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INSIDE

WORLD 8
HOLLYWOOD HILLS FIRE BREAKS OUT AS DEADLY WILDFIRES BURN OUT OF CONTROL ACROSS LOS ANGELES

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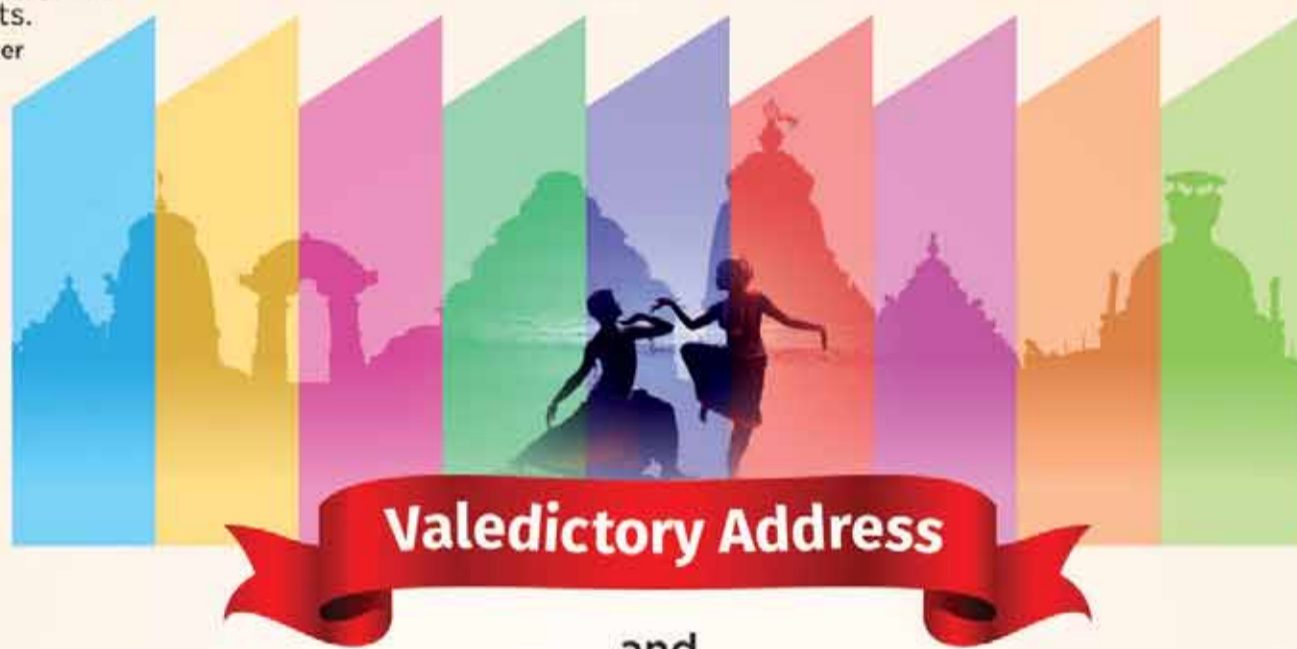
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Together, we celebrate India, Indianness, our culture, our progress and connect to our roots.
- Narendra Modi, Prime Minister



Honouring the Commendable Accomplishment of Indian Diaspora



and Conferment of PRAVASI BHARATIYA SAMMAN AWARDS by Smt. Droupadi Murmu Hon'ble President of India



PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS CONVENTION
10th January 2025
Janata Maidan, Bhubaneswar

in the august presence of

Dr Hari Babu Kambhampati Governor of Odisha
Shri Mohan Charan Majhi Chief Minister of Odisha

Dr S Jaishankar Union Minister of External Affairs
Shri Dharmendra Pradhan Union Minister of Education
Shri Jual Oram Union Minister of Tribal Affairs

Shri Kirtivardhan Singh Union Minister of State for External Affairs and Environment, Forest & Climate Change
Shri Pabitra Margherita Union Minister of State for External Affairs and Textiles

Programme Highlights

- Plenary Sessions on
Diaspora Divas : Celebrating Women's Leadership and Influence - Nari Shakti
- Diaspora Dialogues** : Stories of Culture, Connection, and Belongingness

