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HUNDREDS OF DIFFERENT
DINOSAUR FOOTPRINTS
DISCOVERED IN UK

BHUBANESWAR, FRIDAY JANUARY 3, 2025; PAGES 12 ₹4

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PUBLISHED FROM: DELHI | LUCKNOW | BHOPAL | BHUBANESWAR | RANCHI | RAIPUR | CHANDIGARH | DEHRADUN | HYDERABAD | VIJAYWADA

TERROR STRIKES UNITED STATES

AP ■ NEW ORLEANS (US)

A US Army veteran who drove a pickup truck into a crowd of New Year's revelers in New Orleans, killing 15 people, had posted videos to social media hours before the carnage saying he was inspired by the Islamic State group and expressing a desire to kill, the president said.

The FBI said it was investigating early Wednesday's attack in which the driver steered around a police blockade and slammed into revelers before being shot dead by police as a terrorist act and did not believe he acted alone.

Investigators found guns and what appeared to be an improvised explosive device in the vehicle - which bore the flag of the Islamic State group - along with other explosive devices elsewhere in the city's famed French Quarter.

President Joe Biden said Wednesday evening that the FBI found the videos the driver posted to social media. He called the attack a "despicable" and "heinous act."



A man drove a truck into a crowd on Bourbon Street in New Orleans, US killing and injuring a number of people. The FBI said they recovered an Islamic State group flag from the vehicle; The FBI investigates the area on Orleans St and Bourbon Street by St Louis Cathedral in the French Quarter where a suspicious package was detonated after a person drove a truck into a crowd earlier on Bourbon Street



AP/PTI

Hours after the attack, several coroner's office vans were parked on the corner of Bourbon and Canal streets, cordoned off by police tape with crowds of dazed tourists standing around, some trying to navigate their luggage through the labyrinth of blockades.

Louisiana Gov Jeff Landry urged people to avoid the area, which remained an active crime scene.

"We looked out of our front door and saw caution tape and dead silence and it's eerie," said Tessa Cundiff, an Indiana native who moved to the French Quarter a few years ago. "This is not what we fell in love with, it's sad."

Nearby, life went on as normal in the city known to some for a motto that translates to "let the good times roll." At a cafe a block from where the truck came to rest, people crowded in for breakfast as upbeat pop music played. Two blocks away, people drank at a bar, seemingly as if nothing happened.

Biden, speaking from the presidential retreat at Camp David, addressed the victims and the people of New Orleans: "I want you to know I grieve with you. Our nation grieves with you as you mourn and as you heal."

"My heart goes out to the victims and their families who were simply trying to celebrate the holiday," Biden said in an earlier written statement. "There is no justification for violence of any kind, and we will not tolerate any attack on any of our nation's communities."

FBI officials have repeatedly warned about an elevated international terrorism threat due to the Israel-Hamas war. In the last year, the agency has disrupted other potential attacks, including in October when it arrested an Afghan man in Oklahoma for an alleged Election Day plot targeting large crowds.

The rampage turned festive Bourbon Street into a macabre scene of maimed victims, bloodied bodies and pedestrians fleeing for safety inside nightclubs and restaurants. In addition to the dead, dozens of people were hurt. A college football playoff game at the nearby Superdome was postponed until Thursday.

Zion Parsons, 18, of Gulfport, Mississippi, said he saw the truck "barreling through, throwing people like in a movie scene, throwing people into the air."

"Bodies, bodies all up and down the street, everybody screaming and hollering," said Parsons, whose friend Nikyra Dedeaux was among the people killed.

"This is not just an act of

terrorism. This is evil," New Orleans Police Superintendent Anne Kirkpatrick said.

The attack is the latest example of a vehicle being used as a weapon to carry out mass violence and the deadliest IS-inspired assault on US soil in years.

The driver "defeated" safety measures in place to protect pedestrians, Kirkpatrick said, and was "hell-bent on creating the carnage and the damage that he did."

The FBI identified the driver as Shamsud-Din Jabbar, 42, a US citizen from Texas, and said it was working to determine any potential associations with terrorist organisations.

"We do not believe that Jabbar

was solely responsible," FBI Assistant Special Agent in charge Alethea Duncan said at a news conference.

Investigators found multiple improvised explosives, including two pipe bombs that were concealed within coolers and wired for remote detonation, according to a Louisiana State Police intelligence bulletin obtained by The Associated Press.

The bulletin, relying on preliminary information gathered soon after the attack, also cited surveillance footage that it said showed three men and a woman placing one of the devices, but federal officials did not immediately confirm that detail and it wasn't clear who they were

or what connection they had to the attack, if any.

Jabbar drove a rented pickup truck onto a sidewalk, going around a police car that was positioned to block vehicular traffic, authorities said. A barrier system meant to prevent vehicle attacks was being repaired in preparation for the Super Bowl in February.

Jabbar was killed by police after he exited the truck and opened fire on responding officers, Kirkpatrick said. Three officers returned fire. Two were shot and are in stable condition.

Investigators recovered a handgun and AR-style rifle, according to a law enforcement official who was not authorised to

discuss the investigation publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

There were also deadly explosions in Honolulu and outside a Las Vegas hotel owned by President-elect Donald Trump. President Joe Biden said the FBI was looking into whether the Las Vegas explosion was connected to the New Orleans attack but had "nothing to report" as of Wednesday evening.

A photo circulated among law enforcement officials showed a bearded Jabbar wearing camouflage next to the truck after he was killed. The intelligence bulletin obtained by the AP said he was wearing a ballistic vest and helmet. The flag of the Islamic

State group was on the truck's trailer hitch, the FBI said.

"For those people who don't believe in objective evil, all you have to do is look at what happened in our city early this morning," US Sen John Kennedy, a Louisiana Republican, said. "If this doesn't trigger the gag reflex of every American, every fair-minded American, I'll be very surprised."

Jabbar joined the Army in 2007, serving on active duty in human resources and information technology and was deployed to Afghanistan from 2009 to 2010, the service said. He was transferred to the Army Reserve in 2015 and left in 2020 with the rank of staff sergeant.

AAP-BJP lock horns over farmers

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) are locked in a letter war over the farmers issue. Senior BJP leader and Union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan wrote a letter to Delhi chief minister Atishi and criticised the AAP government for not implementing several pro-farmer schemes of the Centre in the national capital. In his letter written in Hindi, Chouhan said "political competition" should not become an obstacle to the welfare of farmers.

Expressing concern over the condition of farmers, Chouhan told Atishi that Delhi government has no sympathy for farmers and it is very indifferent towards farmers, who are "upset and worried" due to the non-implementation of many welfare schemes by AAP.

In a sharp response to Chouhan's letter, Atishi hit back accusing the BJP of hypocrisy regarding its stance on farmers and said the saffron party talking about them was like "Dawood (Ibrahim) giving a sermon on non-violence." Criticising the party for its treatment of the farming community, Atishi alleged that the situation of farmers under BJP rule was worse than ever before. "The hardships faced by farmers



during the BJP's tenure have never been seen before," the Delhi CM said in her letter to Chouhan.

Meanwhile, AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday said the BJP would be responsible "if something happens" to the protesting farmers in Punjab who are on an indefinite fast over a set of demands, including a legal guarantee on MSP.

Responding to Atishi's allegations, Chouhan clarified that the Centre was ready to provide benefit to the farmers but the Delhi government had failed to submit the necessary proposals for the schemes. The minister said that during the meeting with farmers they had explained their disappointments at not receiving benefits from the central government.

Both the BJP and the AAP are

locked in the letters war ahead of the Assembly polls in Delhi. Lieutenant Governor Vinai Saxena slammed AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal for labeling Atishi as temporary chief minister. Saxena described the comments as not only insulting to Atishi but also disrespectful to the President of India and himself as her representative. Hours later Atishi wrote back to Saxena defending Kejriwal.

"It is disheartening to note that your letter focuses on criticism rather than constructive cooperation," she added. On the New Year's day, Kejriwal has written to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat to ask if the RSS will seek votes for the BJP in the Capital, and whether it supports the party's "wrongdoings". The letter prompted an attack from BJP which claimed that

Kejriwal's claims against the BJP reflect his "political frustration" and his "fear of losing the polls". The BJP responded sharply to Kejriwal's letter with a letter. Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva said, "Today, I have written a letter to Aam Aadmi Party leader and former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal...we hope that you will abandon your wrong habits of lying and deceit and bring meaningful change within yourself".

In his letter, Chouhan said the AAP government has failed to implement major central initiatives including the Integrated Horticulture Development Mission, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, and the Beej Gram programme. "I am writing this letter in sadness. You have never taken proper decisions in the interest of

farmers. Your government has stopped implementation of farmers-friendly central schemes. Your government is not sympathetic towards farmers. Today, farmers in Delhi are upset and worried," Chouhan said in the letter dated January 1.

Due to the non-implementation of multiple central schemes, Delhi's farmers are being denied crucial benefits ranging from seed distribution to infrastructure development, he said. The Union minister said the absence of the Integrated Horticulture Development Mission has prevented farmers from accessing benefits for nursery establishment, tissue culture facilities, planting material procurement, and post-harvest infrastructure.

The non-implementation of Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana has further impacted farmers' access to agricultural mechanization, precision irrigation, soil health initiatives, crop insurance, and the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana, he added. Chouhan expressed concern over Delhi's failure to implement the Beej Gram programme, which offers benefits including seed distribution, testing facilities, laboratory infrastructure improvement, and assistance for seed certification agencies.

ABHA card QR code-based digital health record for patients soon

ABHA card

As Odisha set to digitalise data via Ayushman account

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Now, patients needn't have to carry so many prescriptions with them while consulting doctors for treatment at various hospitals. Odisha is poised to revolutionise the way patients manage their medical information with the forthcoming National Digital Health Mission (NDHM).

The initiative, overseen by the National Health Authority, will be branded as the Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA). It aims to eliminate the inconvenience associated with carrying multiple prescriptions, by digitising patients' medical data into a cohesive accessible platform.

Patients will have the opportunity to register for an ABHA card. The framework



intends to streamline healthcare management by aggregating individual patient data based on population statistics.

The plan includes a unique QR code system, granting users instant access to their historical medical records. The online application is part of the broader NDHM vision, with anticipations that the dispersal of cards will commence before February.

By integrating these services, patients will have personalised and comprehensive access to their healthcare journeys, potentially trans-

forming patient experiences.

"We would request people to register under the National Digital Health Mission. Then they will get Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) cards. The facility will digitalise patients' medical data. By scanning the QR code, users will be instantly granted access to their medical records history. There will be a revolution in the correlation between technology and the health system because of the new system under NDHM. We are going to implement it in Odisha soon," said Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling.

Cold wave again sweeps State

Temp to dip below 10 degree in 2 days

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The cold wave returned to Odisha at the start of the New Year with an intense chill felt in several parts of the State on Thursday.

Temperatures slipped sharply at night and intense cold along with dense fog prevailed over many places, including the capital city Bhubaneswar.

As per the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), a

further drop of 2 to 3 degrees Celsius is expected in the next 24 hours.

The Regional Office of the IMD here said the current weather conditions are due to cold winds entering the State from the north and the north-west. The weather office also said the minimum temperature is likely to drop below 10 degrees Celsius in the coming two days across many places in the State.

As such, following a brief spike in temperature owing to subsequent low-pressure systems in December, the return of the cold wave suddenly

threw life out of gear with no immediate respite in sight as the IMD forecast expects this intense cold to last for at least the next few days.

On the New Year day, Jharsuguda recorded the lowest temperature of 9.2 degrees among urban areas while G Udayagiri shivered at 6.2 degrees, marking the lowest temperature among hill stations in the State.

On the same day, Bhubaneswar witnessed a low of 16.4 degrees and Cuttack observed chilly weather with mercury at 15.2 degrees.

Govt hikes pension of freedom fighters

Financial aid to imprisoned veterans doubled

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Government on Thursday announced a substantial increase in pension for freedom fighters. The government has in effect doubled the support for those who faced imprisonment during the struggle for independence.

Freedom fighters who were imprisoned will now receive Rs 20,000 monthly, double the



previous amount of Rs 10,000. Those who actively participated but were not imprisoned will have their pensions increased from Rs 9,000 to Rs 15,000.

This was announced by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi during the 38th Independence Fighters' Day celebration as a homage to the often-overlooked freedom

fighters of Odisha.

For individuals already receiving the national pension, there will be an augmentation from Rs 8,000 to Rs 10,000. Additionally, those who were detained under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) during the Emergency period are now eligible for Rs 20,000.

The Chief Minister expressed concern that prominent figures in the freedom struggle such as Harekrushna Mahtab, remain relatively unknown despite their significant contributions. Historical

figures like Matangini Hazra, who faced martyrdom, and celebrated freedom fighters like Veer Bagha Jatin and the young revolutionary Baji Rout have not been acknowledged to the extent they deserve.

The CM wanted their stories to be given prominence in educational materials, pointing out that many of these patriots feature scarcely in school textbooks. He called for efforts to correct this oversight and ensure that future generations understand and value their contributions.

First time in Odisha Participation swells for Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

Target 3,500 NRIs from 50+ countries

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

As Odisha prepares to host its first-ever Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Conclave from January 8 to 10, excitement is mounting among the Indian diaspora worldwide. Registrations have surged in recent days with over 150 participants signing up daily—triple the number recorded last week—signaling the event's growing global appeal.

The State Government, aiming to attract 3,500 Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) from more than 50 countries, is on



track to meet its target. Total attendance, including local participants, is expected to exceed 7,500.

Most registrations have come from NRIs in Southeast Asia followed by the Gulf and Europe. Participants from Indian States such as Kerala, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha make up a significant share of the delegation. Odisha's strategic location along a 482-km coastline facing Southeast Asia is seen as a key factor, positioning the State as a bridge for economic

and cultural collaboration.

The 18th PBD Conclave marks the first time Bhubaneswar will host this biennial event, which began in 2003 under then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Past hosts have included major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kochi and Bengaluru.

Bhubaneswar's inclusion is a milestone for Odisha, reflecting its growing prominence in India's economic and cultural landscape. Adding to the event's allure, a Night Flea Market, an Adivasi Fair, and a Food Festival are being organized to showcase Odisha's cultural richness. Local tourism has also received a boost with increased bookings for popular

destinations like Puri and Konark.

"Tour operators have reported significant demand, and numbers are expected to rise further," said Gagan Sarangi, Chairman of the Odisha chapter of the Indian Association of Tour Operators.

The conclave aligns with India's 'Act East Policy', underscoring Odisha's role as a gateway for investment and collaboration in the eastern corridor. The event will feature a Youth PBD session on January 8, a formal inauguration by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 9, and a valedictory address by President Droupadi Murmu on January 10.

In city Tension during eviction of street vendors

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Tension prevailed during an anti-encroachment drive to demolish several unauthorised shops and structures along the stretch of road from Acharya Vihar to Vani Vihar in Bhubaneswar on Thursday.

Prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the BNSS were clamped in the area to avoid any untoward incident during the eviction drive.

Sources reported that the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) and the Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) had earlier issued eviction notices to several owners of makeshift stalls



and street vendors in Acharya Vihar over occupying portions of the road without authorisation, resulting in severe traffic congestion.

However, several street vendors have alleged that they have not received any notice.

They also claimed that authorities are carrying out the eviction drive haphazardly and without offering any compensation.

The current anti-encroachment and eviction drive is part of a beautification drive in

view of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas scheduled to be held in the capital city from January 8. Earlier on December 24, Bhubaneswar Mayor Sulochana Das had stated plans by the BMC and the BDA to clear 55 roads of encroachments in the state capital. For this, the city administration had also issued plans to evict roadside vendors along key stretches and shift them to designated permanent vending zones.

However, the move met with large-scale protests on December 26 when hundreds of street vendors gheraoed the BMC North Zone office and blocked roads at NALCO Square.

In city Youth found dead after New Year party

GRP, Airport cops bicker over jurisdiction

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A mutilated body of a youth was found near the railway tracks at Poonama Gate flyover near the Biju Patnaik International Airport in Bhubaneswar on Thursday morning.

The deceased was identified as Swaraj Behera, a resident of Gosagareswar Chowk in Old Town under the Lingaraj police station.

Locals spotted the body of the youth with severe injuries that resembled sharp cuts and informed the deceased's family.

However, the case sparked



a jurisdictional dispute with Behera's family claiming they were caught between two police stations.

After recovering the body, the youth's family approached the Government Railway Police (GRP) but alleged that police refused to lodge a complaint and instead asked them to approach the Airfield police station.

However, the Airport police allegedly sent them back to GRP, claiming it to be under their jurisdiction. As per the last reports, the body re-

mained at the Capital Hospital, awaiting a postmortem, with neither police stations taking responsibility for initiating a probe.

Behera's family members said the youth had been missing from Wednesday night after participating in New Year's Day celebrations. The family suspected that Behera might have been killed over some dispute during the party.

The family also ruled out chances of Behera being involved in a train mishap based on the nature of the wounds.

3 RBTs to be released into Debrigarh sanctuary soon

Tiger conservation efforts under expansion

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha's wildlife conservation efforts will gain further momentum as the government has planned to bring three more Royal Bengal Tigers (RBTs) to the State soon.

Forest and Environment Minister Ganesh Ram Singh Khuntia informed on Thursday that the RBTs would be released into Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary in Bargarh. The Minister further said that dis-

cussions are currently going on regarding the tigers' arrival in the State.

As per sources, three more tigers including two tigresses will be brought to the State as soon as Yamuna and Zeenat adopt and acclimatise them to the new environment. Preparations are being made in full swing to welcome the newcomers. The move follows a thorough evaluation of the sanctuary's current inhabitants, ensuring a well-managed and sustainable environment for the majestic cats.

Odisha's approach involves engaging local communities in conservation efforts.

By aligning ecological goals with community interests, the introduction of the tigers is an important step towards sustainable conservation practices, benefiting both wildlife and the people of Odisha, the Minister said.

Earlier, it was decided that five tigers would be brought to Odisha in December. However, after the arrival of two tigers, the planning was a bit delayed as tigress Zeenat took a long stroll from Similipal Tiger Reserve that kept the forest officials from three States on tenterhooks for nearly a month and made her a year-end media attraction.

New Governor Kambhampati to be sworn in today



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Dr Hari Babu Kambhampati is scheduled to be sworn in as the new Governor of Odisha at the Raj Bhavan in Bhubaneswar on Friday.

On his arrival in Bhubaneswar on Thursday, Kambhampati proceeded to Puri to visit the Jagannath Temple to seek blessings of the Lords.

The 71-year-old Kambhampati, the former Governor of Mizoram, will replace Raghubar Das in Odisha. He is a native of Andhra Pradesh's Prakasam district and has a long-standing career in politics. His political journey began during his university days when he played an active role in the Jai Andhra Movement in 1972. He

was also imprisoned for six months during the Emergency period in the mid-1970s.

An academic by profession, Kambhampati holds a B.Tech in Electronics and Communication Engineering and a PhD from the Andhra University. He dedicated 24 years to academia as an associate professor in Andhra University's Engineering College.

Kambhampati resumed his politics in 1977 when he joined the Janata Dal. He later became the general secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Andhra Pradesh. In 1999, he was elected as an MLA from the Visakhapatnam-1 constituency.

He served as the president of the Andhra Pradesh BJP between 2014 and 2018. He was a Member of Parliament from 2014 to 2019.

In city Duplicate cement factory unearthed

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Commissionerate police on Thursday busted a fake cement manufacturing unit at Tankapani under the Badagada police station in Bhubaneswar.

Operating under the cover of reputed cement brands, the factory produced duplicate cement to be sold as genuine items in the market.

Acting on a tipoff, police raided and sealed the fake cement factory. Several bags of fake cement were seized, which would have been distributed in the market.

Shockingly, the illegal ce-



ment factory had been operating for the last one and a half years. However, the factory owner reiterated that they were original cement bags which were damaged in the rain.

"We had stored 1,000 bags that were damaged in the rain. So, we were trying to use the cement that is good enough for use as our construction work is going on in Badagada

and Pahala areas," the factory owner claimed.

"The raid was conducted after we received confidential information. We have seized around 500 bags of cement and have also sealed a selling counter in Pahala. They would recycle damaged cement and re-sell it using brand names. A case will be registered against everyone involved," a police officer said.

12-day Adivasi Mela to begin from Jan 5



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State-level Adivasi Mela 2025 will be held from January 5 to 16 at Unit-3 IDCO Exhibition Ground.

To be organised by the ST and SC Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare Department, the event's main attractions will be tribal village, tribal haat, art and craft stalls, tribal food courts, live demonstrations

and Bhagwan Birsa Munda Pavilion. This year, 20 tribal huts are being constructed and tribal goods will be sold in 147 stalls.

In addition, 40 stalls are being prepared for the art and craft and 15 stalls will have the facility of live demonstrations. In addition, galleries related to Birsa Munda's life and journey, a national and State freedom fighters' gallery, a painting exhibition, a Mini Theatre

and a Photo Exhibition will be organised in 5 galleries of Bhagwan Birsa Munda Pavilion. Tribal dance and music will be performed every evening, along with a laser show based on the life and journey of Bhagwan Birsa Munda, a drone show based on the tribes of Odisha, a light and sound show based on the tribal freedom fighters of Odisha, a fashion show and a fireworks show.

