatic FA Cup clash last season and hit a 90th-minute winner against Manchester City last month. His goal on Sunday was only worth a point on this occasion, but it halted United's four-game losing run and prevented fierce rival Liverpool from opening up an eight-point lead at the top of the standings. United head coach Ruben Amorim, however, was still unhappy. "It's a point, a deserved point, but it's just one point, and we should get

mad. Today we should be really disappointed," he said. United led through Lisandro Martinez's strike in the 52nd, but Cody Gakpo leveled seven minutes later. Salah fired Liverpool ahead from the spot in the 70th after Matthijs de Ligt handled in the box. The draw saw United move up to 13th in the standings. Liverpool missed the chance to open up an eight-point lead on second-place Arsenal, which drew 1-1 with Brighton on Saturday. It is still six points clear at the top with a game in hand. "Over the whole game we created more chances than them; a point feels like it's something to take, but when I watch the game back I would hope for more," Liverpool head coach Arne Slot said. United is without a win at Anfield since 2016 — a run that spans nine games in all competitions. But it was a first point for Ruben Amorim's



team since the 2-1 win against Manchester City on Dec. 15. It could have been better for United, with Harry Maguire firing over from close range deep into added time. Liverpool had its chances to win as well, with Virgil van Dijk firing a header straight at United goalkeeper Andre Onana late on. With 39 top-flight titles between them, this was the latest meeting between English soccer's two greatest teams. Liverpool has the chance to equal United's record total of 20 league

crowns this season and could have taken a firmer hold on the title race with a win in front of its home fans. But United produced a performance that confounded its recent form, which has even had Amorim admitting his team could face a relegation fight. "We've been fairly criticized because the position in the table says it all," United captain Bruno Fernandes said. "I think it's a fair result, both teams played really good football. But we can't be satisfied. I'm really upset because if we can show this against Liverpool, why can't we do this every week?" Diallo and Rasmus Hojlund had chances in the first half before Martinez lashed a left-footed shot into the roof of the net from a narrow angle. Alexis Mac Allister had seen Liverpool's best effort in the first half saved by Onana, but the 'keeper could do nothing to stop Gakpo's

powerful shot after cutting onto his right foot in the box. A VAR review led to referee Michael Oliver awarding Liverpool a penalty after the ball struck De Ligt's arm and Salah fired low to score his 21st goal of the season. He has scored 13 goals against United — more than any other player in Premier League history. But it wasn't enough to earn Liverpool the win after substitute Garnacho cut the ball back for Diallo to convert. "The way we conceded the two goals was unacceptable, lazy and careless," Van Dijk said. "It shouldn't happen." Late drama Raul Jimenez scored a penalty in the first minute of second-half stoppage time to salvage a 2-2 draw for Fulham against Ipswich. It was Jimenez's second penalty of the match as Fulham twice came from a goal down at Craven Cottage.

Change of Name	Change of Name
My old name was RAJENDRA KUMAR AGRAWAL S/O BALA PRASAD. Written in my previous Passport. I have changed my name. My new & Correct name known as RAJENDRA AGARWAL S/O BALA PRASAD AGARWAL. Resident Ward no. 05 Shree Balaji Dham near Vivek Jagrati School, Mandideep Dist. Raisen (M.P.) 462046	In My previous passport. My name's spelling wrongly entered as SAYED HASAN KASHIF S/O SAYED HASAN AQIL. According to my present documents. My Correct name known as SYED HASAN KASHIF S/O SYED HASAN AQIL. Resident Flat. No. 804, T-5 Maha Laxmi Parisar old Galla mandi, Berkhedji Jhangirabad Bhopal (M.P.)