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Information & Public Relations Department, Government of Odisha

Future is not in 'Yuddha' but in 'Buddha'

Says PM Modi at Pravasi Bharatiya meet

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Addressing the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention here on Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stressed the need to take the path of development and not war in the interest of mankind. "Odisha represents the heritage of India in every step we take, be it Udayagiri, Khandagiri caves or the famous Konark Temple. In ancient days, Odisha sailors used to go to Bali, Indonesia and till today, Odisha celebrates Bali

Yatra. It is also home to Dhauhi, which is the symbol of peace. When the world conquered each other with swords, Samrat Ashok chose the path of 'peace and righteousness' here in Odisha. It is because of this that India sends a message that the future is not in Yuddha (war) but in 'Buddha' (the Lord who symbolises peace)," said Modi. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas has become an institution to strengthen the bond between India and its diaspora, he said. "Together, we celebrate India, Indianness, our culture, our progress and connect to our roots... I have always



thought Indian diasporas are the true ambassadors of our country. I get great peace when I meet NRIs across the globe. So, I want to thank every one of you. I want to thank you

because it is because of you I get the chance to walk with my head high in pride. In the last 10 years, I have met several leaders across the world, and everyone has only heaped praises on Indian diasporas because we have social values," said Modi.

"We are not just the mother of democracy, but democracy is our way of life, our lifestyle. We don't have to be taught diversity; rather, our life runs on diversity. That's why wherever Indians go, they become part of the society of that particular place (country). But at the same time, our hearts continue to beat for Bharat," said he. Modi said, "In just 10 years,

India has uplifted 25 crore people from poverty and made it the fifth-largest economy in the world. The day is not too far when India will be the third-largest economy."

"Every sector is breaking records to touch the sky be it renewable energy, electric mobility, metro network or bullet train project. Today, India is making 'Made in India' fighter jets and transport aircraft. The day is also not too far when you all will come on Made in India plane to attend the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas... Our country will fulfill the skill demands of the whole world," stated Modi.



Governor Dr Hari Babu Kumbhampati and Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi are with President Droupadi Murmu at the Raj Bhvan in Bhubaneswar on Thursday. Murmu will grace the valedictory session of the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention in Bhubaneswar on Friday.

Hacking Police Mitra to death Cops recreate crime scene with accused

2 more held; murder weapon seized

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Police, while investigating into the murder of youth Sahadev Nayak at Rasulgarh here, have ascertained that the victim was killed over old enmity.

During the investigation, it was also revealed that the accused had discarded the murder weapon, a machete, near the Daya bridge near Dhauhi.

Police on Thursday conducted a crime scene recreation in an area near Dhauhi with the three arrested accused, including a woman. The cops recovered the weapon of offence and also



arrested two persons. On the early morning of January 8, a decapitated body of Sahadev Nayak, a Police Mitra, was found on the Rasulgarh-Vani Vihar over-bridge. Early reports had stated that the youth was chased by at least four people while he was going on his motorcycle on the NH at around 8:30 am. The assailants reportedly severed his head off his

Odisha man exploits over 20 women



By posing as Army Captain

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Born as Haider Ali in Odisha, he posed as Hardik Beglo and trapped women by introducing himself as an officer of the Army Medical Corps. As per the allegations, after luring women into relationships, he would ask them to meet him and would sexually assault them.

Later, he would ask them for money, citing various reasons. After getting the money, he would end all communication, move to a different State and look for his next target. However, he ran out of luck in Lucknow after his latest 'victim' smelled a rat.

Based on the woman's complaint, police began a probe and were shocked by the revelations about him. He wasn't an Army officer but worked in security firms across several cities in Hyderabad, Kerala, Karnataka, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh where he tar-

geted women. Originally hailing from Odisha's Baleswar district, he had opened several Instagram accounts which he used to trap women online. Police have recovered Army uniform, three-star flaps, an Army beret, a fake Aadhaar card, an Army canteen card and other incriminating documents from his possession.

As per preliminary reports, he has cheated over 20 women in the last few years. The number of women is expected to rise during further investigations.