SOCIAL CANVAS

Complete homestead land distribution within timeframe

Right to Protection of Life and Personal Liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution of India says no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law. Right to Housing /Residence /Shelter is a fundamental right which springs from Article 21 and also Article 19. But unfortunately while celebrating the 76th Constitution Day, it is found that the very basic objectives of the Constitution to provide social and economic justice to land less poor agricultural labourers in rural areas have been purposefully ignored in the last 75 years.



MANAS JENA

injustice.

The Independent India has made a number of legislations such as the Estate Abolition Act and Land Reforms Act to ensure land for the historically marginalised sections. A close review of the progress of enforcement of such laws shows that a number of judicial hurdles

have come in the way. Most importantly lack of political will mixed with bureaucratic apathy and anti-poor attitude of the revenue administration in dealing with issues of land of the poor has been a major setback.

The three major issues such as homestead land settlement, rights over agricultural land of the sharecroppers and rights over common property resources of the Dalits because of social discrimination remain incomplete. The second issue is land distributed to the beneficiaries under different schemes such as ceiling surplus and Bhoodan land, waste land etc. In many cases, survey, settlement and demarcation of land have not been completed. The third issue is the number of cases that are fixed in courts that impact the poor the most.

Homestead land is very important as it is linked to the most poorer sections living in rural areas. The primary purpose of the

Odisha Government Land Settlement Act 1962 is to govern settlement of government waste lands in a planned way in favour of landless poor. The government waste land includes waste land belonging to government whether cultivable or not recorded as house site, Anavadi, Chot Jungal, Puratan Patita, Nutan Patita, Paritkyata Bedakhali, Gochara, etc in the ex-Madras presidency areas of Odisha. It is the duty of the government to reserve such categories of land and settle it with the landless agricultural labourers. As per provision, 70 percent of such land shall be settled with persons belonging to STs and SCs in proportion to their respective population in the village and the remaining land shall be settled with other persons. However, it is a fact that still a sizable number of rural households mostly belonging to SC and ST communities have no legal right over the land they have been

staying for generations due to lack of survey and settlement. They have been deprived of the RoR rights to construct houses under different housing schemes of the government for a long time. Under the land distribution scheme, VASUNDHARA, administered by OGLS Act since 2008 (BJP State president Manmohan Samal was the Revenue Minister then) land patta has been distributed to a good number of families but in case of about half of such beneficiaries, the land was not demarcated. In spite of repeated applications before the local authority there has been no action which has underscored the hollowness of the scheme.

It has been found that there are SC and ST hamlets which do not have linking roads. It is extremely difficult for the inhabitants in the rainy season to travel out of their settlements. The women, children and elderly suffer a lot when it comes to going to schools or hos-

pitals. The local Tehsildars keep mum to solve the issues. Though there have been instructions to purchase private land for providing homestead land as per guideline of Union Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) but it is not being implemented.

The land distribution schemes should be extended to urban areas, municipalities and NACs and municipal corporations. The families of scavengers, construction workers and wage labourers should be given priority. It has been found that multi-caste villages in rural areas have imposed social restrictions on Dalits over the use of village common property resources such as cremation ground, village ponds, village playground, grazing land and forest etc. The Revenue Department must look into these issues on priority basis. Along with this the unfinished task of distribution of ceiling surplus land, Bhoodan land, waste land,

Anabadi land, forest land and many other categories of land may be finished by its distribution to landless families depending on agriculture. The reclaimed land generated out of the filling of abundant mining may be distributed to the displaced families, agricultural workers, small and marginal farmers in mining and industrial areas. It is desirable that a State land policy must be drafted and State land commission be set up along with fast track revenue court for the quick redressal of all land related disputes with provision of legal aid to victims of land litigation, especially for SC, ST, women and economically weaker sections of the society. The available funds with the State government such as SC sub plan, ST sub plan, CSR, CAMPA, DMF and MGNREGS may be used for land development and the productive use of such land.

(Email-manasbsr15@gmail.com)

In 2024 Vig lodges 200 cases, detects Rs 131-cr DA

PNS ■ CUTTACK
In the year 2024, the Vigilance police registered over 200 criminal cases and apprehended 181 persons, mostly government officers, for their involvement in various corruption and disproportionate asset (DA) cases. Cases were registered against 50 Class-I officers, including six Chief Engineers, a Joint Commissioner of Excise, a Deputy Director of Fisheries, two Assistant Commissioners of CT and GST, a Jail

Superintendent, a Sub-Collector, two Tehsildars, two BDOs and several others. Besides, 19 engineers, 22 revenue officials, 20 PR and DW officials, nine police officers, five doctors, three forest officials and three ICDS functionaries were arrested by the Vigilance. The anti-graft agency also made a notable headway in tackling disproportionate assets cases, registering 60 such cases and unearthing assets worth over Rs 131 crore. It also cracked down

on bribery, registering 96 trap cases where 115 people, including 99 government officers, were caught while accepting bribes amounting Rs 19.25 lakh. In terms of investigation, the department carried out searches at 483 locations, froze 792 bank accounts of corrupt public servants. As many as 194 buildings and projects valued at approximately Rs 27.03 crore were evaluated. Additionally, 38 wives of officials were made co-accused in various

DA cases. The investigation team successfully completed probes in 307 cases, achieving a disposal rate of 154%, which is said to be the highest-ever recorded. Besides, the Vigilance registered a conviction rate of 50% with nearly 105 convictions. The conviction rate in DA cases is said to be around 80%. Following conviction in several cases, as many as 25 government functionaries were dismissed from their service.

To strengthen anti-graft agency Vigilance to have 8 new SPs, 2 DSPs, 16 SIs

Vacancies across depts to be filled March
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The Odisha government has announced its plans to strengthen its State Vigilance Department by establishing new roles within the anti-corruption bureau. As per sources, the initiative aims to enhance efforts

against corrupt practices among high-level officials. As part of the initiative, Chief Minister Mohan Majhi has approved a proposal to create additional positions within the State Vigilance Department. The enhancement includes creating as many as eight new Superintendent of Police (SP), two Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) and 16 Sub-Inspector posts. These additions are ex-

pected to bolster the department's capacity to combat corruption effectively. By expanding the manpower of the anti-corruption bureau, the State government aims to intensify scrutiny of government officials, ensuring accountability and transparency across various levels of administration. The decision reflects a proactive approach to curbing corrupt activities within the State machinery.

Moreover, in a decisive move to bolster State employment figures, Chief Minister Majhi also directed senior officials concerned to take immediate steps and fill the vacancies across government departments in Odisha. During a meeting at the Lok Seva Bhawan with the Nijukti Aayog's chairperson, orders were issued to accelerate the recruitment process, emphasising completion by March 31.

In Keonjhar Man shoots wife dead with arrow over affair

PNS ■ KEONJHAR
A man killed his wife by shooting her with an arrow after a heated altercation over an alleged extramarital affair in Keonjhar district on Wednesday. The incident occurred at Handibhanga village under the Bamebari police station. Police detained the accused and interrogated him. According to a preliminary investigation by police, Chani Munda (45), wife of Dasara Munda (50) of the village, was in an illicit relationship with another man.

Reports said an argument occurred at night between Dasara and Chani, following which the former lost his cool and shot an arrow at Chani. Later, Chani's relatives rushed her to the Jhumpura Community Health Centre. But she was declared dead. After receiving a complaint, the Bamebari police rushed to the spot and sent the body for postmortem. Investigating Officer Shib Shankar Alda said, "The accused husband has been detained for further inquiry. The body was sent to medical for postmortem."

Memo to Dy CM to accelerate Rayagada projects

By civil society body RNM
BADAL TAH ■ RAYAGADA
During a recent visit of Deputy CM KV Singh Deo to Rayagada, the Rayagada Nagarika Mancha (RNM) submitted a memorandum to the Minister seeking development activities in the district.

The Manch sought steps from the government for fast tracking two irrigation projects over the Vansadhara and Nagabali rivers to improve the agricultural output and economy of the region and mitigate the misery of the population, mostly belonging to the Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe. Besides, the RNM has put forward other demands namely setting up of two big cold storages one each at Rayagada and Gunupur subdivisions besides one each in nine block headquarters in a public-private partnership-PPP model and fixing rational electricity tariff. The space near Ashoka Talkies, Rayagada may be utilised for multi-storied vegetable vending mall and commercial space for business, it proposed. Similarly proper spaces in Gunupur, Tikiri, Muniguda and other towns may be allotted, the RNM demanded. 506 acres have been restored from a defunct sugar mill, which can be used for setting up of a multi-storied secretariat for office accommodation to address urban congestion and optimize space utilisation, the Manch said. The forum also urged for establishment of a Government medical college on a priority basis in Rayagada. Therubali already has a functional airstrip managed by IMFA. The Minister was requested to send a proposal to the Government of India and establish an airport under UDAAN scheme near Therubali or JK Pur. There is only one dilapidated flyover bridge leading to traffic jam in Rayagada town everyday and unintended accidents. The Manch requested the Minister to facilitate establishment of another flyover bridge inside the town. The Manch demanded plying of a day bound daily train from Rayagada to Bhubaneswar in the name of Atal Bihari Vajpayee Express was also demanded. Singh Deo patiently listened to the demands and assured the members to look into them.

In Ganjam Racket forging papers to bail out accused busted; 6 held

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAMAPUR
Baidyanathpur Police have arrested six individuals involved in a forgery racket that facilitated the release of accused persons on bail using counterfeit land documents and identification cards, on Tuesday. The arrests were made in connection with Baidyanathpur PS Case No 601, dated December 21, 2024 registered under multiple sections of the IPC.



The case originated from a complaint filed by one Sarojini Behera (75) of Nuagaon village of Debbahumi in Ganjam district. She alleged that the accused, Sudhir Kumar Jena (48), forged her late husband Ladu Kishore Behera's Aadhaar card and land documents to unlawfully bail out numerous individuals over the past three years. The arrested individuals include Sudhir Kumar Jena of Karatali village, Venket Prasad Pattnaik (55) of Municipality Colony in Lanjipalli, Sanyasi Mohanty (55) originally from Dhubapalli village and now residing in Shastri Nagar in

Brahmapur, Nirakar Sahu (76) of Srikrushna Nagar in Brahmapur, Babula Nayak (70) of Jail Road in Lanjipalli and Judhistir Maharana (70) of Kolathia village in K Nuagaon. During raids at the residences of the accused, police seized 135 forged land documents (Khatian/Patta) with counterfeit seals of Tehsildars from Kanisi, Brahmapur, Kukurahandi, and Aska, along with 10 blank forged Khatian forms, 13 fake revenue tax receipts, counterfeit Aadhaar cards, and specialized paper resembling official government documents. The investigation revealed that the racket primarily targeted accused persons unable to secure bail due to the lack of solvent sureties. For a fee ranging from Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,000, the accused acted as bailers, using fake IDs and land documents to facilitate the release of individuals they had no personal connection with. Sudhir Kumar Jena, a roadside vegetable vendor at Kamapalli Chhaka, disclosed during interrogation that he was introduced to the racket by Bijay Kumar Mohanty, who trained him in forging documents. Jena admitted to using the complainant's late husband's documents to bail out over 100 accused persons in the last three years. Brahmapur SP Dr Saravana Vivek M, addressing the media, said, "This is a serious case of forgery that has compromised the judicial system. The accused exploited the vulnerabilities of the bail process to aid habitual offenders. With these arrests, we have dismantled a significant forgery racket. Further investigations are underway to track others involved and to ensure stringent legal action against the culprits." Police added that the operation exposed a critical breach in legal procedures, as habitual offenders, including liquor traders and thieves, were being released on bail using forged documents. The arrests and seizures have dealt a decisive blow to the racket. Further investigations are ongoing to identify and apprehend other individuals connected to the forgery ring.

Moscow Linguistics Cong Nuapada writer Mishra presents papers



AJIT PANDA ■ NUAPADA
Dr Mahendra Mishra, a writer from Nuapada district, has brought laurels to India by presenting his research papers at the prestigious First Eurasian Congress of Linguists in Moscow. He is presently the national advisor for multilingual education at the Language and Learning Foundation, New Delhi. Dr Mishra, who hails from a modest background, showcased his work titled "Overcoming Linguistic Challenges in Multilingual Societies: The Case of Odisha's MLE Initiative." The Congress, held from December 9 to 13, 2024, was organised by the Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences and supported by the Russian Federation's Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The event was part of the cel-

ebrations marking the 300th anniversary of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Speaking about the significance of the event, Dr Mishra said, "The Congress served as a global platform for linguists to share their research on addressing pressing linguistic challenges. It also provided young researchers with opportunities to learn about the latest advancements in the study of language in all its diversity." Dr Mishra's presentation was featured in one of the 18 parallel oral sections that delved into key issues of linguistics, covering diverse language groups across Eurasia and beyond. His work highlighted Odisha's pioneering Multilingual Education (MLE) initiatives aimed at addressing linguistic barriers in multicultural and multilingual societies.

BBSR reports 7,263 cybercrime cases in 2024

50% increase from 2023
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The Commissionerate police witnessed a significant rise in the reporting of cybercrime-related incidents in 2024. The information was revealed by the Commissionerate police in the annual crime statistics-2024. As per the statistics, 7,263 cases related to cybercrimes were reported in Bhubaneswar last year compared to 4,832 cases in 2023. The capital city recorded a rise of more than 50 per cent in cybercrime-related incidents in 2024. Notably, 3,614 cases regard-

ing various cyber frauds had been reported in Bhubaneswar in 2022. This indicates an over two-fold increase in cybercrime cases in the city in the last two years. Out of the 7,263 cases reported in 2024, as many as 2,653, 1,872, 781 and 1,076 complaints were related to financial fraud, UPI transactions fraud, credit card/debit card fraud and social media fraud, respectively. The Commissionerate police registered 322 FIRs in this regard last year. The cops also arrested a total of 38 cyber criminals, including 20 from outside the State during the above period. The fraudsters duped the gullible victims in Bhubaneswar of Rs

82,53,56,251 last year. Out of the total amount defrauded by the cyber criminals, the cops managed to freeze Rs 23,60,14,447 while Rs 2,50,00,000 was refunded to the victims. The Commissionerate police further mentioned in its report that numerous high-profile cases were solved by the cops in Bhubaneswar last year that included digital arrest scams, social media harassment and blackmail cases, financial investment frauds and call centre cases. Besides, the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack witnessed over an 11-per cent increase in the registration of various criminal cases during 2024. As many as 21,613 criminal cases have been registered

at various police stations in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack during 2024 as against the filing of 19410 cases in 2023. The Commissionerate police in its report revealed that 89 murder cases were registered in the twin city area last year as against 78 murder cases in 2023. The twin city also recorded a rise in cheating cases in 2024 as compared to the cases reported in 2023. As many as 1,729 swindling cases were registered last year as against 1471 cases in 2023. However, the registration of criminal cases related to rape, robbery, dacoity, burglary, theft and rioting has witnessed a decline in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack during 2024.

Z1RWA annual sports meet held



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Z1 Apartments Residents Welfare Association in the Patia area in Bhubaneswar successfully hosted its 14-day annual sports meet from December 13 to 30. The event's motive was to promote unity, sportsmanship, and community bonding among the residents. The sports meet featured track and field, team sports, individual sports, indoor games and fun events. Residents of all ages,

including kids, boys, girls, men, women and senior citizens, participated in individual and team events. The prize distribution ceremony included a performance by Ahsaan Qureshi, renowned Indian stand-up comedian and one of the winners in the Great Indian Laughter Challenge. Z1RWA president Prof PC Mishra, vice-president Malaya Panigrahi, secretary CA Bidhubhusan Nayak and treasurer Artatrana Panigrahi encouraged the participants.

Come winter, Chilika turns avian wonderland

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAMAPUR
As January unfolds, Chilika lake, Asia's largest brackish water lagoon, transforms into a sanctuary of breathtaking beauty. Spanning over 1,100 square kilometers across Ganjam, Khurda and Puri districts, Chilika is a living masterpiece of biodiversity, a refuge for migratory birds and a marvel of ecological harmony. Recognized as India's first Ramsar site in 1981, it holds global significance as a wetland of international importance. Every winter, the lake becomes a vibrant haven for over a million migratory birds. Travellers from Siberia, Mongolia, and the Himalayas journey to the natural retreat, making Chilika a vital stop-

over on the East Asian-Australasian flyway. According to the 2024 Annual Bird Census conducted by the Chilika Wildlife Division, the lake hosted 1,137,759 birds representing 184 species, an increase from the previous year. Notably, a rare Pallas's fish eagle was spotted after a decade, underlining Chilika's global ecological importance. The remarkable congregation includes flamingos, pelicans, pintails, gadwalls, black-tailed godwits and the elusive bar-headed geese. The bird sanctuary at Nalabana Island is the centerpiece of the avian marvel, offering an unparalleled spectacle for birdwatchers, photographers, and nature lovers. The sight of thousands of birds in flight, their calls echoing over the waters, creates an

unforgettable sensory feast. One of the most enchanting experiences at Chilika is the boat journey from Ganjam's Rambha region to Puri via Satapada. The route showcases the lake's grandeur and diverse ecosystems. Starting at Rambha, travellers encounter iconic sites like Breakfast Island, Honey-moon Island, and Beacon Island. As the boat glides over the shimmering waters, flocks of birds soar overhead and Irrawaddy dolphins occasionally surface, adding to the journey's charm. Upon reaching Satapada, visitors enjoy expansive views of the lake before continuing to Puri. The picturesque voyage blends natural beauty, vibrant culture and tranquility, making it one of Chilika's most memorable experiences.



Ganjam district adds a unique charm to Chilika's landscape. Rambha, a serene town on the lake's southern fringes, offers stunning views of the Chilika archipelago. The Ghantasila Hill near Rambha provides a panoramic view of lush greenery and shimmering waters. Bird's Island, known for its natural beauty and nesting avian species, is another must-visit destination. These tranquil spots, coupled with the

district's vibrant culture, make Ganjam an integral part of Chilika's allure. Chilika's ecosystem is a fascinating blend of freshwater, brackish, and marine life. It is home to the endangered Irrawaddy dolphin, with the latest survey indicating a population range of 155 to 165 individuals. The lake also supports an array of fish species, crabs and mollusks, providing sustenance for thousands of

fisherfolk. The surrounding mangroves, seagrass beds and salt marshes are vital for ecological balance, serving as breeding grounds for aquatic life and natural barriers against coastal erosion. For the local fishing communities, Chilika is more than just a source of livelihood. It is their lifeline. Around 30,000 families rely on the lake's resources, including the famous Chilika fish and prawns. These communities practice traditional fishing methods, ensuring sustainable harvests and maintaining the lake's ecological health. The importance of Chilika to these families cannot be overstated, as it sustains their culture, economy and identity. Despite its splendor, Chilika faces challenges such

as siltation, invasive species like water hyacinth and pollution from agriculture and tourism. The Chilika Development Authority (CDA), in collaboration with local communities and organisations like Wetlands International, has undertaken significant conservation initiatives, including dredging, sustainable fishing practices, and awareness campaigns. According to the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management, Chilika lake's restoration has improved salinity levels, enhancing biodiversity and curbing invasive species. Beyond its ecological significance, Chilika is a thriving tourist destination. Satapada, famed for dolphin spotting and Kalijai Island, steeped in mythology, attract visitors

year-round. The annual Makar Mela in January combines cultural festivities with natural wonders, offering an immersive experience. Boat rides, particularly the Ganjam to Puri route via Satapada, provide a unique way to explore Chilika's islands, bird sanctuaries, and fishing villages. These journeys are as enriching as they are visually stunning, leaving travellers with indelible memories. January brings Chilika alive, transforming it into a vibrant tableau of migratory birds, serene waters, and thriving ecosystems. Whether you are a nature enthusiast, a cultural explorer, or a seeker of tranquility, Chilika offers an unparalleled experience that showcases the best of Odisha's natural heritage.

Will implement recommendations of panel on NEET-UG exam: Centre to SC

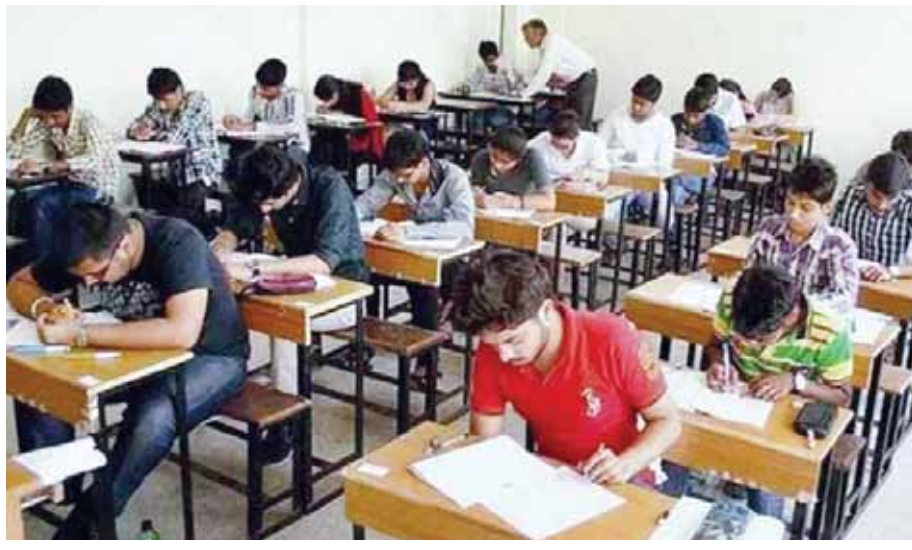
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Centre on Thursday informed the Supreme Court that it would be implementing all the corrective measures suggested by its seven-member expert panel on exam reforms after reviewing the National Testing Agency's functioning in holding NEET-UG last year.