Change of Name	PUBLIC NOTICE
I Rakeshcharan Tiwari father late Shri Gangacharan Tiwari, age 68, resident of Omkar Bhawan Ganesh Ganj Khandwa. This is to inform the general public that my father late Gangacharan Tiwari, Army number J.C.O. number 60966, unit A.C.O. Subedar (Honorary Lieutenant), that my mother Shyamla Tiwari, wife of Shri Gangacharan Tiwari, whose date of birth is recorded as 20.04.1938 in the Army retirement document whereas in reality her date of birth is 01.01.1938, which is recorded in the Aadhar card and PAN card and all other documents. Which is the correct Therefore request to read, write and recorded my mother's correct DOB as 01.01.1938 where so ever needed submitting an affidavit of age by attaching my mother's Aadhar card, PAN card in relation to my mother's DOB to the Family Pension Sainik Office for my mother's family pension to be started. Address - Rakeshcharan Tiwari, father late Gangacharan Tiwari, Omkar Bhawan Ganesh Ganj	It is informed to the General public that I, my Army number 14268600F, Rank Hawaldar. Name Ishwarsingh Tomar, Retired Army, Unit 4 Core Operating Signal Regiment (Company), C/o 56 APO (Tejpur) Asam Center Office- Signal Record Jabalpur (M.P.), I am residing at MB-35 Vatsala Vihar Civil Line Khandwa, Tehsil Khandwa, District Khandwa (M.P.). I Swear that I married Shobha Kiran Tomar wife of Ishwarsingh Tomar, on 28/02/1990. In my army record document, the date of birth of my wife Shobha Kiran Tomar wife of Ishwarsingh Tomar is recorded as 12/09/1970 But the correct date of birth of my wife is 10/09/1961 as per Aadhar Card, Pan Card, 10th Marksheets. But due to some mistake, the date of birth of my wife has become wrong in the Army record. Therefore in my service record my wife's date of birth should be changed from 12/09/1970 to 10/09/1961. If in future there is any dispute regarding my wife's date of birth, then all the responsibility and accountability for it will be mine. Ishwarsingh Tomar MB-35 Vatsala Vihar Civil Line Khandwa, Tehsil Khandwa, District Khandwa (M.P.) M.No. 9977291510

Harbhajan Singh urges BCCI to end 'superstar culture' in team

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh has urged the BCCI to end the "superstar culture" in the team and pick players for future assignments solely on the basis of performance and not on reputation. Harbhajan's stinging remarks came after India's 1-3 Test series defeat to Australia for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy for the first time in a decade. "There is a superstar culture which has developed. We don't need superstars, we need performers. If the team has them (performers), it will move forward. Whoever wants to become a superstar should stay at home and play cricket there," the spin great said on his YouTube channel. "There is a tour of England coming up. Now everyone has started talking about what will happen in England, who will go, who will not go. For me, it is a simple matter. Only players who are performing should go. You

can't keep picking players on their reputation. "If you do that, then you should take Kapil Dev sir and Anil bhai also. Here, the BCCI and the selectors will have to be firm and act tough. I don't think that the superstar attitude is taking the team forward." Captain Rohit Sharma and star batter Virat Kohli were woefully out of form during the just-concluded Test series against Australia. The series defeat resulted in the team losing out on qualifying for the World Test Championship final. Kohli could manage only 190 runs in his nine innings in the series Down Under, repeatedly offering edges to the slip cordon or keeper. Harbhajan said the struggling players should play some form of cricket and prove themselves if they wish to be picked for the England Test tour. "It should be based on performance only, whether it is Virat, Rohit or anyone. No player is bigger than the game, even if he



thinks in his mind that he is a big superstar. If we have to take Indian cricket forward, we have to ask tough questions. "I am not saying that you should drop them but if you take them on tour, they (struggling players) should play some form of cricket whether county cricket or something before England tour. "This will be a challenge for the selectors, but it's time for selectors to wake up and take some action. "I don't say that any player be dropped, and unnecessarily start chopping and dropping but at least there should be a procedure as to who will get how many chances and for how long, because in India there is a long queue of talents." He also spoke about Kohli's struggles in the past few years. "Virat has played 11 Tests in 2024 and scored 440 runs. The average is 23.15, with one hundred and one fifty. Such an average may be unheard of because he is a very big name. This stat is obviously very low. When I saw it, it was a shocking stat for me too.