"We arrested him and began his interrogation. His original name is Haider Ali Beg. He hid his religion and introduced himself as Hardik Beglo and lured several women into relationships and duped them. He talked them into financing cars for him and also borrowed huge sums from them. We are also scanning his call records to locate the women he targeted," a senior officer reportedly said.

'Law and order has crumbled under BJP'

Alleges Student Congress

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Even though the BJP has come to power in Odisha since seven long months, the law and order situation in the State has been deteriorating, said the Pradesh Student Congress here on Thursday.

The people are afraid to venture out of their homes. Police have failed to provide security to common people because the cops are busy providing security to the ministers and



BJP leaders and have forgotten about the citizens, alleged Pradesh Student Congress president Udit Pradhan.

In Bhubaneswar, a huge number of security personnel have been deployed for the ongoing Pravasi Bharatiya Divas. But still, a youth,

Sahadev Nayak, was hacked to death in the city. During the BJP rule, crimes like murder, dacoity and rape and other crimes against women are increasing alarmingly. To hid these failures, the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is being organised, said Pradhan.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Odisha's rich art, traditions on display to NRIs

As array of cultural events underway in city

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In light of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, the Odisha government is leaving no stone unturned in extending a warm welcome to non-resident Indians through a series of meticulously curated events and programmes. These initiatives are aimed at showcasing and promoting Odisha's rich art, culture, and traditions. The event which commenced on Wednesday here will continue till January 10.

At Ekamra Park, a five-day flower exhibition promises to captivate visitors with a stunning array of blossoms. The highlight of the event is the



Cactus House, anticipated to be a major attraction for non-resident Indians (NRIs). Meanwhile, the Park Festival has commenced in Bhubaneswar, featuring mesmerizing music fountains and laser shows across various parks. These activities provide a unique platform to celebrate Odisha's artistic heritage while showcasing the State's traditions to educate and engage the visiting NRIs.

To enhance efforts in show-



ing the State's culture and traditions, the Odisha State Museum has extended its operating hours until 9 pm. Chief Minister Mohan Majhi inaugurated nine new galleries, including the Odisha Ivory Gallery, Zoology, Geology and Mining, Odisha Tribal, and Handloom galleries. These additions provide visitors with an immersive experience, offering a deeper insight into the State's diverse cultural heritage.

To ensure seamless mobility for attendees, the Chief Minister has also launched an e-bus service comprising 5 double-decker buses, 10 hop-on-hop-off buses, and 25 buses operated by the Puri Srimandir administration.

Besides, celebrations to continue with the Rajarani Music Festival at the Rajarani Temple, the Mukteswar Dance Festival 2025 at the Mukteswar Temple, and the Folk Dance Festival at the State

museum, all running until January 11. The Mukteswar Odishi Dance Festival will include solo, duet, and group performances by eminent Odishi dancers, while the Rajarani Music Festival will feature Hindustani, Carnatic, and Odishi music recitals.

While the International Odishi Dance Festival will take place at Rabindra Mandap, the Rajarani Music Festival will be held on the premises of the Rajarani Temple and the Mukteswar Odishi Dance Festival will be organised at the Mukteswar Temple premises.

Culture Minister Suryabanshi Suraj on Monday said, "Classical dance and music are integral to our cultural identity and heritage. The Rajarani Music Festival, Mukteswar Odishi Dance

Festival and International Odishi Dance Festival are being organised to showcase our rich cultural legacy. These festivals will coincide with the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrations in the city, providing an opportunity for guests from across the country and abroad to experience the grandeur of our classical art forms."

Similarly, at the Exhibition Ground, the Adivasi Mela has displayed the unique art, culture, and traditions of tribal communities from Odisha and educate attendees about their life, culture, and traditions. Through these initiatives, the Odisha government is not just welcoming NRIs but also weaving a cultural tapestry that proudly reflects the State's heritage.

SOCIAL CANVAS

Settle rights of sharecroppers as that of farmers

They constitute 50% of real farmers cultivating 80% of land

While the State government has been giving importance to increasing production of agriculture, the real farmers remain ignored. In recent times, paddy crop loss occurred due to untimely rains and extreme cold weather for about a week. There were reports of suicide by farmers mostly sharecroppers. For the last few years, such suicides have been taking place on regular basis.