The top court on August 2, last year refused to annul the controversy-ridden NEET-UG of 2024, saying there was no sufficient material on record at present to indicate a systemic leak or malpractice compromising the integrity of the examination. It had also expanded the remit

of the seven-member expert panel, headed by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief K Radhakrishnan, to review the functioning of the National Testing Agency (NTA) and recommend exam reforms to make the NEET-UG (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test Undergraduate), transparent and free from malpractices.

On Thursday, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, apprised a bench comprising justices PS Narasimha and Manoj Misra that the Centre-appointed committee has filed its report and the government will be implementing all the recommendations. "We are going to implement all



the recommendations and it (matter) can be listed after six months," the law officer said. "The matter is adjourned for three months. List this special leave petition in the month of April," the bench said.

The entire report has not been placed on the records as it also contained some details regarding issues like printing of questions etc. On October 21 last year, the top court had extended the time granted to the Centre-appointed seven-member expert panel to file its report on exam reforms. The NEET-UG is conducted by the NTA for admission in undergraduate medical programs.

While expanding the scope of the expert panel, the top court

had flagged multiple lapses on the part of NTA like the security breach at an examination centre in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh where the rear door of the strongroom was opened and unauthorised people were permitted to access question papers, transportation of question papers by e-rickshaws and distribution of wrong set of question papers among the candidates. Besides Radhakrishnan, other members of the expert committee are Randeep Guleria, B J Rao, Ramamurthy K, Pankaj Bansal, Aditya Mittal and Govind Jaiswal. The bench said the remit of the committee, in addition to the tasks that it has been entrusted with by the Union government and the

NTA, shall encompass examination security and administration, data security and technological enhancements. Its responsibilities will also include policy and stakeholder engagement, collaboration and international cooperation, and recommendations for providing mental health support to students and training of NTA staff, it said.

Over 23 lakh students took up the NEET-UG in 2024 for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses. In November last year, the top court dismissed a petition seeking review of the August 2 verdict by which it had refused to allow a fresh NEET-UG 2024 examination.

Report submitted in Sambhal's Shahi Jama Masjid dispute

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
LUCKNOW

The long-awaited survey report of the Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal has been submitted in the Chandausi court, intensifying the debate surrounding the contentious site. Advocate Commissioner Ramesh Singh Raghav handed over the 40-page document on Thursday to Civil Division Judge Aditya Singh in a sealed envelope.

The contents of the report, compiled during surveys conducted on November 19 and 24 last year, remain undisclosed pending further orders from the Supreme Court.

Raghav, explaining the delay in submission, said, "The survey was thorough and based on photos and videos collected over two days. Due to my health issues, there was some delay, but the report has now been filed and will remain sealed until directed otherwise by the Supreme Court."

The survey's second day, November 24, coincided with violent clashes that left five peo-



ple dead. Local residents recall the chaos vividly. "The violence shook our entire community. People are still struggling to move past the events of that day," said Rajiv Kumar, a shopkeeper in the Kot Purvi area where the mosque is located.

The dispute revolves around claims by the Hindu petitioners that the Shahi Jama Masjid

was originally a Shri Harihar temple, demolished by Mughal emperor Babur in 1529. Mahant Rishi Raj Giri of Kailadevi temple, one of the petitioners, said, "This place holds immense religious significance. It is believed to be the prophesied site for Lord Vishnu's Dashavatara Kalki. There are several proofs within the structure that point to its

origins as a temple." The petitioners, led by Supreme Court lawyer Harishankar Jain and his son Vishnushankar Jain, have presented a 95-page document citing historical texts and archaeological findings to support their claim. Other petitioners include Mahant Dinanath and social workers Vedpal Singh, Madanpal, Rakesh Kumar, and Jeetpal Yadav.

The Advocate Commissioner confirmed that the next steps in the legal proceedings depend on potential appeals in the High Court. "For now, the report cannot open the report until a Supreme Court directive is issued. Even the judges have no access to the findings," Raghav added.

The submission of the report has heightened tensions in Sambhal. Many locals fear a resurgence of unrest. "We want peace and resolution, not more conflict," said Ayesha Begum, a resident living near the mosque. The case remains a sensitive issue, blending historical, legal, and communal aspects, as the nation awaits clarity on the court's next move.

Prayagraj gets 200 roads, city upgraded and beautified with over 3 lakh saplings

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Once characterized by its narrow and worn-out roads, Prayagraj has undergone a remarkable transformation under the Yogi Adityanath government. Following the groundwork laid for Kumbh 2019, the city has seen unprecedented development ahead of Mahakumbh 2025.

With an emphasis on permanent infrastructure, over 200 roads have been newly constructed or upgraded, ensuring seamless connectivity for the millions of devotees expected to attend the grand spiritual gathering.

"The city of Prayagraj is ready to put its best foot forward to welcome pilgrims. The neat clean roads and painted walls are adding sheen to the majestic grandeur to this historic city," said Abhilash Narain, a resident of Prayagraj.

Adding to the transformation, these roads have been adorned with 3 lakh plants and 1 lakh horticultural samplings, enhancing their visual appeal. As devotees flock to Prayagraj



for Mahakumbh, they will not only experience seamless travel, but also take home lasting memories of the city's beautified and welcoming atmosphere.

In preparation for the grand Mahakumbh event in Prayagraj, a total of 200 roads have been upgraded to ensure seamless connectivity for devotees. These efforts include construction of new roads, as well as widening and strengthening of existing ones, with contributions from three key departments.

The Prayagraj Municipal Corporation has led the effort,

successfully reconstructing, widening, and strengthening 78 roads. The Public Works Department (PWD) has developed 74 roads, while the Prayagraj Development Authority (PDA) has worked on 48 roads.

Beyond functional improvements, the roads have also been beautified to enhance the city's appeal. A variety of plants have been thoughtfully placed along the routes, with 3 lakh plants and 1 lakh horticultural samplings adorning these upgraded roads.

These enhanced and beautified roads promise to make the

journey to the Sangam smooth and spiritually enriching, offering devotees an experience of divine bliss during their visit to Mahakumbh.

The construction and development of these roads posed significant challenges for the three departments involved. One of the major hurdles was addressing encroachments along the routes. To facilitate smooth construction, a total of 4,426 encroachments were removed, ensuring clear pathways for both devotees and the residents of Prayagraj.

Additionally, legal obstacles were encountered at various sites, with 82 court cases getting resolved to enable the construction process. Infrastructure adjustments also played a critical role, as 4,893 electric poles were successfully relocated to accommodate the roadwork.

Moreover, as part of the development efforts, 170 kilometers of underground cabling were laid alongside the construction of roads, further modernizing the city's infrastructure and enhancing its capacity to host the grand Mahakumbh event.

SC orders copy of medical reports of Mukhtar Ansari be provided to son

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed the Uttar Pradesh authorities to provide medical and magisterial inquiry reports on the death of jailed gangster-politician Mukhtar Ansari on March 28, 2024. A bench comprising Justices Hrishikesh Roy and S V N Bhatti took note of the submissions of senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Umar Ansari. Umar said the medical and the judicial inquiry reports pertaining to his father's death were not furnished by the State Government.

Ansari, 63, a five-time MLA from Mau Sadar, died of cardiac arrest at a hospital in Banda in Uttar Pradesh on March 28, 2024. He was in jail since 2005, with over 60 criminal cases pending against him, and was convicted in the murder case of BJP MLA Krishnanand Rai. Prior to his death, the son moved the top court in December, 2023, seeking a direction to transfer his father to any prison outside



Uttar Pradesh fearing for his life. In 2023, the State Government assured the bench it would strengthen Ansari's security inside the Banda jail, if required so that no harm was done to him. On Thursday, additional solicitor general K M Nataraj, appearing for UP Government, said the documents would be supplied to Umar. The bench observed a post-mortem was conducted on Ansari and a magisterial inquiry was also held later.

The top court asked the State

Government to provide the copies of the medical and inquiry reports within two weeks to the son who could file his response within three weeks thereafter. Umar's plea said after his mother approached the Allahabad High Court for protection, safety and security of Ansari, the court ordered enhancing his security in May, 2024. When Ansari died, his brother and Ghazipur MP Afzal Ansari alleged he was being subjected to "slow poisoning" in jail, a charge denied by the authorities.

Cyber fraud known as 'pig butchering scam' targeting youths, hosuwives, students: MHA report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Union Home Ministry in its latest report cautioned that a new cyber fraud known as "pig butchering scam" or "investment scam" has emerged, targeting unemployed youths, housewives, students, and needy people who are made to lose large sums of money daily. The report said that cybercriminals have also been using Google services platforms to initiate these crimes.

"Google Advertisement platform provides a convenient facility for targeted advertisement from across the border. This scam, known as 'Pig Butchering Scam' or 'Investment Scam' is a global phenomenon and involves large-scale money laundering and even cyber slavery," it said. The pig butchering scam, which is believed to have started in China in 2016, targets gullible individuals with whom cyber criminals build trust over time, ultimately convincing them to invest in cryptocurrency or some other lucrative scheme when their money is stolen. The analogy to pig butchering comes from



the fattening of swine before their slaughter. To curb the menace, the Home Ministry's Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) has partnered with Google to share the threat intelligence for urgent action periodically.

The cybercriminals are using sponsored Facebook to launch illegal lending applications in India, the report said. "Such links are proactively identified and shared with Facebook, along with Facebook pages for necessary action," said the report by MHA.

WhatsApp remains the biggest social media platform that is possibly misused by cyber

criminals in India, the report said. The data published in the report on "cybercrime complaints where Big Tech platforms have been misused" shows that 14746 complaints were related to WhatsApp, 7651 against Telegram, 7152 against Instagram, 7051 against Facebook, and 1135 against YouTube till March 2024.

"Big techs play an important role in proactive identification and action on cyber criminals. I4C has partnered with Google and Facebook for sharing intelligence and signals for proactive actions," the report said.

National Cybercrime Threat

Analytical Unit (NCTAU) of I4C analyses the complaints reported on the portal and prepares analysis reports on the latest trends of cybercrime and misuse of services provided by service providers, it said.

"These reports are shared with all the concerned stakeholders, i.e., banks, wallets, merchants, payments aggregators, payment gateways, e-commerce and other departments to take preventive measures and mitigate the misuse of their platforms/services," the report said.

The Ministry has also rolled out a Cyber Volunteer Framework, which enables

citizens to enrol as cyber volunteers for reporting unlawful content on the Internet, dissemination of cyber hygiene and as cyber experts to aid law enforcement under which 54,833 volunteers had registered by March 31, 2024, according to the report.

The Ministry's integrated platform Citizen Financial Cyber Frauds Reporting and Management System (CFCFRMS), where all stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies of states/Union territories, all major banks and financial intermediaries, payment wallets, crypto exchanges and e-commerce companies, work in tandem.

The platform ensures quick, decisive, and system-based effective action to prevent the flow of money from the victim's account to the cyber fraudster's account and the seized money is restored to the victim following due legal process, it said.

"Since its launch in April 2021, so far this platform has been able to save more than Rs 16 billion from going into the hands of fraudsters, and thus benefiting more than 5,75,000 victims," it said.

High nitrate levels found in groundwater of 440 districts across India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

High nitrate levels have been found in groundwater of 440 districts across India, with 20 per cent of the samples collected exceeding the permissible nitrate concentration, the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) has said in a report. Nitrate contamination is a significant environmental and health concern, particularly in agricultural regions using nitrogen-based fertilizers and animal waste. The "Annual Groundwater Quality Report - 2024" also revealed that 9.04 per cent of samples had fluoride levels above the safe limit, while 3.55 per cent showed arsenic contamination.

A total of 15,259 monitoring locations were chosen nationwide to check groundwater quality in May 2023. Of these, 25 percent of wells (the most at

risk per BIS 10500) were studied in detail. Groundwater was sampled at 4,982 trend stations before and after the monsoon to see how recharge affects quality.

The report found that 20 per cent of water samples exceeded the nitrate limit of 45 milligrams per liter (mg/l), the threshold set by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) for drinking water. Rajasthan, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu had over 40 per cent of samples above the limit while there was high contamination in samples from -- Maharashtra at 35.74 per cent, Telangana at 27.48 per cent, Andhra Pradesh at 23.5 per cent and Madhya Pradesh at 22.58 per cent.

Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Jharkhand and Bihar reported lower percentages. In Arunachal Pradesh, Assam,



Goa, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland, all samples were within safe limits.

In states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat, nitrate levels have remained stable since 2015. However, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Haryana showed increasing contamination from 2017 to 2023, the CGWB said.

High nitrate levels can cause health issues like blue baby syndrome in infants and are unsafe for drinking. Fifteen districts in

India have been identified as the most affected by high nitrate levels in groundwater including Barmer and Jodhpur in Rajasthan; Wardha, Buldhana, Amravati, Nanded, Beed, Jalgaon, and Yavatmal in Maharashtra; Rangareddy, Adilabad and Siddipet in Telangana; Villupuram in Tamil Nadu; Palnadu in Andhra Pradesh; and Bathinda in Punjab.

High nitrate levels in groundwater can be a result of excessive irrigation which can push nitrates from fertilizers deep into the soil, the report said. Poor management of animal waste in livestock farming adds to the problem, as it releases nitrates into the soil.

Urbanisation and population growth increase wastewater and sewage, which often contain high nitrate levels, while leaking septic systems and poor sewage disposal worsen

contamination. The report further said fluoride concentrations exceeding the permissible limit are a major concern in Rajasthan, Haryana, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana.

Elevated arsenic levels (more than 10 parts per billion) were found in several states, particularly in the floodplains of the Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers. This includes regions of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, and Manipur, as well as areas in Punjab and Rajasthan district in Chhattisgarh.

Long-term exposure to fluoride and arsenic contaminants can have severe health consequences, including fluorosis (from fluoride) and cancer or skin lesions (from arsenic). A major concern in the groundwater quality report was also the elevated levels of uranium in several regions.

CISF records lowest number of suicides amongst its personnel in 2024

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) on Thursday said it has recorded the lowest number of suicides amongst its personnel in 2024 -- at 15 -- over a six-year period due to some "credible" steps taken to resolve the problems of its staffers.

As per official data, the force, which guards vital and sensitive installations in the aerospace, nuclear and government domain, saw 15 deaths last year due to suicide, which comes to 9.86 per lakh in an organisation that has an operational strength of over 1.51 lakh personnel.

The comparative data of deaths due to suicide in the force over the last five years stood at 25 (2023), 26 (2022), 21 (2021), 18 (2020) and 17 (2019). "The



CISF has taken credible steps in combating this challenge by implementing a series of proactive measures, which has led to substantial reduction in suicides of force members in 2024," said a CISF spokesperson.

As per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, the spokesperson said that the national suicide rate stood at 12.4 per lakh in 2022. "In comparison, the CISF has

significantly reduced its suicide rate to 9.87 per lakh in 2024, a decline of over 40 per cent from 2023," he said. It is for the first time in the last five years that suicide rate in the CISF has fallen below the national rate, the spokesperson claimed.

The official said the CISF has taken a series of steps to address "mental health issues" on "proactive" basis, leading to a "substantial" reduction in suicides.

This includes personalised engagement by the officers with the troops on the theme of 'know your men and hear your men', stress management through yoga and games, online grievance redressal, tele-counseling on mental health issues for 4,200 personnel till last year and taking action on mental health issues as recommended by the AIIMS.

NHRC seeks action report on stampede death at 'Pushpa 2' screening in Hyderabad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD

NHRC has sought an action taken report within four weeks from the Hyderabad police chief on the death of a woman in a stampede at a theatre in the Telangana capital early December where 'Pushpa 2' movie was screened, according to the case's proceedings. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has also said that the allegations in the stampede case be inquired by a senior rank police officer and sought "needful action" on it. The complaint was filed with the NHRC on December 5 and registered on December 17, as per the proceedings. The



commission took action on January 1 and has sought a detailed action taken report "within four weeks". A 35-year-old woman died during the stampede at the Sandhya Theatre in Hyderabad on December 4 where the Allu Arjun-starrer 'Pushpa 2' movie was screened and her eight-year-old son was hospitalised. Following the incident, a case was registered against Allu

Arjun, his security team, and the theatre management under different sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at the Chikkadpally police station based on a complaint by the deceased woman's family. Allu Arjun was arrested by the city police in connection with the death of the woman on December 13. The Telangana High Court granted him a four-week interim bail on the same day and he was released from a prison in Hyderabad on December 14. According to the proceedings, the complainant has drawn attention of the commission towards death of a woman allegedly "due to lathi charge" by the police of Chikkadpally

who accompanied Allu Arjun during a promotional show of 'Pushpa 2'. The stampede that happened there resulted in "serious injuries" to the woman and her two children, the complainant said. "He has further alleged that lathi charge resorted to by police officials and lack of necessary arrangements, when film star Allu Arjun entered the theatre, resulted in the death" of the woman and injuries to her children, it said. The complainant has requested the "intervention" of the NHRC to take "necessary action on erring police officials who had resorted to the lathi charge," it adds.

Rahul Gandhi's defamation case: Next hearing scheduled for January 10

PTI ■ SULTANPUR/UP



A special MP-MLA court in Sultanpur conducted a hearing on Thursday in a defamation case against Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi and further proceedings including cross-examination will continue on January 10, a lawyer said. The case pertains to an alleged objectionable remark made by Rae Bareilly Congress MP about Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the 2018 Karnataka assembly elections, prompting a local BJP politician to file a complaint. "Today, cross-examination of the complainant, Vijay Mishra, took place. As the questioning could not be completed, the next hearing has been scheduled for January 10," Gandhi's lawyer Kashi Prasad

Shukla said. Mishra's lawyer, Santosh Kumar Pandey, said, "Rahul Gandhi's counsel cross-examined my client today regarding the defamation case. The next steps will proceed on January 10." The case was filed in 2018 by Mishra, a BJP politician and resident of Hanumanganj in Sultanpur's Kotwali Dehat area. Mishra alleged that Gandhi's remark on Shah during the Karnataka elections was offensive and had deeply hurt him. Over the past five

years, the case underwent multiple proceedings, but Gandhi reportedly failed to appear in court. Consequently, in December 2023, a warrant was issued, compelling Gandhi to appear in the court. In February 2024, the Congress leader complied with the summons and the special magistrate granted him bail on two sureties of Rs 25,000 each. Following this, the court instructed him to record his statement, which was finally completed on July 26, 2024, though after multiple postponements. In his statement, Gandhi pleaded not guilty and claimed the case was a part of a political conspiracy against him. Subsequently, the court directed the complainant to present evidence.

Nitish comes up with cryptic response after Lalu's fresh offer to join INDIA bloc

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday came up with a cryptic response to RJD president Lalu Prasad's offer to return to the INDIA bloc. "Kya bol rahe hain (What are you saying)" was all the JD(U) boss said in reply to queries from journalists about Prasad's fresh offer. Kumar had aligned twice with the RJD, a constituent of the INDIA bloc, in the last one decade. Prasad's son and heir apparent Tejashwi Yadav, however, sought to downplay the remarks made by his father, in an interview to a local news channel, claiming that the RJD supremo had



merely tried to satisfy the curiosity of the prying media. Prasad had said, "Our doors are open (for Nitish). He should also unbolt his gates. This would facilitate

movement of people from both sides". The remark, coming in the backdrop of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's stance on projecting the JD(U) supremo as NDA's

face in the assembly polls due in less than a year, triggered intense speculations in a section of the media here. Kumar was approached with queries by journalists at Raj Bhavan, where he attended the swearing-in ceremony of Arif Mohammad Khan as the new governor. Flanked by Khan and Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary (BJP on either side, Kumar folded his hands and smiled when his comments were sought on the offer from Prasad. Pressed further, he asked, "What are you saying?" When a pointed query was made, as to whether the state government would be able to complete its term, Khan intervened and said, "This is

not the occasion for a question of this type. Today is a happy day. Let us only talk about good things". Later, the posse of journalists approached Yadav, a former Deputy CM and the current leader of the opposition, who had also come to attend the function. The young leader, who had on Wednesday declared that the new year will see "departure" of the NDA government headed by Nitish Kumar, said: "I have already made my stand clear". When probed further, with reference to the utterances of his father, Yadav said, "What would he do if people like you keep coming to him with the same question? Whatever he

said must have been aimed at putting an end to curiosity of you journalists." Meanwhile, when questions about Prasad were posed to Union minister and former JD(U) president Rajiv Ranjan Singh "Lalan", he snapped. "The NDA is strong. JD(U) and BJP are united. It is a free society and anybody can say whatever he pleases. It is for Lalu ji to say more on his own utterances", he said. Lalan was perceived to have grown very close to the RJD supremo when Nitish Kumar was out of NDA. It was rumoured to have been the reason why the de facto JD(U) chief chose to take over as the president of the party.

Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge slams BJP over contractor suicide case



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge on Thursday slammed the BJP leaders for blaming him for the civil contractor Sachin Panchal's suicide case though he was nowhere connected. Addressing reporters here, the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister said there is no comparison between the suicide cases of Sachin Panchal and Santosh Patil. Santosh Patil had died by suicide in a hotel room in Udupi - during the previous BJP government - on April 12, 2022. "Santosh Patil had categorically mentioned about the then Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister K S Eshwarappa of the BJP government whereas in Panchal case, my name is nowhere mentioned in the suicide note but still the BJP is raising a non-issue," Kharge said. "Did the BJP pay compensation to Patil's kins or give job to his family members?" the Minister sought to know. He also said that former Minister Munirathna who is

facing rape and casteist slur cases has not been expelled from the party yet, which raises doubt about BJP's seriousness to follow their own slogan of 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' (save daughters and educate girl child). Regarding the BJP's proposed agitation in Priyank Kharge's home district of Kalaburagi on January 4, he said there are many skeletons in BJP's closets and they should first put their own house in order before commenting on others. Civil contractor Sachin Panchal on December 26 died by suicide by lying before a moving train in Bidar district. In his suicide note, he accused Priyank Kharge's close aide Raju Kapanur of compelling him to take the drastic step. He alleged that he was receiving death threats to pay rupees one crore to Kapanur, who denied these charges. Priyank Kharge too said he has no role in the case as the suicide note does not name him. He also demanded an inquiry into the case to bring out the truth.

Gujrat Police arrests a Russian for cyber fraud



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD

A Russian national was arrested by Gujarat police in connection with a 'digital arrest' case in which a man was duped of Rs 17 lakh, an official said on Thursday. Anatoly Mironov, a resident of Orenburg city in Russia, used to work as a "gatekeeper" for a gang run by a Chinese national and helped in transferring the proceeds of crime into various accounts and converting some of it into cryptocurrency, a release of Ahmedabad Cyber Crime Cell said. A "gatekeeper" is a middleman hired by international cyber criminals to keep a watch on bank account holders who are hired to receive proceeds of crime, and help in transferring those funds into the gang's bank accounts, explained Assistant Commissioner of Police (Cyber Crime) Hardik Makadia. "Since Mironov, who entered India on a tourist visa last year, was behind bars in a similar case of cheating in Maharashtra's Pune, the Cyber Crime Cell took his custody from a jail there through a production warrant and brought him here on Thursday," Makadia said. The probe began after a city-based businessman approached the Cyber Crime Cell in October

claiming some persons posing as Customs and police officials had kept him under 'digital arrest' and extorted Rs 17 lakh. The victim was told by the fraudsters that a parcel in his name, having fake passports, ATM cards and drugs, had been seized by Customs, the release said. "The account into which the victim transferred Rs 17 lakh belonged to Mahedulal Shah. An agent named Nadim Pathan, who was in touch with the gang, had convinced Shah to give his account on rent for this activity. After their arrest, we learnt about the role of Mironov," said Makadia. "After the victim transferred Rs 17 lakh in Shah's bank account, Miranov had called both of them to a hotel in Mumbai where the Russian national transferred the amount to other accounts, including cryptocurrency, as per the orders of his Chinese boss," said Makadia. At that time, some other bank account holders and their agents were also called to the hotel by Miranov for the same purpose, the ACP said. "Mironov acted like a gatekeeper who keeps an eye on agents as well as bank account holders. He then carries out transactions as directed by the gang leaders, who are sitting outside India," Makadia said.

No scrapping of Adani Solar energy deal, without proof: Andhra Pradesh CM Chandrababu Naidu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said the state government cannot scrap power purchase agreements with the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) without obtaining solid proof of bribery allegations. The Chief Minister's comments assume significance in the backdrop of Adani being indicted by the US Department of Justice over his role in an alleged years-long scheme to pay USD 250 million bribes to Indian officials in exchange for favourable solar power contracts, including from Andhra Pradesh. This allegation was refuted by the Indian conglomerate. The previous YSRC regime in Andhra Pradesh is embroiled in this alleged scam with claims that government officials received bribes from



the Adani Group, which reportedly amounted to Rs 1,750 crore. "We are getting proper documentation and once we get that then we will take action (if there was any corruption involved). If we cancel the MOUs right away then it may lead to legal issues and unnecessary complications," Naidu told reporters, during an informal interaction with reporters on Wednesday at TDP headquarters in Mangalagiri. The CM's comments came

after Andhra Pradesh Power Distribution Companies' decision earlier last month to procure over 4,000 million units of power from SECI, out of the total agreed 17,000 MU from the next fiscal. The Chief Minister stressed that he can proceed with action on anybody only after thoroughly establishing the documentary proofs in reaction to questions from reporters as to why he is not acting against certain individuals. "I never indulge in political vendettas. However, I will not spare wrongdoers. Regardless of how great they are, the culprits should be brought to justice" he said. The CM noted that he would take action only after procuring the required documentary evidence. Moreover, Naidu asserted that SECI's agreement to buy

power from the Adani Group was an 'advantage' to Andhra Pradesh and action against bribery allegations will be only after thoroughly establishing the evidence. Refuting the bribery allegations, the YSRC Congress Party has said the agreement was between the state government, Discoms and SECI which is a central government organisation and there is no third-party involvement. Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president YS Sharmila recently alleged that the previous YSRC regime had forged a 25-year deal with the Adani conglomerate to buy power at Rs 2.49 per unit while the Gujarat-based corporate house was supplying it only at Rs 1.99 per unit in Gujarat, burdening Andhra Pradesh people by Rs 1 lakh crore.

Biting cold wave sweeps Uttar Pradesh, residents struggle amid dense fog

BISWAJEET BANERJEE
LUCKNOW

A severe cold wave has gripped Uttar Pradesh, bringing life to a near standstill as icy winds from the mountains continue to lash the state. With dense fog blanketing 50 districts and visibility in Mathura plummeting to a mere 50 meters, residents are braving harsh conditions. Many are relying on bonfires to cope with the relentless chill. In Lucknow, where the temperature was recorded at 10°C early Thursday morning, the freezing winds have left residents shivering. "The cold is unbearable,"



said Sunita Yadav, a street vendor in the city. "I light a fire every morning, but it is hard to stay warm. Sales

have dropped because fewer people are stepping out." Similarly, Ramesh Prasad, a Rickshaw puller, shared, "I

have been wearing layers of clothing, but the winds cut through everything. It's been tough earning enough in this weather." Meerut recorded the state's lowest temperature at 6°C, making it the coldest district. "We haven't seen such bitter cold in years," said Anil Sharma, a farmer in the region. "The frost is affecting our crops, and it is a struggle to work in the fields. Even at home, staying warm is difficult." The Meteorological Department predicts the cold wave will persist for the next three days, with temperatures expected to

dip further by 3 to 5 degrees over the next 48 hours. Rainfall is likely to return on January 6, potentially exacerbating the situation. Lucknow remained cloaked in fog and overcast skies on Thursday, with eastern winds dominating the daytime. The weather forecast suggests a minimum temperature of 9°C and a maximum of 18°C. Statewide, temperatures have fallen sharply due to strong winds blowing at speeds of 20-25 km/h. Kanpur recorded a significant dip, with the daytime temperature dropping to 6.6°C-the steepest decline in Uttar

Pradesh. Dr. S.N. Sunil Pandey, a meteorologist at Kanpur's CSA University, attributed the intensified cold to the steady flow of mountain winds. "The cold wave has been ongoing for the past 48 hours, increasing the chill factor significantly. This pattern will likely continue for the next 72 hours, followed by a chance of light drizzle," he said. Authorities have urged residents to limit outdoor activities and take precautions against the bitter cold, while advising travelers to avoid journeys during periods of dense fog.

Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini leads pre-budget consultation meeting for FY 2025-26

PARVESH SHARMA
GURUGRAM

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Thursday presided over a pre-budget consultation meeting for the fiscal year 2025-26 in Gurugram with stakeholders from the industry and manufacturing sector. Minister for Industries and Commerce, Environment, Forests, and Wildlife, Rao Narbir Singh, Sohna MLA Tejpal Tanwar, and Gurugram MLA Mukesh Sharma also attended the meeting.



The representatives from various organizations

associated with the industrial and manufacturing sectors

shared their suggestions for the upcoming budget. During the meeting, the Chief Minister reiterated the state's commitment to an inclusive approach toward prosperity and progress, highlighting the role of industrial institutions in Haryana's economic development. He said that the state will certainly play a pivotal role in realizing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of transforming India into a developed nation by 2047. He said that the budget would not only address immediate

needs but also focus on achieving long-term objectives. Describing the budget as a reflection of collective aspirations and priorities, the Chief Minister further stressed the importance of engaging with all sections of society to ensure positive steps are taken to meet the needs and aspirations of every citizen of Haryana. During the meeting, the Chief Minister also shared Haryana's remarkable progress in agriculture, industry, education

infrastructure, and technology over recent years. He said that priority will be given to every suggestion shared by the stakeholders for strengthening the rural economy, promoting industrial investment, empowering youth through skill development and social welfare, and proper representation in the upcoming budget. He also assured to sympathetically consider the suggestions put forward by the representatives regarding improving health services,

public transport in industrial areas, and necessary reforms in industrial policy. During the meeting, Chief Minister Secretary to Chief Minister Rajesh Khullar shared that the Chief Minister has introduced a new initiative allowing citizens to submit budget suggestions online. Through the portal <https://bamsharyana.nic.in>, suggestions can be submitted across various sectors and sub-sectors. Suggestions can be given by going to the sector and sub-sector category through the

portal. Over 1,000 suggestions have already been received through this platform, he said. Additional Chief Secretary and Financial Commissioner, Revenue & Disaster Management and Consolidation Department, Anurag Rastogi, said that previous pre-budget consultations had yielded impactful suggestions. Programmes like Harhit Stores, drone technology, STEM labs, and Super 30 were developed based on these suggestions.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Save Priya

Priya's story reveals a harrowing struggle. Efforts must intensify to stop her execution and ensure repatriation

The story of Nimisha Priya, a nurse from Kerala, currently on death row in Yemen, has sparked widespread debate and concern. With her death sentence sanctioned by Yemen's President Rashad al-Alimi, the clock is ticking on securing her release. Her story is not an isolated case but an ordeal that many workers face in the Gulf and many other countries. This case is not only about the fate of one individual but also raises critical questions about justice, diplomacy and human rights. Nimisha Priya, a trained nurse, moved to Yemen to work in private hospitals and make a career. In 2015, she partnered with Yemeni national Talal Abdo Mahdi to set up a clinic in Sana'a. Yemen's laws necessitate local sponsorship for businesses and Mahdi played that role for Priya. However, this professional relationship spiraled into a nightmare. Mahdi manipulated ownership documents of the clinic, claimed he was her husband using forged and morphed photographs and seized control of her finances. She was harassed mentally and subjected to physical torture and imprisonment in her own home. In 2017, desperate to reclaim her passport and escape his clutches, Priya attempted to sedate Mahdi. Unfortunately, the sedatives proved fatal due to an overdose, leading to his death. The Yemeni judicial system found her guilty of murder, sentencing her a death sentence. Efforts to appeal her conviction have been exhausted, with the Yemeni Supreme Court and President rejecting her pleas. While Mahdi's death is undeniably tragic, Priya only wanted to regain her life and runaway from coercion and cruelty. If she is executed than it would be travesty of justice and would mean



penalising a victim. Priya's actions, though legally punishable, occurred in a context of desperation and fear for her safety and freedom. The Government of India must assist Nimisha Priya and her family in securing her release and repatriation. Her release hinges on a complex process involving Yemen's tribal justice system and the payment of blood money to Mahdi's family must be paid by the accused to get a pardon. High-level diplomatic discussions with Yemeni authorities and tribal leaders are essential to secure a waiver of the death penalty. Besides, mobilising public support to raise blood money can be a way out. Employing a dedicated legal team with expertise in Yemeni law and tribal negotiations is crucial to ensuring fairness and efficiency in the process. Highlighting Priya's case on global platforms as a human rights issue may garner international support and pressure Yemen to reconsider her sentence. Priya's case underscores the plight of expatriates caught in abusive circumstances. Her actions, while grave, were not premeditated but driven by self-preservation against a backdrop of systemic exploitation. Repatriating Priya to India would allow her a better trial. The Indian government and civil society must step up efforts to secure her release and ensure she receives a fair chance to rebuild her life.

PICTALK



Local folk singers (Baul Fakir) perform to entertain visitors and wishing them Happy New Year, in Birbhum

Winter session stalemate: Urgent need for reform

There is a pressing need for parliamentary reforms to ensure discipline, decorum and efficiency as a lot of parliamentary time is simply wasted



KALYANI SHANKAR

The Parliament's productivity in the recent Winter Session was a record low, with only 52 per cent of scheduled work completed. Various factors, including disruptions and lack of quorum, contributed to the reduced output. The confrontation between the treasury benches and a belligerent Opposition continued throughout. The current performance highlights the challenges in maintaining productivity. The Opposition, in particular, wanted to discuss the Adani issue. Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi has been raising the issue in public. It is a matter of significant public interest due to its implications. Also, the Opposition asked Union Home Minister Amit Shah to apologize for his comments about Dr BR Ambedkar, a highly respected figure in Indian history. The government was not willing to be flexible. With a productivity of merely 40.03 per cent during the Winter session.

Lok Sabha passed four of the five bills it received. Rajya Sabha approved 3 bills. During this session, the Lok Sabha lost 65 hours and 15 minutes, the highest in 2024. Many requests for adjournment motions made in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha were not accepted. The 18th Lok Sabha is different in many respects. For the first time in a decade, we have a strong opposition with an official leader of Opposition (LOP). The bitterness between parties within and outside Parliament is increasing. Neither side is willing to accommodate. Discipline, decorum and dignity of Parliament are of paramount importance. The pressing need for parliamentary reforms is more evident than ever, and action is needed now. Over Rs 97,87,50,000 of taxpayers' money was spent during the Winter Session. The cost of running a Parliament session is over Rs 2.5 lakh per minute, a considerable burden on the exchequer, which should prompt reevaluating our parli-



mentary practices. The Parliament's high cost and low productivity must be addressed sooner or later. House is often adjourned many times a day. In the last five decades, it has increased by over 100 times. This underlines the need to address the issue. For instance, Parliament saw protests from the ruling BJP-led NDA and the aggressive Opposition INDIA Bloc. BJP MPs accused the Congress party of "insulting" Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi and INDIA Bloc MPs demanded the resignation of Union Home Minister Amit Shah over his comments about Ambedkar. The escalating conflict over this issue resulted in two injuries and police involvement. Political parties should focus on honouring Ambedkar's legacy instead of blaming each other. Other bills include the Mussalman Wakf (Repeal) Bill, the Bharatiya Vayuyam Vidheyak, the Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, the Bills of Lading Bill, the Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill, the Railways (Amendment) Bill, the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, and the



DURING THIS SESSION, THE LOK SABHA LOST 65 HOURS AND 15 MINUTES, THE HIGHEST IN 2024. MANY REQUESTS FOR ADJOURNMENT MOTIONS MADE IN LOK SABHA AND RAJYA SABHA WERE NOT ACCEPTED

Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill. The government also introduced a controversial bill, 'One Nation, One Poll'. While the MPs are called lawmakers, Bills have been passed amidst the din and noise without proper discussion. The decreasing time available for parliamentary debates is detrimental to democracy. Protests, adjournments, and shortened sessions have lost nearly half of the sessions. Parliamentarians question the government, elicit information, and check it mainly through the Question Hour. Short Notice questions, calling attention, and adjournment motions all check the executive. But all these are relevant only when the House runs. More efforts need to be made to establish the success of a parliamentary system: Discipline, character, and a strong sense of public morality. The need for comprehensive and immediate parliamentary reforms is more evident than ever, and the time for action is now. All stakeholders, including political analysts and citizens, must understand the urgency of the system. All stakeholders, from

political parties to citizens interested in governance and parliamentary affairs, should feel this urgency. Economic reforms are imperative to ensure sustainable economic growth. The role of Parliament is linked with the new economic policy, which should lead to a drastic reduction in the role of the State. Professionalising floor management techniques is crucial to ensuring Parliament's efficient functioning. While we can legitimately be proud of the reasonably successful work of Parliament during the last five decades, Parliament must function in step with the needs of the changing times. We must proceed carefully and cautiously and evolve a national consensus on desirable changes. After all, Parliament is the communication link between the people and the government. The solution lies in adopting healthy parliamentary practices and maintaining decorum and discipline, which are crucial for dignified conduct in the Parliament. For this, both the government and the Opposition must cooperate. (The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AN EXCELLENT ARTICLE ON DR SINGH

Madam — I am writing to express my heartfelt appreciation for the excellent article titled 'The Statesman and a Gentleman' published in your esteemed newspaper. The article captures the life, legacy and unparalleled contribution of Dr Manmohan Singh to India's economic and political landscape. The article is very informative and educative. I have found Dr V K Bahuguna extremely well-informed. His writings are excellent and deep.

R K Sharma | New Delhi

SIMPLIFY H-1B VISA PROCESS

Madam — The H-1B visa system, a vital link between international talent and US companies, has become a contentious issue in the global workplace. It offers opportunities for skilled professionals in fields like technology, medicine, and engineering but faces significant challenges such as intense competition, complex procedures, and unclear minimum wage thresholds. According to a 2024 report by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, only 85,000 of 387,000 applications were approved, with the lottery-based system often excluding highly qualified professionals. Companies like Infosys, TCS, and Google face talent shortages due to limited approvals, while startups struggle with high costs, ranging from \$35,000 to \$50,000 per application.

The lack of a minimum wage threshold further fosters unfair competition for U.S. workers. Tesla CEO Elon Musk has called for reforms, including a minimum wage of \$150,000 to ensure only highly skilled professionals qualify. He advocates simplifying and automating processes to enhance efficiency. Musk also suggests reducing fees to support startups and small businesses, aligning the system with its goal of advancing America's technological and industrial leadership. Reforming the H-1B visa system could boost U.S. innovation, productivity, and tax revenues while balancing competition

Farmers' protests disrupt daily lives



Hindu sentiment of the fundamentalist Khalistani forces added up force in the agitation under the grab of farmers.

People at large are angrily fed up with the farmers agitation that started with the 3 farm laws enacted by the parliament, which were touted to be the game changer to improve the economic health of farmers across the country. As usual, about every decision of the Union Govt. led by Narendra Modi since 2014, the political opposition with tacit anti-India international forces successfully built the narrative after their anti-CAA agitation faded out and the anti-

Though obviously the so-called farmers who are agitated are from Punjab and have been the recipient of the biggest cake from the state in the name of MSP, subsidies, loan waivers, free electricity etc, what they are demanding now is untenable. The Supreme Court which called for suspension of the farm laws without exercising its authority against the roadblocks is still deaf towards the tragedy of commuters on the highway blocked by these anarchists supported by AAP, Congress and SAD politically just to vent their hatred towards the BJP and Modi. Only forcible evacuation of the highway is the very first thing that needs to be done, the SC and the CJI must order the use of force in public and national interest at the earliest.

Jai Prakash Gupta | Ambala

between local and foreign workers. With transparent and efficient procedures, the system could become a cornerstone of global collaboration and long-term growth, positioning the U.S. as a leading hub for global talent.

R K Jain | Barwani

ROHIT SHARMA NEEDS A BREAK

Madam — Australia is the champion in the 'Boxing Day' test at Melbourne when they have everything in their command. The will to win made all the difference and the Aussies did it professionally at MCG in the fourth test to take the lead 2-1 in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. While India lost by a margin of 184 runs by bowled out for a meagre 155 in their chase, the selectors must take a serious call at this juncture. It's once again the pathetic failure of Rohit Sharma, which has been highly disappointing and Kohli partnered him soon in the pavilion by recklessly fishing one well outside the off-stump. K L Rahul and N K Reddy can't always be among runs and get out by the beauty of deliveries. Yashasvi Jaiswal was

the lone fighter in the middle and his fluent 84 couldn't help the team when wickets were falling like ninepins at the other end.

When Pat Cummins sets an example by his responsible all-round display for the Aussies, Rohit Sharma can't have any excuses for his dismal batting. Selectors would continue with Rohit for the final test at Sydney and if the stewardship doesn't go to change in the near future it will be construed as gross injustice for Jasprit Bumrah by denying him the captaincy at the right time. Time has ripened for Bumrah to take over and it's high time for Rohit to gently take a break from the test cricket format to make room for deserving young guns who are in the waiting for long to take pride by wearing the Indian hat. Maybe the Head Coach Gautam Gambhir might have felt that his fitness and form are much better than relying on Rohit and Kohli at this stage.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Crowdfunding can transform science research funding

By connecting directly with the public, crowdfunding offers researchers an opportunity to explore bold ideas fueled by passion



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

The conventional research funding model, which is primarily dependent on government grants and institutional allocations, is currently under increasing scrutiny. Scientists and innovators frequently find themselves facing competition for a diminishing pool of resources as budgets tighten and priorities shift in numerous regions of the globe.