"If you give a youngster an opportunity, I feel he will also be able to do this much (match the stats of Kohli)." Harbhajan said India would have lost the series 0-5 or 0-4 if Jasprit Bumrah was not part of the team. "He was used like you squeezed juice from sugarcane. It was like 'Travis Head has come, give the ball to Bumrah, Marnus has come, give the ball to Bumrah, Steve Smith has come, give the ball to Bumrah'." "How many overs will Bumrah bowl? He has been reduced to such a condition that he was not available at the end. If he was there, Australia may have won the fifth Test but they would have lost eight wickets, it would have been tough for them. "You broke his back and the management should have decided on how many overs he should be given." Harbhajan also criticised the team selection for the fifth Test in Sydney which India lost by six wickets.



Toughest SCG pitch, I got chainsawed: Smith on missing 10,000 Test runs milestone

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Veteran Australian batter Steve Smith has said he had never encountered a wicket like the one at the SCG, after falling one run short of reaching 10,000 career runs in the five-match Test series against India for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. In Australia's first innings of the fifth Test here, Smith edged a delivery to slip just five runs shy of the landmark. In the second innings, Prasidh Krishna's delivery rose sharply from short of a length and Smith advanced down the pitch, only to fend it into the gully to be dismissed on 9999 Test runs. "I got chainsawed didn't I! Pretty nasty delivery actually; back of a length, I thought 'oh, there's one to punch through point' and it just took off," the former Australian captain told 'Triple M' after their six-wicket win on Sunday that gave them the trophy after a decade. "It wasn't to be (reaching 10k Test runs), but that's alright we got the result we were after. "Absolutely (toughest SCG pitch I've played on). By a mile. It was two-paced, up and down, seaming all over the place, swinging. I've never played on a wicket like that at the SCG before. It was incredibly difficult to bat. Smith made 33 in the first innings and 4 in the second, failing to sign off on a high after notching two

hundreds in the series. "I love the game, it's been a fun series, India are an unbelievable team. There's been some great challenges, Bumrah in particular. It's been great fun and fortunate to get the result in the end," the 35-year-old added. Left-arm quick Mitchell Starc highlighted that everyone had "worked our backsides off" to get to the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series, emphasising the collective effort of the squad, support staff, and families for the successful result. "Five Test matches against India, they're always gruelling, particularly four and five always close together," Starc told Fox Cricket. "We've all worked our backsides off to get to this series, we knew it was a big one on the calendar and I think that's just reward for all the hard work from the support staff, the families to the extended squad and everyone that's taken part. It's a fantastic result, today caps it off. "I like staying out of the scanner but sometimes I'm made to get in there. It's always 'if I can make it worse, what's worse look like?' and if not, then kick on. I always want to be a part of it, if I can contribute - I don't want to leave the guys a man short so that's always a question - but as soon as I knew I wouldn't leave them short I was ready to go."

ICC, BCCI, CA, ECB explore possibility of two-tier Test system

PTI ■ SYDNEY/NEW DELHI

The ICC in collaboration with cricket boards of India, Australia and England is exploring the possibility of a two-tier Test system to facilitate more series between big three nations. The Age reported that Jay Shah, the new ICC chairman, is set to meet Cricket Australia chair Mike Baird and his England counterpart Richard Thompson later this month to discuss the finer points. "Any plan for a move to two divisions in Test cricket would kick in after the end of the current Future Tours Program in 2027," the Age reported quoting its sources. The BCCI is currently gearing up for its Special General Meeting on January 12 in Mumbai where interim secretary Devajit Saikia is expected to get a full-time role. Saikia was appointed in



the interim role after Shah vacated his post last month to take over as ICC chairman. A BCCI official indicated that the discussion floated around the ICC corridors in 2016, the first-time when a two-tier Test system was seriously considered. "We don't have any news of any such move as yet. Currently, preparations are

being made for SGM and the recent tour to Australia too needs to be discussed. "There was such a move sometime back, but we haven't heard anything since," a BCCI source told PTI. The BCCI and cricket bodies of Zimbabwe and Bangladesh opposed the move, citing the possibility of decreasing revenue.