The increasing cost of fertiliser, agricultural appliances, seeds and high risk of crop loss due to a number of reasons, including natural calamities and absence of insurance and compensation have been pushing sharecroppers to a distress situation. Many of the farmers are going for distress migration that impacts agricultural production as well as the local employment situation. Approximately 80 percent of the farmland is being cultivated by the sharecroppers,



MANAS JENA

who are the real farmers constituting about 50 per cent of the people involved in agriculture.

Majority of the sharecroppers are agricultural workers and small and marginal farmers with small holdings of less than one hectare land. The sharecroppers mostly represent the most backward class in the villages who are being socio-economically integrated with farming as landless farmers and farm labourers. Mostly, the absentee

landlords and very few small land holders have given their land to sharecroppers for cultivation on the basis of verbal agreement. In rural Odisha with a feudal social system still in vogue, the land owners enjoy unequal power equations against sharecroppers who are vulnerable in every respect. The sharecroppers take all the risk in the entire activities of farming, put in their labour and investment, but get a very less return.

Land ownership in the State shows an unequal distribution of land holdings and marginalized groups such as Dalits have almost negligible share in the land ownership. A NSSO survey shows that 70 per cent of the land is owned by 25 per cent households and 30 per cent of land is owned by 75 per cent households. 70 per cent of the SC households are under the category of landless or persons with less than one acre land. The uneven land ownership, along with a large presence of absentee landlords, non implementation of land reform policy, periodic survey and settlement, especially land distribution programme are some of the rea-

sons for sharecropping. In States like Punjab and Haryana, large and medium farmers take lease from small land owners, but the reverse happens in Odisha where mostly the small farmers do sharecropping in the land of the land lords who are officially treated as farmers though in reality they are not related to farming except for owning land. A large majority of absentee landlords are from educated upper class and caste, who are mostly employed in high earning non farm sectors in cities such as government jobs, business and private sector jobs. They lease out their land to traditional poor in the village without any fear of losing it.

The sharecroppers in Odisha can not go for long term investment in land development and irrigation because of insecurity of eviction at any point of time by the land owner. They do not have rights of availing credit for cultivation, agriculture subsidy to purchase appliances, seed, fertilizer, compensation and relief due to crop loss. Virtually in distress, they are forced to sell paddy to private parties at throw-away prices, even less than the pro-

duction cost. The rice mill owners and their agents in villages are enjoying an upper hand of negotiation with sharecroppers. The government data shows huge agricultural credit was advanced to farmers owning land and subsidies for purchase of agricultural equipment.

During the freedom struggle and in the post independent era, the issues of sharecroppers had been a matter of concern. The movements have raised the demand for abolition of intermediaries and tenant rights over land, but the question of sharecroppers has remained unattended. The Land Reform Committee headed by Nabakrushna Choudhury, the then Revenue Minister, in 1946 recommended administrative and legislative measures including protection of sharecroppers. As an outcome, The Odisha Tenants Protection Act, 1948 came into force which remained valid till 1955 and then the Odisha Tenant's Relief Act, 1955 and later came Odisha Land Reforms Act 1960, and Rules 1965 with provisions of security against eviction, payment of rent to the land owner to be limited to one

fourth of the value of produce and no collection of any other rent from the tenant by the landlord. In Odisha, leasing is prohibited except in the case of privileged Raiyats, defence personnel, and persons suffering from specified disabilities. Privileged Raiyats are co-operative societies, Lord Jagannath, public trusts and public financial institutions. The State of Tamil Nadu has a law which says that every tenancy agreement must be in writing and shall be executed in triplicate to protect sharecroppers. The document should show the details of the land and the terms of the tenancy. A copy of the agreement is required to be deposited in the Taluk office. It is left to the parties to decide the duration of the tenancy. In West Bengal there is a presumption in law that a person lawfully cultivating the land of another person is a 'Bargadar' in respect of such land. The 'Barga' right is heritable and can be terminated only on certain specified grounds.