A novel paradigm is emerging, one that is influenced by the digital economy: crowdfunding for research. Is it possible that this community-driven, decentralised approach could revolutionise the way we finance science? Government funding has been a cornerstone of scientific research across the globe, particularly in the domain of basic research. This funding plays a vital role in driving innovation, supporting the exploration of fundamental scientific principles, and fostering advancements that often serve as the foundation for applied research and technological development. Despite its critical importance, accessing government research grants presents sig-



nificant challenges for scientists and institutions, making it a complex and often time-consuming endeavour. The exhaustive application process is one of the foremost difficulties in securing government funding. Researchers must navigate hectic administrative paperwork, including filling out detailed forms, providing extensive documentation, and adhering to strict procedural guidelines. This bureaucratic overhead often becomes a distraction, diverting researchers' time and energy away from their primary focus—scientific discovery. Writing and refining grant proposals, ensuring compliance with submission requirements, and coordinating with institutional administrators

consume weeks or even months. This process can be overwhelming for many scientists, particularly those involved with teaching responsibilities or other professional commitments. Another challenge is the influence of governmental policy on funding priorities. The allocation of research funds is often tied to the strategic objectives of the ruling government. This means that researchers must tailor their proposals to align with themes or areas of focus deemed significant by policymakers. As a result, projects that do not align with government priorities may struggle to find financial support, even if they hold substantial scientific or societal value. Moreover, the eligibility criteria for government funding further restrict access. Typically, government grants are available only to individuals holding doctoral degrees and those affiliated with recognised academic or research institutions, and some agencies restrict people from private institutions. Crowdfunding is emerging as a revolutionary alternative to

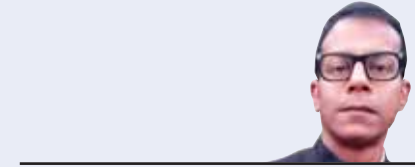
overcome these hurdles. Crowdfunding involves gathering financial support for a project or venture by soliciting small contributions from a large group of people, typically through online platforms. It offers a direct, democratic, and flexible solution, empowering researchers to pursue their ideas with fewer constraints while promoting passion-driven inquiry. Crowdfunding allows researchers to connect directly with the public, garnering financial support for projects that resonate with a broader audience. Platforms like Kickstarter, Indiegogo, FundRazr, Hoopoe, GoFundMe, etc. have already successfully funded creative projects and their application in scientific research is growing. Crowdfunding science projects require researchers to dedicate considerable time and effort to campaign management, diverting resources away from their core research work. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

INDIA'S NEW TRADE PARADIGM WITH THE US

India faces new challenges from the Trump's tough stance, spurring urgent talks on tariffs and trade



KUMARDEEP BANARJEE

The year gone by saw some crucial path-altering elections in nearly 70 of the most powerful democracies in the world. Some of the most populous countries led by India and including the US, Bangladesh, Indonesia etc. voted for a leadership of their choice in 2024. While the Indian electorate chose to renew another 5-year term for Prime Minister Modi (albeit with a less-than-expected mandate), Bangladesh too renewed its faith in Sheikh Hasina (who was accused of rigging the electoral process to retain power), which ultimately led to her being thrown out in a coup. In a highly polarised election ground, in the US, the incumbent President a front runner for the top job at the white house, pulled out near the finish line, leaving his second in command the Vice President to throw her hat in the ring against a mighty opponent Donald Trump. The US electorate gave a clear mandate for Donald Trump to lead the new global order for the US. Donald Trump's clear victory in the US elections, now potentially could lead to several multilateral, bilateral rejigs, around the globe. President-elect has already nominated several friends and allies from the past, in some of the top jobs. He has threatened high tariffs for Canada and Mexico while joking that the former is another state of the US. He has strong views on India's trade surplus with the US which is already an issue of concern for Indian officials. Several Indian ministries were in a huddle in the last week of the year 2024, trying to assess the amount of exports from their respective sectors, while looking at the tariffs imposed on US imports. New Delhi-based policy research institute Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) spent the last day of the year discussing 'Trade Tariff and Trump'. Several recommendations were made by the panel of experts regarding the future of India-US bilateral trade relations.



A press release from the event highlighted in the first paragraph that "India should have comprehensive engagement with the US, as new administration led by President-elect Trump takes over. India should explore a comprehensive new institutional framework to address the multiple issues that arise from trade, investment, technology and finance linkages. India should urgently consider appointing a Task Force or create other institutional mechanisms that bring in domestic policy coherence on these lines." In an unrelated development, India's External Affairs Minister Jaishankar spent the last week of the year in the US, meeting key presidential nominees for the incoming Trump administration and also attending the last foreign affairs ministers meeting under President Biden, even though QUAD as the framework was empowered by Trump Presidency 1.0.

The policy research institute RIS has cautioned to not respond with any knee-jerk reactions, to possible volatile statements emerging from Washington, immediately after President Trump's swearing-in, instead, it suggests "India may need to plan first, plan hard, and yet plan fast." An agile, business approach may be the best way forward to dealing with the incoming administration. It may also be worthwhile to note that the Indian government should reconsider some of the non-tariff barriers it imposes on imports in the form of regulatory compliances and compulsory testing etc. To avert losses, tie up with our US importers need to be strengthened so that they lobby for their own needs. However, low technology products have high US tariffs. We may be left with an avenue there to improve our participation in the value chains being built up in the US manufacturing sector. "A diversification of markets for Indian products may be needed, which could also have a sectoral focus. India can focus on exporting a certain bunch of products to say the Gulf Nations or the ASEAN group of countries depending on the price advantage. Some hedges need to be built to prevent any major hit of Trump tariffs.

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

AI: Revolutionising Punjab's governance

Punjab has the potential to harness artificial intelligence as a cornerstone for global competitiveness and unprecedented growth and bring about substantial gains



A S MITTAL



Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a futuristic concept confined to science fiction; it is a transformative force redefining governance globally. For a state like Punjab, rich in culture and potential but grappling with multifaceted challenges, embracing AI could be a game-changer. With a technocrat policymaker like Arvind Kejriwal, Punjab is uniquely positioned to leapfrog other states by recognising AI as a critical element for global competitiveness to unlock unprecedented growth. One of the first steps toward AI-driven transformation is the creation of a dedicated Ministry of Artificial Intelligence (MAI). Such a ministry, backed with an Artificial Intelligence policy equipped with adequate budget provisions, could centralise its AI initiatives, ensuring that day-to-day work across multiple departments is well-coordinated and strategically aligned.

The ministry could also promote AI literacy among citizens, emphasising the benefits of AI and addressing any potential concerns or ethical challenges. A robust policy framework led by MAI could position Punjab among innovative states. States like Telangana have already set an example by launching an AI mission to drive AI adoption across governance, healthcare, and agriculture. Punjab can adapt these learnings to build a robust AI ecosystem that attracts accountability and efficiency. Fostering Accountability and Efficiency AI is not a replacement for human effort but a tool to support it. AI can free up human resources for more strategic work by automating routine tasks and providing real-time insights. For example, Finland has successfully used AI to improve public services, ensuring accountability and efficiency in governance without overburdening employees.

Punjab's administration can similarly use AI to track project progress, measure outcomes, and enhance transparency. AI can also play a vital role in curbing corruption, a long-standing issue in governance. By using AI algorithms to analyse pat-



AI CAN ALSO PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN CURBING CORRUPTION, A LONG-STANDING ISSUE IN GOVERNANCE. BY USING AI ALGORITHMS TO ANALYSE PATTERNS IN FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS AND DETECT ANOMALIES, THE GOVERNMENT CAN IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS INSTANCES OF MISMANAGEMENT OR FRAUD

terns in financial transactions and detect anomalies, the government can identify and address instances of mismanagement or fraud. Such measures save resources and build public trust in the governance. Empowering Citizens Through AI Successful implementation of AI empowers citizens. AI-driven e-governance platforms can simplify administrative processes, making it easier for people to access government services. For example, AI chatbots can assist citizens in filing complaints, applying for permits, or seeking information, significantly reducing bureaucratic delays.

AI can enhance public safety by enabling predictive policing and improving disaster management systems. By analysing data on crime patterns and natural disasters, AI can help authorities take preventive measures, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Punjab's residents.

Revolutionising Key Sectors - AI can be the cornerstone for transformation in Punjab's key sectors: **1. Health:** AI-powered diagnostic tools can revolutionise healthcare delivery in Punjab, especially in rural areas with limited access to quality healthcare. Tamil Nadu's use of AI to predict disease outbreaks and improve maternal healthcare outcomes offers a model worth emulating. Punjab's healthcare system could leverage AI for telemedicine, enabling remote consultations and reducing the burden on overworked medical professionals. Moreover, AI can assist in making cutting-edge treatments more accessible to patients.

2. Education: AI-driven platforms can personalise student learning experiences, addressing individual strengths and weaknesses. For instance, a country

like Estonia has integrated AI into its education system to offer tailored teaching, ensuring no student is left behind. Punjab can adopt similar systems to improve education levels and employable skill development. AI can also predict dropout rates and identify at-risk students, enabling timely interventions to keep them in education. Additionally, AI tools can train teachers, equipping them with modern methodologies to enhance classroom engagement.

3. Agriculture: Agriculture is Punjab's backbone, but the sector faces multifaceted challenges. AI can optimise irrigation, predict weather patterns, and offer crop-specific advice to farmers. Karnataka's use of AI to predict crop yields and help farmers secure better prices exemplifies how technology can empower agricultural communities. Punjab could take this further by implementing AI-powered precision farming techniques, which use data from drones and sensors to monitor soil health and pest activity, ensuring higher productivity with lower resource consumption.

4. Industry and Infrastructure: For enterprises, AI could bring regulatory clarity or, conversely, added scrutiny in areas such as data sharing, intellectual property and the ethical use of AI. It can streamline manufacturing processes, enhance supply chain efficiency, and improve project monitoring in infrastructure development. Gujarat's use of AI to attract investments and facilitate industrial growth shows how a state can harness technology to boost its economy. Punjab's industrial sector could use AI to identify global market trends and adapt its manufacturing capabilities accordingly. In infrastructure,

AI can ensure better planning and execution of projects, reducing delays and cost overruns.

5. Resource Mobilisation: AI tools can help Punjab's government enhance efficiency in tax collection, reduce revenue leakages, and improve financial planning. Andhra Pradesh's Real-Time Governance Society (RTGS) uses AI to monitor and optimise resource allocation, providing a blueprint for Punjab to follow. AI can also assist in identifying untapped revenue streams, enabling the government to fund developmental projects without increasing the financial burden on its citizens.

The Way Forward By embracing AI with a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach, Punjab can address its existing challenges and set itself on a path toward sustainable and inclusive growth. The magic of AI lies in its ability to amplify human potential and solve complex problems. Under the visionary leadership of Bhagwant Mann and with the proper policy framework, Punjab can harness this magic to transform its socio-economic landscape. Establishing a dedicated AI ministry, investing in infrastructure, and adopting AI across key sectors will make Punjab a leader in good governance and improve its people's quality of life. The time to act is now, and Punjab must rise to the challenge to set a precedent for other states to follow.

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

From vision to reality: How good governance is transforming education in India

Vajpayee's vision of a 'New India,' anchored in democratic principles and citizen-centric governance is giving a new look to the education

Ten years ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi set forth his vision of sushasan (good governance), calling it "the key to a nation's progress." He declared December 25, former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birth anniversary, as Good Governance Day. Vajpayee had envisioned a "New India" where the government would embody the principles of democracy and development, emphasising citizen-centric decision-making, transparency, and public participation. Put simply, good governance means that the day-to-day functioning of the government is effective, transparent, and accountable, which, in the modern age naturally includes e-governance and



TUHIN A SINHA

digital empowerment. In fact, in the context of a welfare government functioning in a vastly unequal society, good governance is fundamental for ensuring sustainable development, social justice, and the protection of human rights. In 2019, India also adopted a metric called the Good Governance Index (GGI) to track and compare governance among the states and

union territories across ten key sectors. The 11th Good Governance Day presents an apt moment to pause and reflect on the state of governance in one of the most critical sectors—education. Even though Human Resource Development, composed of indicators like "quality of education" and "elementary school retention rate," is one of the ten key sectors covered by the GGI, a close look at India's education governance reveals substantial room for improvement, particularly at the school level. Vajpayee's commitment to education was evident during his tenure as Prime Minister—he pioneered the landmark Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2002,

which emphasised universal school enrollment and went on to form the cornerstone of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009. Building decisively on this foundation, Prime Minister Modi's leadership has elevated education to new heights through bold reforms. The introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, along with the NIPUN Bharat Mission, has revolutionised the approach to foundational learning. This shift is being carefully monitored through multiple assessment initiatives - states have implemented third-party evaluations, while programs like CBSE's SAFAL, the National Achievement Survey, and Gujarat's groundbreaking Vidya



Samiksha Kendra (VSK) use cutting-edge technology to track progress systematically. These assessment systems have revealed both progress and persistent challenges in our education system. The data highlights critical areas that need attention, particularly in learning outcomes. Various learning sur-

veys show that over 5 crore elementary-grade students lack foundational literacy and numeracy skills. Learning gaps for these children only keep widening as they progress through grades with a weak foundation. It is then unsurprising that almost 33 per cent of Grade VIII students are unable to read simple sentences or do basic arithmetic.

Recognising these challenges, PM Modi's administration has taken a step through the State School Standards Authority (SSSA), recommended in the NEP 2020, which emerges as a pivotal reform to enhance India's school governance standards. The proposed SSSA would be an indepen-

dent quality regulator for all schools, both public and private. One of the key functions of the SA is to ensure public disclosure of school performance data for all schools through a digital portal. With all schools being held to clear and uniform quality standards and policymakers being informed by data-driven insights, educational resources will be used more efficiently. The SA can create a culture of transparency where parents are active participants in their children's education. With its emphasis on streamlining bureaucracy, focusing on outcomes rather than inputs, and integrating technology to reduce administrative burdens, not only

does it embody Prime Minister Modi's ideal of "minimum government, maximum governance". A pertinent example is the set of eight principles of good governance recommended by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)—participation, rule of law, transparency, accountability, equity, effectiveness, consensus, and responsiveness. As the nation observes Good Governance Day, the call to action is clear: states must embrace the SA to realise the shared vision of a "New India," where quality education is a right, not a privilege.

(The writer is National Spokesperson, BJP; views are personal)

UK upgrades law to crack down on 'vile' people smugglers

PTI ■ LONDON

The UK on Thursday unveiled tougher laws including travel restrictions and a ban on phone usage to clamp down on "vile" people smugglers behind organised immigration crime networks.



The Home Office said new interim orders will allow immediate action to disrupt and deter suspected serious criminality in a "major upgrade" to the country's Serious Crime Prevention Orders.

The changes form part of the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill, with new powers mirroring those which are already used to disrupt other harmful criminality such as knife crime, slavery and trafficking.

"Dangerous criminal people-smugglers are profiting from undermining our border security and putting lives at risk. They cannot be allowed to get away with it," said UK Home Secretary Yvette Cooper.

"Stronger international collaboration has already led to important arrests and action against dangerous gangs over the last few months. We will give law

enforcement stronger powers they need to pursue and stop more of these vile gang networks," she said.

Under the proposals, breaching an interim order could lead to up to five years in prison. Restrictions to be imposed under such orders will vary on a case-by-case basis and could include: travel restrictions on suspects; ban on laptop or mobile phone usage; ban on accessing social media networks, including via a third party; restrictions on whom someone can associate with; restrictions on devices and communications with certain individuals; and restrictions on their finances, helping to prevent criminal proceeds from going under the radar.

The Home Office said that

currently securing a Serious Crime Prevention Order imposed on suspects, including people smugglers, can be a complex and lengthy process, restricting the use of this powerful tool.

Interim orders are intended to go further, speeding up the process for placing restrictions on people under investigation to prevent, deter and disrupt serious and organised crime, including people smuggling.

The new interim orders will allow the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA), the police and other law enforcement agencies to apply directly to the High Court to impose immediate restrictions while a full order is considered.

The Home Office said: "This will strengthen the tools of law

enforcement to disrupt these individuals who are operating in the UK, in some cases allowing investigations and prosecutions to continue whilst preventing further serious criminality from taking place.

"The new orders will form an important part of preventing organised immigration crime while complementing the UK's relentless pursuit of criminal gangs."

It comes as the UK signed new agreements with Germany and Iraq to tackle people-smuggling gangs and enhanced cooperation with the Calais Group to clamp down on the problem of migrants illegally crossing the English Channel in dangerous small boats.

Home Office provisional data for the New Year showed that 36,816 people arrived in Britain by such small boats in 2024, a quarter more than in 2023 (29,437). People from Afghanistan accounted for the single largest group of arrivals in the first nine months of 2024 at 17 per cent, Iranians were the second-largest group (13 per cent), followed by Vietnamese and Syrians (12 per cent).

UNICEF calls for safety of migrant children

AP ■ ROME

The UN children's fund urged governments on Thursday to prioritise the safety of migrant children after the latest Mediterranean shipwreck left about 20 people missing and added to a gruesome annual tally.

Among the seven survivors of the New Year's Eve wreck off the Sicilian island of Lampedusa was an 8-year-old girl whose mother is among the missing, UNICEF said. The agency noted that last month, an 11-year-old girl found floating off Lampedusa was believed to be the lone survivor of a migrant boat that had left Sfax, Tunisia, with about 45 people on board.

According to the International Organisation of Migration's missing migrant tracker, 2,275 people were unaccounted for in the Mediterranean in 2024, bringing the total number of people missing since 2014 to 31,180. The vast majority — 24,466 — were believed to have died on the perilous central Mediterranean route, which is most often used by smugglers from Libya and Tunisia to ferry desperate people toward Italy.

Imran' party, Pak govt to hold third round of talks next week

Bid to end prevailing political tension, instability in country

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The second round of talks between the government and jailed former premier Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf party representatives concluded on Thursday with the commitment to meet again next week in a bid to end the prevailing political tension and instability in the country.

National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq facilitated the talks held in the parliament house. Later, he told the media that the two sides participated in good spirits and with the commitment to continue the process. "The two sides have agreed to meet again next week," he said, adding that talks were held in a cordial atmosphere.

Senator Irfan Siddiqui, who is part of the government team, read out the joint communique issued after the talk, stating that Omer Ayub Khan from the PTI demanded that all political prisoners should be released and a probe commission should be formed to investigate the events of May 9, 2023, and Nov 26, 2024. He said that the PTI commit-

tee also demanded that they should be facilitated to meet Imran Khan, who has been held in the Adiala Jail Rawalpindi, to get his direction for talks.

Siddiqui said that the government agreed to facilitate the meeting after which the next round of talks would be held. He also said that Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, who led the government side, said that the PTI was expected to present its charter of demands but it sought time. Dar also said that his side has no objection if the PTI will present its demands in writing during the next meeting.

The first meeting between committees representing the government and the PTI took place on Dec 23, kicking off long-anticipated talks between the rival parties to end the political tension.

Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, Omar Ayub Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, PTI lawmaker Asad Qaiser, Sunni Ittehad Council chief Hamid Raza, Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen chief Senator Raja

Nasir Abbas Jafri and PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja attended the meeting from the opposition.

From the government side, ruling PML-N Senator Irfan Siddiqui, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leaders Raja Pervaiz Ashraf and Naveed Qamar, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaullah and others attended.

Speaking to reporters before the meeting, Omar Ayub Khan said that the PTI wanted its jailed leaders released. "Our agenda for the negotiations is clear. The release of under-trial political prisoners and the formation of a judicial commission to probe the events of May 9, 2023 and Nov 26," he said.

The talks come after an acrimonious political tussle between the PTI and the government due to differences over the outcome of the general elections held on Feb 8 last year. PTI also accuses the government of implicating its leaders in fake cases, an allegation rejected by the government.

Gunman who killed at least 12 people in shooting rampage in Montenegro dies by suicide

AP ■ PODGORICA (MONTENEGRO)

A gunman who fatally shot at least 12 people, including two children, in Montenegro has killed himself while surrounded by police, officials said Thursday.

At least four others were wounded in the shooting rampage in the western town of Cetinje on Wednesday that followed a bar brawl, officials said.

The shooter, identified as 45-year-old Aco Martinovic, killed the owner of the bar, the bar owner's children and his own family members, Interior Minister Danilo Saranovic said. The attacker, who fled after the rampage, was later located and surrounded by police. He died

after shooting himself in the head, Saranovic said. Police had dispatched a special unit to search for the attacker in the town, which is located about 30 kilometres northwest of the capital, Podgorica. All the roads in and out of the city have been blocked as police swarmed the streets.

Saranovic said that Martinovic had died while being taken to a hospital in the capital and succumbed from the "severity of his injuries."

The government has declared three days of national mourning starting on Thursday, with Prime Minister Milojko Spajic describing the shooting as a "terrible tragedy."

"The level of rage and brutality shows that sometimes such people ... are even more dan-

gerous than members of organised criminal gangs," Saranovic said.