They had also argued that smaller nations would miss out on the opportunity of playing against top teams if such a system comes into existence. However, nine years down the road the modalities have changed and even some of the reputed experts such as former Indian skipper Ravi Shastri are supporting the division. "I've been a firm believer in that if you want Test cricket to survive and be alive and thriving, I think that's the way to go. "The top teams play against each other more often, so there is a contest; you want contests," Shastri told SEN during the recent fifth Test between India and Australia. Even some of the top players such as England Test skipper Ben Stokes had criticised the current model of World Test Championship.



Speechless: Beau Webster gushes after a 'dream debut' in Sydney against India

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian all-rounder Beau Webster is feeling "speechless" after his impressive debut against India during the fifth Test here, which the hosts won by six wickets to reclaim the Border-Gavaskar Trophy after a decade. Webster made 57 and unbeaten 37 in the two innings of the Sydney Test, important contributions in the match's context, besides taking the wicket of Shubman Gill in India's second innings. "I'm a bit speechless, honestly. If you told me a week ago that all this would happen in the last few days, I wouldn't have believed you," Webster told cricket.Com.Au. "It's been a dream debut and to get the win there inside three days is a hell of a feeling. I'm sure the boys will celebrate accordingly," he added. The Tasmanian had a nice ending to his debut Test when he smashed spinner Washington Sundar for a boundary down the ground to collect the winning runs. The 31-year-old said he would cherish that moment forever. "When I hit that cut-shot boundary, I saw we only needed four (to win) and I thought, 'It's got to be one of these two balls - how many chances are you going to get to hit a boundary for the winning runs for your country?' "I was going to go no matter

where that ball was, that last one, and managed to make connection. I looked straight at 'Heady' (batting partner Travis Head) and he was up and about," he noted. "It was a great moment, probably one I'll never forget. That's something that might never happen again - especially a boundary on the fifth Test of a decider. It doesn't get much better than that," he added. Webster replaced an out of form Mitchell Marsh in the New Year Test, and the all-rounder admitted that initially he felt a bit "awkward." "It was a bit of an awkward moment. I sort of came to training at the last minute, and I didn't think that they'd change the team. I hadn't heard anything right up until the training (the day) before the game, and I just expected it to be the same XI. "Then we got to the ground and asked Mitch what he was doing, and he said, 'I'm waiting to see if I'm playing.' That hit me by surprise a little bit and then in the next hour or so, we were fumbling around until I went back in the change rooms. "He (Marsh) had a big grin on his face and just said, 'You're in mate.' And he couldn't have been happier. He's been unbelievable this week," Webster said, explaining the situation surrounding his entry into the Australian team.

Australia's tactics to break down Rohit were successful, says Kerry O'Keeffe

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Indian skipper Rohit Sharma wilted under the traditional Australian tactic of mentally breaking down the opposition captains during the just-concluded Border-Gavaskar Trophy, said former spinner Kerry O'Keeffe. India lost the five-match series 1-3 and Rohit made just 31 runs from three Tests at an average of 6.20. "They couldn't bring down (Jasprit) Bumrah. He was too good. But then the baton was passed to Rohit Sharma and they brought him down straight away, to the extent that he withdrew from the final Test," O'Keeffe told Fox Sports. "So that's a tactic they seem to want to do if they can, if they can break the skipper and make him anonymous, it empowers them," he added. It may be recalled that former



Australian pacer Glenn McGrath used to make pre-series predictions as how many times he will dismiss the opposition captain and it often worked against the likes of ex-England skipper Michael Atherton. Bumrah led India in the first Test at Perth in the absence of Rohit, who stayed back in India for the birth of his second child. India won the match by 295

runs. The 37-year-old Rohit took over from Bumrah in the second Test in Adelaide, but his personal form and the team's fortunes went south from that point. Eventually, Rohit "opted out" of the fifth and final Test Sydney with Bumrah returning to guide the side. The 75-year-old further validated his point saying the Aussies could not dominate

Ajinkya Rahane during the 2021-22 series which India won. "They couldn't get Ajinkya Rahane the last time and he won the series," he said. O'Keeffe, who played 24 Tests and two ODIs for Australia, said Australia had employed a similar strategy against captains of other visiting teams. "But if you look at the captains they've brought down in recent times, Sharma, Tick, Shan Masood with Pakistan. It was three-nil. Kraigg Brathwaite, it was one-all, but they were on top of Kraigg. "They went to New Zealand and brought down Tim Southee, winning two-nil," O'Keeffe added. The leg-spinner also said veteran batter and former India skipper Virat Kohli had become "bunny" of pacer Scott Boland in the series.