The new National Agricultural Policy emphasizes on reforming tenancy laws to allow all sections to appropriately participate in the

lease market and promote capital investment in agriculture allowing private investment for farming and agribusiness. It has come up with proposals of public land banks at panchayat level and group farming by disadvantaged farmers such as Dalits, Adivasis, women and other landless poor by facilitating land purchase along with distribution of surplus land along with lease. This will enforce a formal lease system and change the informal practice of sharecropping in villages without changing the condition of sharecroppers. However, it is argued that this will facilitate the privatisation process which will be more beneficial to land owners and large lease holders going for capital investment in agriculture. The Revenue Department has come up with promises to protect the interest of sharecroppers and go for enactments in line with provisions in AP, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal but nothing has been done so far. The sharecroppers are suffering as before affecting the agriculture production, rural employment and State economy. (manasbbsr15@gmail.com)

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Cong cornered in INDIA bloc truck

Mohit Kandhari n Jammu

Amid growing differences within the INDIA bloc, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Thursday dropped clear hints suggesting he was also on the verge of splitting ties with the opposition plank. Omar also demanded the INDIA bloc should be disbanded as the opposition parties were not on the same page in the run-up to the Delhi polls.

Acerbic observations made by Omar, a close friend of Rahul Gandhi, have once again sparked speculation over the future of the Congress party in the INDIA bloc.

While both AAP and the Congress are part of the INDIA bloc, the parties are contesting the Delhi polls separately.



Photo: PTI

Mamta Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress along with Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT) and Akhilesh Yadav's Samajwadi Party (SP) have already announced their support to the Aam Aadmi Party in the Delhi elections leaving Congress party stranded in the multi-cornered poll battle.

The subtle timing of Abdullah's remark, a day after Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav said the INDIA bloc had lost its significance and was formed specifically for the Lok Sabha polls, has also raised many eyebrows in the power corridors.

"INDIA bloc was formed just for the Lok Sabha elections and to stop the victory march of the BJP. It has no significance now. The bickering between the

Congress and the AAP is not unexpected," the former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister said. Reacting to Abdullah's remark, Congress MP Manickam Tagore said the opinion of INDIA bloc allies was not binding on the party. "INDIA bloc allies will not decide what the Congress wants to do in Delhi," he said. Abdullah, whose National Conference is part of the INDIA bloc, Thursday said "It is unfortunate that no meeting of the INDIA bloc has taken place. Who will lead? What will be the agenda? How will the alliance move forward? There is no discussion on these issues. There is no clarity on whether we will remain united or not." "After the Assembly elections in Delhi, they (INDIA Bloc) should call all the alliance members for a meeting. If this

alliance was only for the parliamentary elections, it should be wound up, and we will work separately. But if it is also meant for strengthening India and eliminating hatred. "The alliance is permanent - it is for every day and every moment." "We don't want to fight New Delhi. We want to work together with Delhi to resolve the state's problems. We don't want to engage in battles. Those who want to fight can do so," the former chief minister told reporters here.

Abdullah said the National Conference has nothing to do with the BJP, but it is the responsibility of the central government to support state governments in addressing local issues. "We are not with the BJP, nor do we have any connection with them," he said.

increasing support for AAP ahead of next month's Delhi elections, Omar Abdullah said, "I cannot say anything about this at the moment because we have no involvement with Delhi polls. The Aam Aadmi Party, Congress, and other political parties on the ground will decide how to compete with the BJP strongly." Stating that AAP succeeded twice in Delhi previously, Abdullah said, "This time, we will have to wait and see what the people of Delhi decide." Meanwhile, National Conference President Dr Farooq Abdullah on Thursday said his party does not intend to "fight" New Delhi to collaborate with the central government to address the pressing issues of Jammu and Kashmir.

Commenting on the unity within the INDIA bloc, Abdullah said the alliance is not just about contesting elections, but it is about strengthening India and eliminating hatred. "The alliance is permanent - it is for every day and every moment." "We don't want to fight New Delhi. We want to work together with Delhi to resolve the state's problems. We don't want to engage in battles. Those who want to fight can do so," the former chief minister told reporters here.

Abdullah said the National Conference has nothing to do with the BJP, but it is the responsibility of the central government to support state governments in addressing local issues. "We are not with the BJP, nor do we have any connection with them," he said.