Martinovic was at the bar throughout the day with other guests when the brawl erupted, Police Commissioner Lazar Scepvanovic said. He said that Martinovic then went home, brought back a weapon and opened fire at around 5:30 pm.

"He killed four people" at the bar before heading out, and then continued shooting at three more locations, Scepvanovic said.

He said that the suspect received a suspended sentence in 2005 for violent behaviour and had appealed his latest conviction for illegal weapons possession. Montenegrin media have reported that he was

known for erratic and violent behaviour.

The small country of Montenegro, which has a population of around 620,000 people, is known for its gun culture and many people traditionally have weapons.

Wednesday's shooting was the second shooting rampage over the past three years in Cetinje, Montenegro's historic capital. An attacker killed 10 people, including two children, in August 2022 before he was shot and killed by a passerby in Cetinje.

President Jakov Milatovic said that he was "shocked and stunned" by the tragedy. "Instead of holiday joy ... we have been gripped by sadness over the loss of innocent lives," Milatovic said in a post on X.

Hundreds of different dinosaur footprints discovered in UK's Oxfordshire

PTI ■ LONDON

Researchers from the Universities of Oxford and Birmingham have uncovered a huge expanse of quarry floor filled with hundreds of different dinosaur footprints. In a stunning find, the teams uncovered multiple enormous trackways dating back to the Middle Jurassic Period (around 166 million years ago).

The trackways form part of a huge 'dinosaur highway' and include footprints from the nine-metre ferocious predator Megalosaurus, and herbivorous dinosaurs up to twice that size.

The excavation will be broadcast on BBC Two's Digging for Britain on January 8 and featured in a new public exhibition Breaking Ground at Oxford University Museum of Natural History (OUMNH).

These footprints offer an extraordinary window into the lives of dinosaurs, revealing details about their movements, interactions, and the tropical environment they inhabited.

The dig, carried out at Dewars Farm Quarry in Oxfordshire, uncovered five extensive trackways with evidence of more in the surrounding area. The longest continuous trackway measured more than 150 metres in length.

Four of the trackways were made by gigantic, long-necked, herbivorous dinosaurs called sauropods, most likely to be Cetiosaurus, an up to 18-metre-long cousin of the well-known Diplodocus.

The fifth trackway was made by the carnivorous theropod dinosaur, Megalosaurus which had distinctive, large, three-toed feet with claws.

One area of the site shows the carnivore and herbivore tracks crossing over, raising questions about whether and how the two were interacting.

Megalosaurus was the first dinosaur worldwide to be scientifically named and described in 1824, and kick-started the last 200 years of dinosaur science.

Dr Emma Nicholls, Vertebrate Palaeontologist at OUMNH, explained: "Scientists have known about and been studying Megalosaurus for longer than any other dinosaur on Earth, and yet these recent discoveries prove there is still new evidence of these animals out there, waiting to be found." The footprints were buried under mud but came to light when quarry worker Gary Johnson felt 'unusual bumps' as he was stripping the clay back with his vehicle, in order to expose the quarry floor. At this point, the experts were called in. Working closely with Dewars Farm and Duns Tew Quarry Manager Mark Stanway, and his staff, the Universities of Oxford and Birmingham co-led a team of more than 100 people on a week-long excavation in June 2024.

Pak govt reduces pension benefits of retired civil, armed forces personnel

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan government has drastically reduced pension benefits of retired civil and armed forces personnel to reduce a growing pension bill which has already swelled over Rs 1 trillion, according to a media report.

The Ministry of Finance on Wednesday issued three separate notifications to discontinue multiple pensions, reducing both the first home take pension and also lowering the base for determining future increases in pensions, The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

After debt servicing, defence and development, the pension is the fourth largest expenditure in the budget, the paper said.

According to the Ministry of Finance's notification, on the recommendations of the Pay and Pension Commission of 2020, "it has been decided that henceforth, in an event where a person becomes entitled to more than one pension, such person shall only be authorised to opt to draw one of the pensions".

Instead of taking a pension on the basis of the last drawn salary, the new pensioner will get a pension based on the average salary of the last two years.

The finance ministry stated that all the existing instructions on multiple pensions should stand amended with immediate effect.

The changes will not be applicable to people who have already retired, except in cases where multiple pensions are paid.

It also ended the annual compounding of the pension and any increase would be treated separately from the base pension, a concept that is similar to the ad-hoc salary increase that is not made part of the basic salary to avoid compounding.

The changes will take effect from January 1 and will be applicable to both retired civil and military personnel. Many serving federal government employees, who are taking salary and pension, would also be affected by the changes.

The finance ministry's notifications stated that the changes in the pension rules have been made on the basis of recommendations given by a commission constituted by the government of former prime minister Imran Khan in 2020.

For the current fiscal year, the government has allocated Rs 1.014 trillion in the budget for paying pensions and its lion's share, as 66 per cent or Rs662 billion has been allocated for military pensions. There is an increase of 24 per cent in the pension bill compared to the last year, which is funded from the budget and is not sustainable.

After these changes, it is expected that in the next decade, the pension bill will significantly reduce and will become manageable.

Apart from the new changes made in the pension system, the government already abolished the traditional pension scheme for the civilian employees hired from July 1, 2024. The scheme will also be applicable to employees of defence forces from July 1, 2025.

Instead, the new employees have been provided with a system of contributory pension based on the contribution made by them through salary.

Rescuers find gruesome scene at Honolulu home after fireworks blast kills 3, injures 20

AP ■ HONOLULU

Emergency crews arrived to a chaotic and gruesome scene in a Honolulu neighbourhood after a large New Year's firework tipped over after being lit and ignited a fiery, shrapnel-studded blast that killed three people and injured more than 20 others, several of them critically.

Two women died at the scene and a third woman died at a hospital, authorities said Wednesday as they implored people to abandon their New Year's tradition of setting off fireworks across the city.

Officials promised tougher penalties for illegal fireworks. Hawaii Gov Josh Green graphically described the deaths in a news conference Wednesday to emphasize the potential danger of fireworks. "We're talking about the worst possible, war-zone injuries that took their lives."

Some of the more than 20 people taken to hospitals with

severe burns and shrapnel wounds included children, said officials who had not yet publicly identified any victims including those killed.

Police were investigating whether charges for the person who lit the firework near midnight were warranted, Honolulu Police Chief Arthur Logan said.

The blast happened at a three-story home with a bottom-level carport. Piles of debris including bundles of blackened firework mortars could be seen in front of the house in Wednesday's daylight.

The explosion broke windows across the street. It happened within a lit bundle of aerial, mortar-style fireworks called a "cake" tipped over or fell off a table and fired sideways into crates containing additional fireworks, which then exploded.

The cake's rounds could be separated but had been lit as a bundle of 50, part of what officials said was tens of thousands

of dollars' worth of fireworks at the home.

Ambulance crews arrived but had to triage — separate and treat victims with the worst injuries first — several houses away because of parked cars and crowds on the streets, Honolulu Emergency Services Department Director Dr. Jim Ireland said.

Some people nearby continued setting off fireworks even as blast victims were being taken to hospitals, officials said.

The neighbourhood is near Honolulu's international airport and a joint US Air Force and Navy base and a little more than 2 miles (3.22 kilometers) east of the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial, which honours sailors who died in the attack on Pearl Harbor that drew the US into World War II. "I've been in EMS over 30 years and this is probably one of the worst calls I've ever been on as far as the immense tragedy and amount of patients and severity of the injuries," Ireland said

in an earlier news conference. A fourth person was killed in a different fireworks explosion elsewhere on Oahu, officials said. At least four other serious injuries occurred in unrelated fireworks accidents overnight.

Social media posts overnight showed fireworks being set off across wide areas of Honolulu even though sparklers, fountains and aerial fireworks are illegal and a permit is required to set off firecrackers, according to the Honolulu Fire Department.

"We're angry, frustrated and deeply saddened at this unnecessary loss of life and suffering. It's a tragic way to start the new year," Mayor Rick Blangiardi said. "No one should have to endure such pain due to a reckless and illegal activity."

Green said he was looking into whether new penalties including a felony charge for possessing large fireworks are needed to curtail fireworks in Hawaii.

Israeli strikes kill at least 18 in Gaza

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli airstrikes killed at least 18 people in the Gaza Strip on Thursday, including three children and two high-ranking officers in the Hamas-run police force, according to Palestinian and hospital officials.

One strike early Thursday hit a tent in an Israeli-declared humanitarian zone known as Muwasi, where hundreds of thousands of displaced people are sheltering in tents during the cold and rainy winter.

Another strike killed at least eight Palestinians in the central Gaza Strip. The dead were members of local committees that help secure aid convoys, according to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, which received the bodies. An Associated Press

reporter at the hospital confirmed the toll.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on the strikes.

The war was sparked by Hamas-led militants' October 7, 2023 attack into Israel. They killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250 that day. Around 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, at least a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Israel's offensive has killed over 45,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to local health officials, who say women and children make up more than half the fatalities. The officials do not distinguish between civilians and combatants in their tally.

Israel says it targeted Hamas official in a strike that killed 9

others: The Israeli military says it targeted a senior member of Hamas' internal security apparatus in a strike in the Gaza Strip that Palestinian officials say killed nine other people, including three children.

The strike early Thursday hit a tent in an Israeli-declared humanitarian zone known as Muwasi, where hundreds of thousands of displaced people are sheltering in tents during the cold and rainy winter.

The military said Hossam Shahwan, a senior officer in the Hamas-run police force in Gaza, was involved in gathering intelligence used by Hamas' armed wing in attacks on Israeli forces.

Maj Gen Mahmoud Salah, another senior police official, was also killed in the strike.

The military says Hamas militants hide among civilians and blames the group for their deaths in the nearly 15-month war, which was ignited by Hamas' October 7, 2023 attack into Israel.

The Hamas-run government had a police force numbering in the tens of thousands that maintained a high degree of public security before the war while also violently suppressing dissent.

The police have largely vanished from the streets in many areas after being targeted by Israel, contributing to the breakdown of law and order that has hindered the delivery of desperately needed humanitarian aid.

Syrian security forces search for militants who refuse to turn in their weapons: The forces together with armed vehicles were

deployed in the city of Homs Thursday to look for the militants affiliated with ousted President Bashar Assad, state media reported.

SANA, citing a military official, said that the new de facto authorities led by the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham had set up centres in Syria's third-largest city for former soldiers and militants to hand over their weapons, similar to other parts of Syria.

In early December, a lightning insurgency took out the decades-long rule of Assad in less than two weeks. HTS has since run much of war-torn Syria under the authority of its leader Ahmad al-Sharaa. Officials who were part of Assad's notorious web of intelligence and security apparatus have been arrested over the past few weeks.

Impeached South Korean president issues defiant message as he faces possible detention

AP ■ SEOUL
Impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, in a message to conservative supporters rallying outside his Seoul residence, vowed to "fight to the end" against "anti-state forces," while his legal team warned Thursday that police officers attempting to detain him could face arrest by his presidential security service or even civilians.

Office must detain him immediately, and the presidential security service must cooperate with the lawful execution of the detention warrant," said Park Chan-dae, the Democrats' floor leader.
"Yoon should be aware that obstructing the execution of the detention warrant could result in punishment for interference with official duties and complicity in rebellion," he said.

Yoon's presidential powers were suspended following a National Assembly vote to impeach him on December 14 over his imposition of martial law, which lasted only hours but has triggered weeks of political turmoil, halted high-level diplomacy and rattled financial markets.
Yoon's fate now lies with the Constitutional Court, which has begun deliberations on whether to uphold the impeachment and formally remove Yoon from office or reinstate him.

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Pakistan military accepts mercy petitions of 19 convicts involved in May 9 violence

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD
Pakistan military on Thursday said that it has accepted the mercy petitions of 19 convicts involved in attacks on the army facilities on May 9, 2023. On May 9, 2023, former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party supporters allegedly attacked several military installations, including the army headquarters in Rawalpindi and the ISI building in Faisalabad, to vent their anger against the arrest of their party founder in a corruption case.

in the countryside swoop. Cases of more than 100 civilians were sent to the military court for trial because they were involved in the attack on military installations.
In December, military courts sentenced 85 civilians to prison terms ranging from two to ten years for their roles in the violence.
According to a statement issued by the army on Thursday, the sequel to the promulgation of punishments to the May 9 tragedy convicts, they have exercised their right to appeal and have asked for mercy and remis-

sion in their punishments. It said that 67 convicts had given their mercy petitions, adding that "48 petitions have been processed to Courts of Appeal, while petitions of 19 convicts have been accepted purely on humanitarian grounds in accordance with law".
It further stated that the mercy petitions of the remaining convicts will be decided in due course of time, following the legal process.
"The remission of punishments is a testament to the strength of the due process and fairness, which ensures that justice is served while also taking into

account the principles of compassion and mercy," it said.
The army said that all those whose mercy appeals had been accepted would be released after the completion of procedural formalities.
It also said that all those convicted retain the right of appeal and other legal remedies as per the law and the constitution.
It is the second batch of those involved in the attacks being released. Earlier in April 2024, the release of 20 convicts was also carried out on humanitarian grounds in accordance with the law.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Known to all that my client, S.H. SHYAM MOHAN SHARMA & 2. SH. RAM MOHAN SHARMA owner of the GROUND FLOOR AND FIRST FLOOR WITHOUT ROOF, PROPERTY NO. WZ-242 (OLD NO.-AR/33), AREA BOTH FLOOR 48.33SQ. YDS., KHASRA NO. 214/2, LAJWANTI GARDEN, VILLAGE NANGAL RAVIA, NEW DELHI, and Sh. Shyam Mohan Sharma & Sh. Ram Mohan Sharma have Not Original Sale Deed in favour of Smt. Kanta Devi registered as doc. no. 15917, dated 29.11.2005 in SR-IX Delhi. And it is informed that any deal with said documents by any person except my said client and said institution regarding said property, shall be deemed as null and void. If any person having any claim, person having any right, person having any claim and handover the same and apprise his claim to undersigned within 8 days of this publication.

PUBLIC NOTICE
My client Smt. Sangeta Nagar W/o Sh. Chanchal Nagar owner of Residential Plot area 961.30 sq. yds. i.e. 803.74 sq. meters, out of total area measuring 1607.53 sq. meters, out of Kharsa no. 207/11m, situated at Village East Para, Pargana & Tehsil Dadr, District Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. through registered gift deed dated 01.01.2025 executed by Smt. Baleswar W/o Late Sh. Mahavir Singh and Sh. Chanchal Nagar S/o Late Sh. Mahavir Singh, Vide Reg. no. 72 at SR-10/DR GREATER NOIDA U.P. the above-mentioned property is going to be mortgaged with Federal Financial Services Limited. If any person/bank/financial institution having any claim/right, lien, any objection whatsoever in regard to the above property, should notified to the undersigned/Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karkarduma Court, Delhi-110092, within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived. Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karkarduma Court, Delhi-110092, Mob. 9811215181

Public Notice
This is to inform general public that Mr. Raj Vikash Verma, Mr. Ankur Verma and Mr. Abhinav Verma are the joint owners of Entire First Floor, alongwith 32% undivided, indivisible and separate ownership rights in the plot of land measuring 300 Sq. Yds., Property bearing No. S-64, situated at Greater Kailash Part-I, New Delhi 110048 by way of Reacquisition Deed dated 24.09.2024 Doc. No. 2024/7198/933. Documents related to the above said property had been misplaced i.e. Original Reacquisition Deed dated 24.09.2024, Doc. No. 2024/7198/933, and the original title deed of the property, New Delhi. Anyone who find the said documents shall handover the same to the Mr. Raj Vikash Verma S/o. Mr. Uma Nath Verma R/o. First Floor, Plot No. S-64, Greater Kailash Part-I, New Delhi-110048. Contact: +91-9811300142 or +91-9810455750.

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER
No.e-597081/40
The Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam, invites bids from registered appropriate class of contractor for 15 groups of building works in different PM-Shri schools as per the detailed notice inviting tender which can be downloaded from the website https://www.assamtenders.gov.in
The last date of submission of tender is 20-01-2025 upto 2.00 PM.

LEGAL NOTICE
Gh. No. 769, Dwarka Court Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-75 Mobile : 98990413918

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NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
SMM/EMU/GZB acting for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Tender against Tender No. 46243551-28-12-2024 The details are as under:
1 Name of work: Micro Controller Based electronic speed Indicating Recording System for trower wagon as per RDSO specification: MP.0.3700-07 Rev.07.Aug.2017
2 Approx. cost of work: 63.72,000/-
3 Quantity: 30 set
4 Last Date & Time of Submission of tender bid of tender: 28.01.2025 (11:00 Hrs.)
5 Date & Time of opening of tender document: 28.01.2025 (11:00 Hrs.)
6 Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen: www.ireps.gov.in

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The last date of submission of tender is 20-01-2025 upto 2.00 PM.

India to fund rehab of Sri Lanka's north boatyard

PTI ■ COLOMBO
India will provide Sri Lanka Rupees 290 million to develop the Karainagar Boatyard in the Northern Province of the island nation, the Indian High Commission said here on Thursday.
The project envisages rehabilitation of Karainagar Boatyard of the Cey-Nor Foundation Ltd, incorporated under the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and operating under the Ministry of Fisheries, Aquatic and Ocean Resources.
"An MoU was signed and exchanged by High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka Santosh Jha and the then High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to India Kshenuka Dhireni Senewiratne on December 16," the High Commission said in a release.
The project will cover civil works and procurement, including installation of plant, machinery, equipment, material, services etc. Once fully operational, the rehabilitated boatyard will augment livelihood opportunities of local fishermen, create more job opportunities in the area, including through small establishments around the boatyard, and help enhance the supply of quality fisheries products, the release said.

Kankensantharai Port; and construction and repairs at numerous schools and hospitals across Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Vavuniya.
"These projects also include restoration of Thiruketeswaram Temple, and distribution of significant quantities of assistance to the agricultural community, as well as the fishing community including boats, nets, outboard motors, freezers," the release added.

Office of the Managing Director
Uttarakhand Co-Operative Dairy Federation Ltd.
Mangal Parao, Haldwani - 263139 (Nainital) Uttarakhand
E-Tender Notice No.: 25(1-10)/UCDF/2024-25, Date-01.01.2025
Following E-tenders are invited by the undersigned, from experienced, reputed and financially sound Manufacturers/Firms/Authorized Dealers for the following works so as to reach this office on or before 15.01.2025 up to 5.00 PM, which will be opened on 16.01.2025 at 11.00 AM.

SUPERIOR FILELEASE LIMITED
CIN: L74899DL1994PLC061995
Regd. Off: NS-92, Kharsa No-33/21, Ranaji Enclave, Najafgarh, Near Arjun Park Bus Stand, New Delhi-110043; Email: superiorfilelease@gmail.com; Website: http://www.superiorfilelease.com; Phone No: +91-9953798335

NOTICE
PUBLIC NOTICE FOR ATTENTION OF EQUITY SHAREHOLDERS OF THE COMPANY IN RESPECT OF INFORMATION REGARDING EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING TO BE HELD ON MONDAY, 27TH JANUARY, 2025 THROUGH VIDEO CONFERENCING ("VC") OTHER AUDIO-VISUAL MEANS ("OAVM")

- 1. Shareholders may note that the Extraordinary General Meeting ("EGM") of the Company will be held through Video conferencing (VC) other Audio-Visual means ("OAVM") on Monday, 27th January 2025 at 03:00 PM IST in compliance with General Circular numbers 20/2020, 14/2020, 17/2020, 09/2024 and all other applicable laws and circular issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and Securities and Exchange Board of India ("SEBI"), to transact the Business that will be set forth in the Notice of the Meeting.
2. In compliance with the above circulars, electronic copies of the Notice of the EGM will be sent to all the shareholders whose email addresses are registered with the Company/Depository Participant(s). The notice of the EGM will also be made available on the Company's website at http://www.superiorfilelease.com, BSE Website https://www.bseindia.com/ and Metropolitan Stock Exchange of India Limited website https://www.msx.in/.
3. Manner of registering email addresses:
1. In case shares are held in physical mode, please send a request to Registrar and Transfer Agents of the Company i.e. Skyline Financial Services Private Limited ("RTA") at info@skylinetra.com providing folio No., Name of shareholder, scanned copy of the share certificate (front and back), PAN (self-attested scanned copy of PAN card), Aadhar (self-attested scanned copy of Aadhar Card) for registering e-mail address.
2. In case shares are held in dematerialized mode, please contact your Depository Participant (DP) and register your email address and bank account details in your Demat account, as per the process advised by your DP.
4. Manner of casting vote through e-voting:
Shareholders will have an opportunity to cast their vote remotely on the business as set forth in the Notice of the EGM through electronic voting system. The manner of voting remotely for shareholders holding shares in dematerialized mode, physical mode and for shareholders who have not registered their email addresses will be provided in the notice to the shareholders which will also be made available on the website of the Company.
5. The Notice of the EGM will be sent to the shareholders in accordance with the applicable laws on their registered email address in due course.