India's bench strength: Plenty of batting options; bowling talent sparse

PTI ■ SYDNEY

The nightmarish batting performance is deservedly under the scanner after India's meek surrender in the Border-Gavaskar series but a closer look at the team's bench strength would reveal that bowling resources are a bigger concern for the side as it navigates a difficult transition. Skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli's Test future hangs in balance after their poor returns with the bat but the national selection committee has the reserves to ensure that the order remains a solid one even if the two giants were to be phased out. However, bowling, especially pace, is a different story. The cupboard in the fast bowling department is bare and it will take some time to prepare another crack line-up that can match up to the aura of Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami and Ishant Sharma. The available names are doing their best but is that enough for the team or for Bumrah, whose workload became a massive concern during the just-

concluded series? The spearhead was forced to watch from the dressing room during the last innings of the decisive fifth and final Test that India lost by six wickets as back spasms prevented him from bowling. Mohammed Siraj, after 36 Tests, hasn't developed into a game-changer yet and Prasidh Krishna bowls too many loose balls. There is the duo of Akash Deep and Mukesh Kumar, who are skilful, but they are not really tested at the highest level. In the Ranji circuit, there aren't too many exciting fast bowling options that the selectors can explore as of now. The main problem seems to be a dearth of left-arm seamers as Arshdeep Singh hasn't actually set the stage on fire and Yash Dayal doesn't look a finished product. But when it comes to batting there is some real talent available although the Ajit Agarkar-led selection committee will not decide anything till the end of the Ranji Trophy season. If the panel decides to move away from Rohit and Kohli or the two



announce retirements, there are at least half a dozen name ready to stake a claim for the two slots that will open up. One of the prime contenders could be B Sai Sudharsan of Tamil Nadu.

The elegant left-hander impressed in his appearance for India A against Australia A in Mackay but then he had a sports hernia operation and is undergoing rehabilitation. As and when Sudharsan is ready

and if there are at least a couple of slots, he should be in contention provided he is in form and has the requisite fitness levels. In the current set-up, there is Devdutt Padikkal, another stylish and sinewy left-hander, who has

played a couple of Tests. Abhimanyu Easwaran has been around the side for three years now but there is a belief in the Indian cricketing circle that he is not cut out for bigger challenges in SENA (South Africa, England, New Zealand and Australia). A proof of it the recent series, where he travelled with the squad but wasn't even remotely in contention for a playing XI slot in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. For Sarfaraz Khan, his technique against real quick bowling was always doubtful but the manner in which he got out in Pune and Mumbai in the home Tests against New Zealand has made the current team management wary. In most of the venues, Sarfaraz didn't even come out to bat during the customary net sessions, an indication that he is quite low in the pecking order. There is every chance that he might not make it to squad for the upcoming limited-overs series against England. There are also three seasoned players who might get a second wind if the second half of Ranji Trophy goes well for them.

They are Chennai Super Kings skipper Rituraj Gaikwad, who is yet to make his debut, three-Test-old Rajat Patidar and Mumbai's very own Shreyas Iyer. Iyer's problem has been the short ball, while Patidar flattered to deceive against England at home last year. Gaikwad failed in two India A games Down Under but his pedigree is unquestionable. It is understood that the selection committee won't be looking at just the volume of runs or wickets but would also focus on impactful performances. A century on a Lahli green top or a five-wicket haul on a Rajkot belter would carry more weight than performances in favourable conditions. How a young bowler is coming back with the old ball for his third or fourth spell or how a batter is dealing with spinners on rank turners will also hold more credence. But any decision on who would be elevated to the next level will be taken only after the end of the domestic season in February. India's next red-ball assignment is the tour of England in June.