Bijli, Paani free on BJP's poll platter?

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

What was once criticised as "free ki revri" and "freebies" has now become the central focus for the political parties as they vie for votes in the February 5 Delhi elections. In a bid to match the ruling AAP's raft of pre-poll promises in Delhi, the BJP is likely to announce free electricity of up to 300 units for household, free piped water, and a Ladli Behna-like scheme (financial assistance of Rs 2500 for eligible women) to woo the voters in its manifesto for the upcoming assembly polls. Along with this, the BJP is also planning to provide free electricity of up to 500 units to religious places like temples and gurudwaras.

Top sources said these recommendations are expected to be part of the manifesto. The

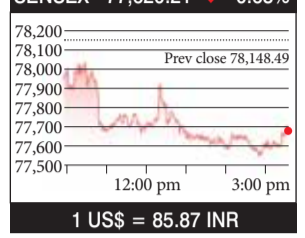


Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

recommendations have been sent to central leadership for approval. According to sources, the manifesto committee has also recommended not doing away with schemes currently in place in Delhi including free public bus travel for women, up to 20 kilolitres of free water per month to domestic consumers, and free electricity to households that consume less than 200 units a

month. The AAP-led Delhi government currently provides free electricity for up to 200 units a month. Under the existing free electricity scheme, the Delhi government provides free electricity to consumers with a monthly consumption of 200 units. Whereas, a 50 per cent subsidy is given to people with a consumption of 201-400 units of electricity.

MARKETS



WEATHER



GRAP III invoked in the Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Rising air pollution level has once again forced the authorities to impose vehicle ban on BS 3 petrol and BS 4 diesel cars as the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) for Delhi and its adjoining area has imposed the Stage-III ('Severe' Air Quality) measures under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) for Delhi-NCR with immediate effect. The stage 3 also bans the entry of non-essential BS 4 diesel trucks into Delhi. The restrictions are not applicable for commercial vehicles involved in essential services "Persons with Disabilities shall be permitted to ply BS - III Petrol / BS - IV Diesel LMVs, provided that these are specifically adopted for them and are run only for their personal use," the CAQM said in a statement. GRAP Stage 3, which was revoked on Sunday, entails a ban on non-essential construction work.

Indian passport ranking slips

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Even as outbound travel from India continues to grow rapidly and a growing number of destinations try to woo Indian tourists, obtaining a visa for travel has become harder for Indian travelers, the global ranking of Indian passport dropped five spots to 85th in 2025. An Indian national can travel to 57 visa-free destinations around the world, it adds. The index is considered the standard reference tool for global citizens and sovereign states when assessing where a passport ranks on the global mobility spectrum,



the Henley & Partners said. As per the index for 2025, India stands at 85th while the ranking of Pakistan and Bangladesh stood at 103rd (101st in 2024) and 100th (97th in 2024), respectively. According to a data chart available on the firm's website, for the range of years from 2006-2025, India's rank was the lowest at 90th in 2021, while its best score was in 2006 when the country was ranked 71st. According to the passport index, the ranking of Pakistan and Bangladesh stood at 103rd (101st in 2024) and 100th (97th in 2024), respectively.

Naidu visits Tirupati stampede victims

PNS ■ TIRUPATI



Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu meets a person injured in the stampede on Wednesday, at SVIMS hospital in Tirupati PTI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday visited the injured undergoing treatment in a hospital here following a stampede that left six people dead. Six devotees died and nearly 40 more were injured in the stampede at Bairagi Patteda near MGM School in Tirupati on Wednesday night as hundreds of them jostled for tickets for Vaikunta Dwara Darshanam at Lord Venkateswara Swamy temple on Tirumala Hills.

Hundreds of devotees turned up from across the country for the 10-day Vaikunta Dwara Darshanam commencing from January 10. Earlier, Naidu visited the accident site where the stampede claimed six lives and injured many.

Congress still relevant in Delhi: Sandeep Dikshit

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI



Congress candidate from the New Delhi assembly constituency and two-time East Delhi MP, Sandeep Dikshit, has accused the AAP of siphoning off Congress votes in other states, at a time when the ruling party has made serious allegation against him and his party for being in cahoots with BJP while dismissing AAP's claim of Centre hindering the Delhi government from functioning.