For Superior Filelease Limited
Sd/-
Rajneesh Kumar
(Director)
DIN: 02463693
Date: 02.01.2025
Place: New Delhi

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform the public at large that Mr. Anil Kumar Mishra who is purchasing the Property No. 4/87, area measuring 35 Sq. Yards out of 85 Sq. Yards, out of Kharsa No. 786, situated at Village Ghonda Gujan Khadar, in the abadi of Gali No. 2, Karta Nagar, Ilaga Shahdara, Delhi-110053, from Mrs. Babita W/o Mr. Vikas Kansal who became owners vice Regd. Family GPA dated 08.02.2024. Agreement to Gift dated 08.02.2024 & Will Deed dated 08.02.2024 executed by Mr. Vikas Kansal S/o Mr. Ashok Kansal and same to be financed & mortgaged by Aditya Birla Housing Finance Ltd. If any person having any type of claim/right/lien/interest over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections within 15 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of encumbrances, lien etc.
Lucem Legal LLP
B-93B, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank
Sector 2, Noida, U.P.-201301/Contact No: 20-4269373

PUBLIC NOTICE
Loss of Allotment Letter (original) issued by ATS Dated 27.05.1985 & General Power of Attorney, ATS Dated 10.06.1998 in Respect of the Said Property, TA-278/5 Near Gurudwara, Tughlakabad Extn, New Delhi-110019 Founder May Inform Pintoo Gupta on above address within 7 days.

MADHYA PRADESH POWER GENERATING COMPANY LIMITED
Office of The Addl. C.E. (P&W), Shree Singaji Thermal Power Project, Dongalia, Distt. Khandwa (M.P.), E-mail ID : sepnw.ststp1@gmail.com, Ph. : 9407033993
Date : 31.12.2024

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER (Website : mppgcl.mp.gov.in)
Tender Particulars / Tender Number Estimated Cost (Rs.) (including GST) Tender Cost & EMD in Rs. Last Date and Time for Closing of Online Submission
Unit of overhauling for Boiler Pressure Part of Unit#2 at 2x600 MW, SSTPP, MPPGCL, Dongalia. (Tender No.- T-2024 MPPGC 382192) 322.25 Lakhs 5000/- & 3,22,250/- 16.01.2025
Biennial Work Contract for Routine and Preventive/Breakdown maintenance of Boiler Non-Pressure Part of Unit 1 & 2 of 2x600MW, SSTPP, MPPGCL, Dongalia. (Tender No.- T-2024 MPPGC 382369) 450.00 Lakhs 5000/- & 4,50,000/- up to 15:30

MANIBHAVNAM HOME FINANCE INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED
"APPENDIX-IV-A" [See proviso to rule 8(6)] Sale notice for sale of Immovable Properties
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Name of Borrower, Co-Borrower/ Guarantor(s) with address/es Description & Owner(s) of Properties Reserve Price (RP) & EMD Amount 10% of the Reserve Price and Incremental Amount Recovery Amount as per Demand Notice Date & Time of On-Site Inspection of Property Date & Time of E-Auction
1. ADESH S/O GYANCHAND, 2. ARTI W/O ADESH, 3. ALL THAT PIECES AND PARCEL FREEHOLD RESIDENTIAL PLOT NO. SUMANTRA W/O GYAN CHAND, 4. ANIL S/O PYARELAL, ALL 87/1 AREA MEASURING 50 SQ. YDS. OUT OF KHASRA NO. 2503/1 R/O - HOUSE NO.76, NEW VIKAS NAGAR, NEAR SANTOSH INTERSTRATED AT ADESH NAGAR IN BLOCK-E VILLAGE LONI PRACHA (COLLEGE, LONI DEHAT, GHAZIABAD, UTTAR PRADESH-201102, SR NO. [LONI TEHSIL & DISTT. GHAZIABAD U.P. BOUNDARIES EAST-PILOT NO. 3] ALSO AT: AKPUR RIYANA, BULANDSHAHR, UTTAR PRADESH-204511] 80 WEST-ROAD 18 FT. NORTH-PILOT NO. 82 SOUTH PLOT NO. 83/2/- 4,00,000/- & 40,000/- 70,000/- Rs.5,41,801.26/- as on 03-02-2025 to 04-02-2025 From 10.00 AM to 5.00 PM 05.02.2025 10 Am to 12 Pm (with unlimited extensions of 5 Minutes each)

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Poonam W/o Mahender Kumar R/o K - 5A, Saket New Delhi-110017, I have changed my name Poonam to Poonam Rani for all purpose in future. PD(1186)A
I, Rajput Basaheb Narayan, W/o- No.8036187A Hav Girase Ajayshing Bharatsing, R/o- Vill- Kampur, PO-Vikharan, Teh-Shindkheda, Distt- Dhule, Maharashtra- 425408, have changed my name from Rajput Basaheb Narayan to Girase Basaheb Ajayshing, vide affidavit dated 02/01/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1187)C

LOST & FOUND

I, Kulbhushan Chaudhary, S/O Hakikat Rai , A-35 Pushpanjali Enclave Pitampura Delhi-110034 Have Lost My Original Allotment Letter, Possession Letter, Site Possession. Property Address: A-41, Gt Karnal Road Industrial Area Delhi-33. Finder Contact: 9810035387. Pd(1188)A

THANKSGIVING

Thankyou St jude for all blessings Saunam
Thankyou Jesus for all blessings Saunam
Thankyou Jesus for all blessings Saunam
Thankyou Jesus for all blessings Saunam
Thankyou Jesus for all blessings Saunam
Thankyou Mother Mary for all blessings Saunam
PD(1185)C

With a development cooperation portfolio with Sri Lanka of over USD 5 billion, India has people-centric development assistance initiatives in virtually all major sectors in Sri Lanka, the High Commission said.

10 hurt in shooting incident outside New York's Queens

New York (PTI): A group of men fired at least 30 gunshots into a crowd gathered outside a nightclub in New York's Queens on New Year's Day, injuring 10 people, police said.
The shooting happened on the same day a terror attack was carried out in New Orleans that killed 15 people. Police officers received multiple 911 calls around 11:18 pm on Wednesday for "several people" shot outside the "Amazura" nightclub in Jamaica, Queens. Police said three to four males were walking toward the venue and opened fire over 30 times in the direction of a group standing in line outside the event, striking multiple vehicles.

LEGAL NOTICE
Gh. No. 769, Dwarka Court Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-75 Mobile : 98990413918

LEGAL NOTICE
Gh. No. 769, Dwarka Court Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-75 Mobile : 98990413918

Re-Residence: House Bearing No. Niti Khand-11/1166, H.C. District, area measuring 40.05 sq. mts., situated in the residential colony named Indrapuram, Ghaziabad, Tehsil & District Ghaziabad, U.P. (hereinafter referred to as the "Property"). Notice is hereby given to the general public including Banks, Financial Institutions, etc. that, as informed by our client, Mr. Ashgar Ali, he is the sole and absolute owner of the said property vide Sale Deed executed by Mrs. Smt. Rani and Mr. Hemant Kumar in his favour. The said deed is registered as Document No. 9147, in Add. Book No. 1, Volume No. 31652, Pages 295-348, on 20.06.2019 (SR-IX, New Delhi). In this connection, our client has further informed us that the following original documents namely: (1) Sale deed dated 06/09/2005 executed by GDA, New Delhi, in favour of Mrs. Manjy (2) Sale deed dated 13/09/2007 executed by Krishna Mangal in favour of Mr. Om Prakash; (3) Sale Deed dated 05/03/2010 executed by Mr. Om Prakashin favour of Smt. Rani and Mr. Hemant Kumar; and (4) possession letter, in respect of the said property, have been lost, misplaced and not traceable. These documents form part of the chain of custody and henceforth called the "said documents". An FIR regarding loss of these said documents has been lodged with Uttar Pradesh Police, District of Ghaziabad, New Delhi, dated 01.01.2025. Now our client intends to mortgage the said property with Aditya Birla Finance Ltd for availing loan facility. If the aforesaid original said documents or any of them are/is found or have/have been found by any person, he/she may be returned and delivered to the undersigned at the address mentioned herein below. Further, if any person, body, institution is having any claim and/or objection in respect of the said property, he/she may inform his/her/ their objection/s, in writing, with documentary evidence, by Registered AD Post, to the undersigned at the address mentioned herein below, within 07 days of publication of this notice. Otherwise, after expiry of 07 days from the date of publication of this notice, no objection shall be acceptable and the said property shall be mortgaged by our client to Aditya Birla Finance Ltd and no objection shall be acceptable against such mortgage. General Public may also take note that any deal or transaction done by anybody on the basis of the said documents or any of them shall be illegal and not binding on our client. The person doing so shall be liable to be prosecuted under the law. SHIVKANT ARORA, ADVOCATE FOR M/S UGRO CAPITAL LIMITED, A-74, LOWER GROUND FLOOR, DEFENCE COLONY, NEW DELHI-110024.

For and on behalf of M/s MA Creations Through Its Partners Mr. Manish Sharma & Mr. Advesh Kumar Sumit Tyagi (Advocate) Address: Chamaro No. 756, Gali No. 22, Block-A, Situated at District Court Sarajpur, Greater Noida Distt Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. Contact: 9717141700

UGRO U GRO Capital Limited
4th Floor, Tower 3, Equinox Business Park, LBS Road, Kuria, Mumbai 400070
SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMEDIATE PROPERTIES
E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE OF 30 DAYS FOR SALE OF IMMEDIATE ASSET(S) ["SECURED ASSET(S)"] UNDER THE SECURITIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 READ WITH PROVISIO TO RULE 8 AND 9 OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002.
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Secured Asset(s) mortgaged / charged to U GRO Capital Limited ("Secured Creditor"), the possession of which has been taken by the authorised officer of Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is what is" and "As is where is" and "Whatever there is" on the date and time mentioned herein below, for recovery of the dues mentioned herein below and further interest and other expenses thereon till the date of realization of amount, due to Secured Creditor from the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) mentioned herein below. The Reserve Price, Earned Money Deposit (EMD) and last date of EMD deposit is also mentioned herein below:
Details of Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) Details of Demand Notice Details of Auction
1. Dawesco LLP Date of Notice : 10-06-2024 Reserve Price : ₹ 1,00,37,115/- EMD : ₹ 10,03,712/-
2. Neil Dawes Bhutani Outstanding Amount: Last date of EMD Deposit : 20-01-2025
3. Raemon Dawes Bhutani, A. Arun Bhutani Loan Account Number : Rs. 85,66,772/- Date of Auction : 22-01-2025 UGDELTH000011248 as on 05-06-2024 Time of Auction : 11 AM to 01 PM Incremental Value : Rs. 1,00,000/-
Description of Secured Asset(s): "All that part and parcel of the immovable property bearing Property No. 129, area measuring 35 square yards, out of Kharsa No. 303, consisting of Ground Floor, First Floor, Half Third Floor, situated in Abadi of Lal Dora of Village Saiduajabad, Tehsil Saket (M.B. Road), New Delhi. Butted and bounded on the East by house of Mr. Ram Kumar, on the West by House of Mr. Raj Kumar, on the North by main M.B. Road, on the South by House of Others."

UGRO U GRO Capital Limited
4th Floor, Tower 3, Equinox Business Park, LBS Road, Kuria, Mumbai 400070
SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMEDIATE PROPERTIES
E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE OF 15 DAYS FOR SALE OF IMMEDIATE ASSET(S) ["SECURED ASSET(S)"] UNDER THE SECURITIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 READ WITH PROVISIO TO RULE 8 AND 9 OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002.
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Secured Asset(s) mortgaged / charged to U GRO Capital Limited ("Secured Creditor"), the possession of which has been taken by the authorised officer of Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is what is" and "As is where is" and "Whatever there is" on the date and time mentioned herein below, for recovery of the dues mentioned herein below and further interest and other expenses thereon till the date of realization of amount, due to Secured Creditor from the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) mentioned herein below. The Reserve Price, Earned Money Deposit (EMD) and last date of EMD deposit is also mentioned herein below:
Details of Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) Details of Demand Notice Details of Auction
1. VJ SEEMA ENTERPRISES Date of Notice : 25-09-2023 Reserve Price : Rs. 40,73,490/- EMD : Rs. 407349/-
2. MR. YOGESH KUMAR S/O GAJRAJ SINGH Outstanding Amount: Last date of EMD Deposit : 20-Jan-25
3. MRS. SEEMA DEVI W/O YOGESH KUMAR Loan Account Number : Rs. 2811614/- Date of Auction : 22-Jan-25 UGDELSC0000110787 as on 07-09-2023 Time of Auction : 11 AM to 01 PM Incremental Value : Rs. 1,00,000/-
Description of Secured Asset(s): "All that Piece and Parcel of immovable property being Plot of Land measuring 71 sq. yds. Part of Kharsa No. 838, situated at Indira Enclave, Village Beha Hazipur, Pargana Loni & Tehsil District Ghaziabad, Butted and bounded on the East by Other property, on the West by others property, on the North by Plot of Mr. Sohanveer, on the South by Gali 11 ft wide."

India's textile exports grew seven per cent to USD 21.35 bn during Apr-Oct period of FY25: Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's textiles and apparel exports, including handicrafts, grew 7 per cent during the April-October period to USD 21.35 billion, the government said on Thursday. The outbound shipments from the sector stood at USD 20 billion in the same period of the previous financial year, FY 2023-24.

"The Ready Made Garments (RMG) category with exports of USD 8,733 million has the largest share (41 per cent) in the total exports (USD 21,358 million) during the period of April-October of FY 2024-25, followed by Cotton Textiles (33 per cent, USD 7,082 million), Man-Made Textiles (15 per cent, USD 3,105 million)," the Textiles Ministry said. Growth of exports was observed in all principal commodities during April-October of FY 2024-25, as compared to corresponding period of FY 2023-24, except wool and handloom, which declined by 19 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively, the Ministry said. Meanwhile, the overall import of textiles and apparel including handicrafts declined 1 per cent during the April-October period of



FY 2024-25 (USD 5,425 million), compared to the same period of FY 2023-24 (USD 5,464 million). The man-made textiles category with import of USD 1,859 million has the largest share (34 per cent) in the total imports (USD 5,425 million) during the period of April-October of FY 2024-25, as there is a demand-supply gap in this sector, the Ministry said.

"Growth of imports is observed majorly in Cotton Textiles mainly on account of import of long staple cotton fibre and such trends of import indicates an increase in production capacity of the country amidst rising consumption and self-reliance," the official statement said. During FY 2023-24, the import of textiles and apparel products by India

stood at USD 8.94 billion, down by nearly 15 per cent in comparison to USD 10.48 billion in FY 2022-23. India was the sixth largest exporter of textiles and apparel in the world in 2023. The share of textile and apparel (T&A) including handicrafts in India's total exports stood at 8.21 per cent in FY 2023-24. "Our country has a share of 3.9 per cent of the global trade in textiles and apparel. Major textile and apparel export destinations for India are USA and EU and with around 47 per cent share in total textile and apparel exports. "India is a major textile and apparel exporting country and enjoys trade surplus. Bulk of import takes place for re-export or for industry requirement of raw material," the Textile Ministry said. It is noteworthy that export is a function of demand and supply and depends on factors such as global demand, internal consumption and demand, order flow, logistics etc. Exports in FY 2024 were initially low mainly due to the geopolitical crises around the Red Sea, which affected export movement during January, February and March 2024, the Ministry stated.

Rupee falls nine paise to close at 85.73 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee depreciated 9 paise to close at 85.73 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, as strong dollar demand from importers and foreign fund outflows dented investor sentiments. Forex traders said the dollar gained against most currencies during 2024 and continued to remain on a strong footing this year. Moreover, persistent foreign fund outflows further dented investors' sentiments. Additionally, global markets are expected to see low volumes as the holiday season is underway in major economies like those in Europe. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened on a weak note and witnessed an intra-day low of 85.79 and a high of 85.68 against the American currency. The local unit settled for the day at 85.73 (provisional), registering a fall of 9 paise over its previous close amid a sharp recovery in domestic equities. On Wednesday, the rupee settled flat at 85.64 against the US dollar.



On December 27, the local currency touched its lifetime intra-day low of 85.80 against the greenback. "We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on strength in the US Dollar and dollar demand from importers. Sustained FII outflows may further pressure the rupee," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan. "However, any intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may support the rupee at lower levels. USDINR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 85.50 to 86, Choudhary added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's

strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.02 per cent lower at 108.46. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.91 per cent to USD 75.32 per barrel in futures trade. India's manufacturing sector growth fell to a 12-month low in December, as new business orders and production expanded at softer rates, a monthly survey said on Thursday. The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index was at 56.4 in December, down from 56.5 in November, indicating a weaker improvement in operating conditions.

Employment increases 36 per cent to 64.33 Crore in last ten years: Mansukh Mandaviya



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union labour minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Thursday said employment in the country has increased by 36 per cent to 64.33 crore in 2023-24 from 47.15 crore in 2014-15, which shows improvement in job creation during NDA period. Talking to media persons, the minister also stated that employment under UPA grew by just about 7 per cent between 2004 to 2014. He noted that under the UPA government between 2004 to 2014 just 2.9 crore additional jobs were created whereas

under the Modi government between 2014-24, 17.19 crore jobs were added. In the last one year (2023-24) alone, the Modi government has created around 4.6 crore jobs in the country, the minister stated. The data assumes significance in the backdrop of pressure on the government for job creation in the country. About the agriculture sector, the minister stated that employment declined by 16 per cent between 2004 to 2014 under UPA tenure whereas it has grown by 19 per cent between 2014 -2023 under Modi tenure.

Similarly, employment in the manufacturing sector grew by just 6 per cent between 2004 to 2014 under UPA tenure while it increased by 15 per cent between 2014-2023 under Modi tenure. He further informed that employment in the services sector grew by 25 per cent between 2004 to 2014 under UPA tenure while it increased by 36 per cent between 2014 -2023 under Modi tenure. He also stated that the unemployment Rate (UR) dropped from 6 per cent in 2017-18 to 3.2 per cent in 2023-24 while the employment rate (WPR) grew from 46.8 per cent in 2017-18 to 58.2 per cent in 2023-24. Similarly, he informed that the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) grew from 49.8 per cent in 2017-18 to 60.1 per cent in 2023-24. About the growth in youth joining the formal job market, the minister also informed that in the last seven years (between Sept 2017- Sept 2024) over 4.7 crore youth (Age 18-28 years) have joined Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) fold.

Govt clears PLI incentive of ₹246 Crore sought by M&M, Tata Motors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ministry of Heavy Industries has approved incentive claims of Rs 246 crore submitted by Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors under the Rs 25,938 crore PLI scheme for the automobile and auto components industry, officials said. Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H D Kumaraswamy has expressed satisfaction with the progress made by auto original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) toward achieving localized manufacturing through initiatives like PLI scheme. He also congratulated Tata Motors and M&M for developing this capability and exuded confidence that more applicants would take advantage of the PLI scheme. According to sources, Tata Motors submitted an incentive claim of approximately Rs 142.13 crore based on determined sales in FY 2023-24. The eligible sales of Advanced Automotive Technology (AAT) products from Tata



Motors include the Tiago EV (electric four-wheeler), Starbus EV (electric bus), and Ace EV (electric cargo vehicle), totalling Rs 1,380.24 crore. Mahindra & Mahindra submitted an incentive claim of Rs 104.08 crore based on determined incremental sales of AAT products totalling Rs 800.59 crore for FY 2023-24, with a cumulative investment of Rs 978.30 crore, officials said. The eligible sales from their e3W models, including Treo,

Treo Zor, and Zor Grand amount to Rs 836.02 crore, supported by a certificate of domestic value addition (DVA) issued by the Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI). "The total claims from these two applicants amount to approximately Rs 246 crore, which have been examined and recommended by the Project Management Agency (PMA) and subsequently approved by Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI)," an official said.

The scheme aims to enhance India's manufacturing capabilities in AAT products, address cost disabilities, and establish a robust supply chain. Approved on September 15, 2021, the PLI scheme is designed to operate from FY 2023-24 to FY 2027-28, with incentive disbursements scheduled from FY 2024-25 to FY 2028-29. Under this scheme, incentives of 13-18 per cent are offered for components related to electric vehicles and hydrogen fuel cells, while other AAT components receive incentives of 8 per cent and 13 per cent. As of September, 2024, the scheme has already facilitated an investment of Rs 20,715 crore, leading to incremental sales of Rs 10,472 crore, said an official. The first incentive disbursement is anticipated in 2024-25. Key features of the scheme include requirement of a minimum of 50 per cent domestic value addition and eligibility for both domestic and export sales.

IOCL to provide fueling services at Noida International Airport

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Indian Oil Corporation (IOCL), a public sector oil marketing company, will provide fueling services at Noida International Airport (NIA) in Jewar, Gautam Buddha Nagar district, Uttar Pradesh. The airport is expected to be inaugurated early next fiscal, according to a statement released on Thursday. Under a 30-year concession agreement, IOCL will operate fuel stations at three locations within the airport premises - near the main western access road for passengers, at the airside for airport operations, and close to the eastern cargo precinct, the private airport operator said. "Our collaboration with Indian Oil Corporation Ltd marks another milestone in NIA's journey to operational readiness. By partnering with IOCL, we will ensure seamless and efficient fueling services at the airport," said Christoph Schnellmann, CEO, Noida International Airport.

Sasan Power pays \$150 million to IIFCL, UK

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sasan Power Limited (Sasan Power), a subsidiary of Reliance Power Limited (Reliance Power), on Wednesday has made a bullet payment of US\$150 million to IIFCL, UK, fulfilling its debt obligation on 31 December 2024. This repayment will bolster Sasan Power's debt coverage metrics, improve liquidity, and enhance its credit rating. Sasan Power operates a 3960 MW Ultra Mega Power Plant (UMPP) in Sasan, Madhya Pradesh, which is the world's largest integrated coal-based power plant. It boasts a captive coal mining capacity of 20 MTPA. The plant supplies electricity to 14 DISCOMs distribution companies (DISCOMs) across seven states—Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, and New Delhi—at the lowest tariff in India of Rs. 1.54 per unit, benefiting more than 40 crore people. For seven consecutive years, Sasan Power has been ranked as the best-performing power plant in India. The loan repayment further strengthens Reliance Power's balance sheet as the company transitions its focus toward the renewable energy sector, which is poised to drive future growth. Reliance Power, a zero-debt company, recently raised Rs. 1,525 crore through equity-linked warrants via a preferential issue.

India-EFTA trade pact likely to be implemented before end of 2025: Goyal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The implementation process of free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the four-nation European bloc EFTA is progressing fast and is expected to come into force before the end of this year, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said. The two sides signed the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) on March 10, 2024. Under the pact, India has received an investment commitment of USD 100 billion in 15 years from the grouping while allowing several products such as Swiss watches, chocolates and cut and polished diamonds at lower or zero duties. The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland. "Yes, EFTA is progressing very fast," Goyal told PTI when asked if the agreement would come into effect this year. The minister said the Swiss Council of States has approved the agreement and now will go to their National Council for approval. "So this overwhelming support in political circles in Switzerland for the TEPA with EFTA is truly a sign of the times to come... And in their statement also, it shows that that it has cleared an important hurdle and they are hoping to bring in entry to force by autumn of 2025, before the end of calendar year 2025," Goyal said. The bloc committed an



investment of USD 100 billion - USD 50 billion within 10 years after the implementation of the agreement and another USD 50 billion in the next five years - which would facilitate the creation of 1 million direct jobs in India. This is a first-of-its-kind pledge agreed upon in any of the trade deals signed by India so far. The commitment is the key substance of the TEPA (Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement), which took almost 16 years to conclude, for India in return for opening its markets for several products coming from the EFTA nations. There is a provision in the agreement that if the proposed investments would not come because of some reasons, India can suspend duty concessions to the four countries. Domestic customers will get access to high-quality Swiss products such as watches, chocolates, biscuits, and clocks at lower prices as India will phase out customs duties under the trade pact on these goods over 10 years. It is taking time to implement the agreement due to an

India's non-life Insurance industry may register double-digit growth in 2025

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Despite flat general insurance penetration in the country, the non-life insurers are expecting to register double-digit growth in 2025 with a conducive regulatory environment and launch of innovative products catering to specific customer needs, stakeholders said on Thursday. The industry is also expected to meet this expectation if it receives a favourable outcome on GST relief and a revisit of motor third-party rates, a top private insurer said. "While health insurance will continue to drive growth in the coming years, there will likely be significant expansion in non-motor and non-health segments, such as pet insurance, liability, professional indemnity, and housing insurance," Future Generali India Insurance Company Ltd managing director & CEO Anup Rau said. The industry estimates a 14 per cent annual growth rate and is expected will witness significant developments as the sector "emerges as a true partner in progress, integrating digital fabric, delivering hyper-personalised solutions, and harnessing the power of data to mitigate emerging risks", he said. HDFC ERGO General Insurance Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Anuj Tyagi emphasised the need to make insurance affordable and accessible. "We anticipate increased innovation in product development, underwriting,

and customer servicing, which will play a crucial role in deepening the reach of insurance to citizens not only from urban cities but also from tier 2 and 3 locations. Bajaj Allianz General Insurance MD & CEO Tapan Singhel said the insurance industry is set to undergo transformative shifts, emphasising personalised and proactive offerings driven by digital innovation. "Cyber insurance is expected to gain prominence alongside the adoption of parametric insurance for disaster management and surety bonds as alternatives to traditional bank guarantees in infrastructure projects," he said. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), in its latest annual report, said that the insurance density in the non-life industry has increased to USD 25 up from USD 22 in 2022-23. The insurance density is a measure of a country's insurance sector development, calculated as the ratio of premiums collected by companies to the country's population. Rau pointed out that the industry will require support, particularly around GST and motor third-party rates to reverse the trend. "Removing GST on health insurance would make it more affordable, driving higher penetration and reducing the government's burden to provide coverage. Motor third-party premiums have been unchanged for five years, these rates need to be revised," he pointed out.

Tata Power-DDL joins hands with Delhi Police to enhance public safety awareness

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (Tata Power-DDL) leading power utility supplying electricity to a populace of around 9 million in North & Northwest part of

Delhi, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of Delhi Police, for enhancing public safety awareness across the National capital. Under the MoU, the two parties will work together to produce content on a variety of safety issues.

INBRIEF

INAUGURATION OF THE DESIGN CLINIC FACILITY TO BOOST INNOVATION, COMPETITIVENESS FOR STARTUPS AND MSMEs

NEW DELHI: The Design Clinic Facility, a new initiative aimed at empowering startups, MSMEs, entrepreneurs, and innovators, was inaugurated by Dr. N. Kailasvelu, Secretary, DSIR & DG, CSIR in the presence of Cmde.



INDIAN RAILWAYS AND THE MAHARAJAS' EXPRESS TRAINS

There is well used adage, "If wishes were horses, men would fly". Maybe it is a vogueish predisposition of humans to transcend mountains, skies and water bodies like the avian species.



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND ENHANCED PASSENGER SERVICES ON INDIAN RAILWAYS

One is a talismanic cricketer - Mahendra Singh Dhoni and the other an iconic sprinter who scorched the tracks, P.T. Usha. One began his career with the South Eastern Railway and the with Southern Railway.

HDFC LIFE OFFERED JOBS TO 10 GNDU MBA STUDENTS

AMRITSAR: Under the able leadership of Vice Chancellor Dr. Karamjeet Singh, Directorate of Placement & Career Enhancement of Guru Nanak Dev University organized Campus Placement drive by HDFC Life Insurance company for MBA - Batch 2025 students of the University.





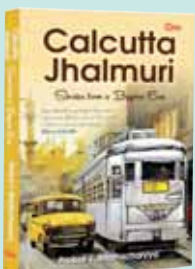
JANUARY READS



Book: Romancing The 80s
Author: Seema Sethi
Publisher: Om Books International
Price: ₹3,995



Book: Stree: The Women of the Ramayana
Author: Lalita B Jai Shulka
Publisher: Om International Books
Price: ₹395



Book: Calcutta Jhalmuri
Author: Probal J. Bhattacharyya
Publisher: Om Books International
Price: ₹295



Book: The Ballad of Jew Town
Author: Samyuktha Nair
Publisher: Niyogi Books
Price: ₹350



Book: Stylistic Trends in Later Bundelkhand Painting
Author: Seitz Konard
Publisher: Niyogi Books
Price: ₹4,500



THE EVOLUTION OF THALASSERY CRICKET

“STUMPED: LIFE BEHIND AND BEYOND THE TWENTY-TWO YARDS” OFFERS AN INSIGHTFUL LOOK INTO KIRMANI’S LIFE, STRUGGLES AND CRICKETING JOURNEY, WRITES KUMAR CHELLAPPAN



Thalassery, a small town in Kerala’s Kannur district, is known as the land of three Cs: Cake, Circus and Cricket. It is said that cricket made its first appearance in Thalassery in the 1830s, making the town the cradle of Kerala cricket. The game was introduced in Thalassery by Sir Arthur Wellesley, who led a military campaign to Malabar to defeat the Islamic aggressors and Pazhasi Raja, the monarch of the kingdom who had challenged the East India Company (EIC) for imposing heavy taxes on the people. Wellesley’s mission was to subdue Pazhasi Raja, who had incited the local population to resist cooperation with the EIC and refuse to pay the arbitrarily imposed taxes. To keep his soldiers engaged, Wellesley introduced the game of cricket at the military station. He also included players from the local population to build trust. Although cricket was considered a game of royalty, Wellesley recruited washermen, porters, rickshaw pullers, and others from the working class. The local players exceeded expectations, excelling in all aspects of the game. Talented batsmen, bowlers, and fielders emerged, and some quickly gained prominence. Notable players like Aboobaker, Ahmed and Kunjipakki became local legends. Aboobaker was famously nicknamed Anson Aboobaker for his

batting style, which resembled Geoffrey Anson’s, while Kunjipakki earned the title Sixer Kunjipakki for his crowd-pleasing sixes. Records of Kunjipakki and Aboobaker’s performances, chronicled in scorebooks

imported from England, are preserved in the Arakkal Home, the ancestral house of the chieftain. This home, with its panoramic view of the maidan, houses a collection of cricket memorabilia from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Ernest

Cowdrey, father of British cricketer Colin Cowdrey, regularly represented the English team at the Thalassery maidan. Old-timers fondly recall the golden era of cricket in Thalassery, when players’ names became part of local folklore.

The tradition of naming players after cricketing icons persisted. At Sree Sankara College, Kalady, Ramakrishna Iyer, a wicketkeeper-batsman, was nicknamed Kirmani Ramakrishnan for emulating SMH Kirmani, India’s renowned wicketkeeper. Kirmani was honoured with the Best Wicketkeeper in the World award after the 1983 World Cup, a recognition yet unmatched.

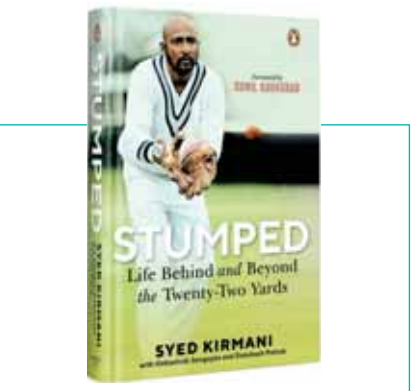
Despite his exceptional performance, Kirmani was often dropped from the national team for reasons known only to selectors. His eventful career, spanning nearly four decades, is documented in his memoir, STUMPED: Life Behind and Beyond the Twenty-Two Yards. Co-written with Debashish Sengupta and Dakshesh Pathak, the memoir includes articles by cricket writers and highlights Kirmani’s contributions to the game.

Cricket, once a status symbol for the elite, became a sport for the masses with players like Kirmani, Kapil Dev and Balwinder Singh Sandhu. Before their rise, the game was dominated by royals like M. A. K. Pataudi and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In the 1970s, cricket coaching was a privilege, but players like Kirmani, born into a lower-middle-class family, worked tirelessly to succeed. Kirmani’s determination and resourcefulness, using bricks as wicketkeeper’s gloves in his school days - echo the humble beginnings of sports legends like Pele.

Kirmani’s memoir recounts his inspiration from England’s wicketkeeper Alan Knott and his experiences keeping wickets for unpredictable bowlers like Chandrasekhar, E. A. S. Prasanna and Bishan Singh Bedi. Despite his dedication, Kirmani was undervalued. While other players received ₹1 crore for benefit matches, Kirmani was allocated a mere ₹25 lakh, a glaring injustice.

Announcing his retirement from first-class cricket with sorrow, Kirmani criticised the selectors’ inability to appreciate talent. However, he remains a beloved figure in Indian cricket history, celebrated for popularising the game and his unparalleled skill as a wicketkeeper.

The only drawback in STUMPED is the occasional typos and grammatical errors, which detract from the reading experience. Penguin, the publishers, could have ensured a more polished presentation.



ABOUT THE BOOK
Book: STUMPED: Life Behind and Beyond the 22 Yards by SYED KIRMANI
Publisher: Penguin
Price: ₹599

The book “Hindu Studies: Foundations and Frameworks” by Nandini Sahu, published by Authorspress in Delhi, presents an inclusive and forward-progressive perception of the advancing academic field of Hindu Studies. By plunging into the literary, philosophical, cultural and social aspects of Hinduism, the book surpasses a singular perspective and instead assumes an interdisciplinary framework. The ambitious breadth and complexity of the book are evident in Sahu’s effort to interweave various academic fields, including religion, sociology, anthropology, art history, and literature, among others. The book is carefully structured into ten parts, each delving into different aspects of Hindu Studies. Her analysis is both thorough and extensive, initiating with an introduction to the field of study and progressing to an analysis of Hindu scriptures and settings. The book delivers a comprehensive basis for understanding the fundamental scriptures of Hinduism, including the four Vedas and the works linked with them, as well as the Epics, Puranas, and Smriti literature. Furthermore, Sahu’s discussion of Hindu philosophical traditions, such as Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta, demonstrates a sophisticated engagement with Hindu philosophy’s intricate metaphysical and epistemological disputes. Hindu Studies: Foundations and Frameworks is a rigorous and broad investigation of the many factors of Hinduism. By employing a variety of research methods, the book offers a deeper understanding of the complexity of Hinduism, making it a relevant and engaging read for scholars and practitioners. “Hindu Studies” is an interdisciplinary field that intersects with anthropology, sociology, history and religious studies.

The book argues that this study goes beyond historical or theological examination, encompassing contemporary issues such as the influence of Hinduism on global politics, the diaspora and modern religious groups. By blending traditional and contemporary ideas, the book initiates a dialogue between Hinduism and other global faiths, creating a comparative framework crucial for interfaith discourse. The chapters that dive into the lived experiences of Hindu devotion and the cultural representations of religion are equally captivating. These chapters are devoted to Hindu ceremonies, customs, and traditions. The presence of Sahu’s focus on regional variants and vernacular traditions contributes to the enrichment of the discourse by drawing attention to Hinduism’s heterogeneous and dynamic character. The work is exceptional in its methodological rigour, one of its most remarkable aspects. Using comparative models, historical gradient analysis, and ethnographic research, Sahu establishes Hindu Studies as a science founded on scientific principles. In order to evaluate and analyse Hinduism not only as a religious belief system but also as a cultural and historical phenomenon, Sahu uses the theoretical foundation of Cultural Materialism as a continuous thread. It is both relevant and vital for Sahu to focus on the social and ethical knowledge systems that are part of Hinduism, especially in relation to caste, gender, and the dynamics of society. The critical debate on class, caste, and gender reveals the socio-political components of Hinduism, hence challenging the narratives that are often linked with the tradition of Hinduism. Sahu’s critical analysis of these aspects provides a deeper understanding of the social and



Hinduism’s Global Perspective

Hindu Studies: Foundations and Frameworks offers an inclusive, interdisciplinary exploration of Hinduism’s cultural, philosophical and social dimensions, says SHALEEN KUMAR SINGH

ethical structures within Hinduism. In the final sections of this book, Sahu investigates what modernity and Hinduism have to offer each other and how the role of Hinduism in a multilateral context is changing. It is a critical examination of how Hinduism has responded to the challenges posed by modernity without losing its fundamental identity. The discussion of Hindu art, architecture, and iconography illustrates even more the extent to which

the religion has influenced Indian artistic traditions during this timeframe. Her inquiry into the global reach of Hinduism through diasporic movements, engagement with interfaith dialogues, and interaction with Western intellectual traditions illustrates how Hinduism has transcended regional and cultural boundaries. The subsequent chapter, “Navigating New Frontiers,” is the most argument-rich in terms of content because it shows us the newer paradigms

emerging in Hindu Studies. Sahu at least has the matter of stretching the limits of traditional research on her side-she is considering what possibilities and tensions exist in the field. This is part of current academic debates around decolonising knowledge systems and assimilating dialogue between cultures, as her essay calls for a more muscular and democratic engagement with Hindu Studies. The findings are categorised thematically, geographically, and textually. Analysis of epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata shows their deeper connection with Indian culture and ethos. Bhakti literature highlights the role of devotional movements in reshaping regional cultures. Puranic literature relates myths and stories, bridging the ancient with the modern. Nandini Sahu has produced a landmark volume that provides the foundation for the discipline of Hindu Studies and

proposes an innovative conceptual grid for future scholarship in the field. The name of this work is “Hindu Studies: Foundations and Frameworks.” This book presents an interdisciplinary approach, methodological rigour, and critical engagement with the complex socio-cultural concerns replete with the issues at stake. Sahu’s deft balancing act between scholarly depth and accessible prose ensures that the book will be valuable to academic and popular audiences. In this way, she highlights the importance of Hindu Studies in contemporary academia and beyond. The fact that this work uses the examples noted above is a compliment to Sahu’s intellectual brilliance and her persistent desire to move the discourse forward in an increasingly globalised world with special reference to Hinduism.

Much of the book deals with the Sanskrit tradition, portraying its centrality in Indian forms of knowledge. Details of contributions and development in Sanskrit grammar by Panini, Katyayana, and Patanjali have been recorded and comprise a solid foundation for India’s linguistic and philosophical discipline. Sanskrit, described as the “foundation of Indian epistemology,” is represented as a language of unmatched precision and beauty that lies at the heart of understanding Hindu thought. The book deserves serious attention from scholars and critics.

Hindu Studies: Foundations and Frameworks

Nandini Sahu

ABOUT THE BOOK

Book: Hindu Studies: Foundations and Frameworks by Nandini Sahu
Publisher: Authorspress
Price: ₹1,195

About the Reviewer:

Shaleen Kumar Singh (shaleensingh.in) teaches English at Swami Shukdevanad College, Shahjahanpur, India, edits creativesaplugs in an online journal and can be contacted at shaleen@scollgespn.ac.in

Debates in dressing room should stay there: Gautam Gambhir

PTI ■ SYDNEY
Asserting that "debates" in the dressing room should not come out in public domain, India head coach Gautam Gambhir on Thursday said he has had some "honest" conversations with his players and that the ongoing transition in the team will be all-encompassing.



batting as well as bowling," he said. The question of natural game versus situational awareness cropped up and the coach reiterated his stand that the team's needs come first.



Sri Lanka beats New Zealand by 7 runs in the 3rd T20

AP ■ NELSON
Kusal Perera scored Sri Lanka's fastest Twenty20 International century — from 44 balls — on Thursday to spur his team to a consolation win over New Zealand by seven runs in the final match of the three-match series.

Australia captain Pat Cummins likely to miss tour of Sri Lanka

PTI ■ SYDNEY
Australia captain Pat Cummins hinted that he may skip the tour of Sri Lanka later this month to be present for the birth of his second child.



want to play well, and of course, there's going to be pressure, but you don't want to forget what mum and dad used to say to us every time we went out to play as kids: 'Go and enjoy it. Try your best, but make sure you enjoy it.'



Marsh dropped, Starc declared fit for BGT finale

PTI ■ SYDNEY
All-rounder Beau Webster will replace an out-of-form Mitchell Marsh in Australia's squad for the fifth and final Test against India, home skipper Pat Cummins said here on Thursday.

Arsenal moves up to 2nd place in Premier League with 3-1 win over Brentford

AP ■ LONDON
Arsenal is back into second place in the Premier League and in no rush to add players in the transfer window.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER RURAL WORKS DIVISION, BARGARH. 1st corrigendum to tender call notice no. 12 of 2024-25. Tender Call Notice No. Online-Bgh-12 of 2024-25 is hereby cancelled due to some un-avoidable circumstances.

ବିଜ୍ଞାପିତ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ପରିଷଦ, ବାଲୁଗାଁ, ଜିଲ୍ଲା: ଖୋର୍ଦ୍ଧା. ବିଜ୍ଞାପନ ସଂଖ୍ୟା: 03 / ଚାରିତା. 01.01.2025. ବିଜ୍ଞାପନ ଉପରେ ଉପସ୍ଥାପନା କରାଯାଇଥିବା ଉପରୋକ୍ତ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମକୁ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣାଙ୍ଗରେ ପରିଚାଳନା କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଉପଯୋଗୀ ଉପାଦାନ ଯୋଗାଇ ଦେବାକୁ ଅନୁରୋଧ କରାଯାଉଛି।

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION, JAJPUR. GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA e-Procurement Notice. Bid Identification No. on line SEMIDJAJ-06/2024-25. Construction of Canal Lining of MIPs under M.I. Division Jajpur.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES, OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION, NAYAGARH. BID IDENTIFICATION NO-SEMIDN-07/2024-25. Letter No- 2704 Dated- 26.12.2024.

Odisha Police Office of the D.G & I.G. of Police, Odisha, Cuttack. Website : www.odishapolice.gov.in. Email : adgcs-odisha@gov.in. Online Bids through e-Tender Portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in are invited from the eligible bidders for Request for Proposal (RFP) for selection of a Consultancy Firm for establishing of Technical Assistance and Support Unit (TASU) for providing Naval Experts advisory for Odisha Coastal Security Police during the current financial year 2024-25 as per the particulars mentioned below.

AFFIDAVIT. By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Balasore on 02/01/2025, I Sukantilata Kar W/O Late Hemanta Kar, (Widow daughter of Late Gopinath Panda) At Kaharagohiri, Po-Sarasatia, P. SKhantapada, Dist-Balasore, Odisha do hereby declared that my maiden name is Sukantilata Panda. After marriage my surname has been changed from "Panda" to "Kar".