The son of former Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit is a widely known critique of AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal, one of the reasons he stated for pitting him against Kejriwal in the upcoming elections. While the AAP has made several allegations against Dikshit and Congress for being hands in gloves with the BJP, Dikshit, in an interview with The Pioneer, shrugged them off claiming that the BJP is picking his criticisms rather than the other way around.

"BJP is repeating what I am saying. They have never attacked Kejriwal on factual information. I have done that and I think it's good whoever is picking that up. Secondly, there is a critique and a criticism of AAP, which is not party-specific. Criticism is opposition-specific," he said. "If Yamuna is dirty, do you expect BJP to say something

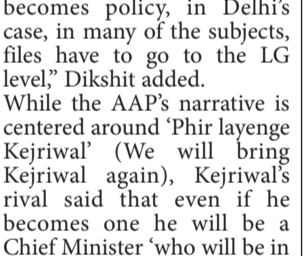
else about Yamuna and us to say something else? We are in the opposition, we will attack you for all the things that you have not done. When they were in the opposition, AAP and BJP both called us corrupt in 2012-13. We could very easily say that you are saying exactly what BJP was saying. The role of the opposition is to criticize the government wherever it finds valid criticism," he said. He further raised questions on AAP fighting elections outside Delhi and claimed that they cut Congress votes to help the BJP. "They are really somebody who helps BJP win different elections and then they attack me," Dikshit alleged. Claiming that the AAP is afraid of Congress fighting the elections, he asked why the AAP is scared of him or AICC treasurer Ajay Maken when they say that Congress is not relevant in Delhi.

Minister signs a file and it becomes policy, in Delhi's case, in many of the subjects, files have to go to the LG level," Dikshit added. While the AAP's narrative is centered around 'Phir layenge Kejriwal' (We will bring Kejriwal again), Kejriwal's rival said that even if he becomes one he will be in jail, or he will 'not do any work' because of the conditions put by the Supreme Court on his bail. "In the remote chance that AAP wins Delhi again, and you get elected as their leader, even if you get sworn in as Chief Minister, you cannot perform. Not even for a single day. This promise of Rs 2,100 he made to the women. In reality, if he signs that file, he'll go to jail. He'll break his bail conditions," the leader said, adding that AAP Convenor resigned from his Chief Ministerial post not as a sacrifice but because he knew that he cannot perform its duties.

The Congress candidate also plans to remind people of the work his mother has done for Delhi and how Kejriwal has not been able to carry it on even in an 'average fashion'. Dikshit also claims that in case of any post-poll alliance, other parties will have to come to them and not the other way around as he is confident of a good performance by the Congress.

SC to review JEE-Advanced attempt limit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to examine a plea against bringing down from three to two, the attempts given to Joint Entrance Examination (JEE)-Advanced aspirants. When the plea came up before a bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih, the petitioner's counsel said, "This matter pertains to the IIT (Indian Institute of Technology) admission entrance examination in which the number of attempts have been reduced from three to two."

The lawyer said a similar plea was listed before the bench on January 10 following which the court directed both to be tagged.

'Odisha to be mega IT hub'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR



Railways and Information Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Thursday met Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi here and held discussions regarding development of railway infrastructure and IT industries in Odisha.

During the meeting, it was revealed that as many 48 railway projects are ongoing in the State. This includes eight projects that were recently approved by the Union Cabinet. Vaishnav informed the Chief Minister that more railway projects would be

taken up in Odisha in the next five years.

The Union Minister also said Odisha would be turned into a mega IT hub, for which the necessary steps are being taken. For development of IT startups in Odisha, 'Chip to Startup' programmes are being started at IIT Bhubaneswar, IIT Rourkela, IIT Bhubaneswar and Parala Maharaja Engineering College in Brahmapur.

Besides, discussions were held on how more people from Odisha can attend the Kumbh Mela in Uttar Pradesh.

'Your role vital for India's dev by 2047'

PM Modi addresses Pravasi Bharatiya meet

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday emphasised that the Indian diaspora would play a crucial role in India's journey to becoming a developed nation by 2047, marking the centenary of its independence.

Speaking at the inauguration of the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention

at the Janata Maidan in Bhubaneswar, the PM acknowledged the significant contributions of the Indian diaspora to both global progress and India's own development.

Modi highlighted that the Indian diaspora has earned a stellar reputation worldwide for their achievements and hard work across diverse sectors. Their efforts have not only enhanced India's global standing but also helped spread the nation's rich cultural heritage, which promotes values of peace, unity



and cooperation. Reflecting on his government's achievements since 2014, Modi noted that more than 25 crore people have been lifted out of poverty,

contributing to the country's rapid economic and technological advancements. "India has made remarkable progress in various sectors such as science, technology,

agriculture, and industry, rising from the 10th to the 5th-largest economy globally. We are poised to become the third-largest economy soon, all thanks to the dedication of

our people and the diaspora's support," he said.

Modi further emphasised India's strides in renewable energy, electric mobility and defence manufacturing, including fighter jets and transport aircraft.

During the event, the PM also inaugurated several exhibitions showcasing India's cultural diversity and economic potential. The convention will conclude on Friday with President Droupadi Murmu delivering the closing address and presenting the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman.

Jharsuguda coldest in State at 6 deg

Temp rises in Twin City

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The cold wave continued to grip the State with temperatures slipping to as low as 6 degrees Celsius.

On Wednesday night, Jharsuguda recorded the lowest minimum temperature of 6 degrees followed by Rourkela 6.4 degrees, Keonjhar 8.8 degrees, Hirakud 11.2 degrees and Sambalpur 11.6 degrees.

As per the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the twin cities witnessed a slight rise in temperature with

Bhubaneswar recording 15.1 degrees and Cuttack 15 degrees. Incidentally, on January 4, the State capital had recorded 12.7 degrees and the Silver City 12.4 degrees, marking the lowest temperatures this season.

Coastal areas like Puri witnessed a minimum of 16.6 and Gopalpur recorded 15.4 degree. Notably, temperatures have been higher than normal in these regions while it has been lower than usual in interior parts of Odisha.

The IMD has predicted a gradual rise in temperature by 2 to 4 degrees over the course of the next three days across all districts of the State.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas held in B'pur

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAPUR

The 18th District-Level Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was celebrated with enthusiasm at the VV Giri Government Secondary Training School for Women here on Wednesday. The event honoured the contributions of the Indian diaspora and their pivotal role in addressing societal challenges.

The event featured competitions such as cycling, quizzes, essays and poster displays, with over 150 participants from 22 blocks across the district. The programme was coordinated by District SC/ST Samagra Shiksha Ganjam coordinator Dr Saroj



Mohan Pal.

Chikiti MLA Manoranjan Dyan Samantara attended the event as the chief guest. In his address, he emphasized the role of migrant Indians in fostering growth in health, education, art and culture in Odisha, suggesting their involvement could address un-

employment challenges.

Brahmapur Mayor Sanghamitra Dalai graced the occasion as the guest of honor. She encouraged students to work towards building a better nation, drawing inspiration from the contributions of Indian migrants.

In the competitions, Katur

Higher Secondary School student Chaitanya Behera won the essay competition. Thigasol Odisha Model School student Rainya Priyadarshini Sahu and Hatiota Odisha Model School student Priya Pradhathini Sahu emerged as winners in the quiz competition.

The programme was inaugurated by District Education Officer and Ganjam District Project Coordinator Amita Patnaik. Prominent attendees included Additional District Education Officer Rajesh Kumar Pradhan, among others. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Chandini Panda. Teacher Anita Das coordinated the proceedings.

In Kalahandi Excise team attacked; 2 hurt

PNS ■ BHAWANIPATNA

Excise Department officials were allegedly attacked while conducting a raid on suspected illegal liquor traders at Kanarla village under Bhatangapadar panchayat in Kalahandi district on Thursday.

As per reports, some residents of the village allegedly vandalised the excise officials' vehicles and assaulted them brutally.

Two constables were injured in the attack. The injured were admitted to a hospital in Bhawanipatna.

Later, a complaint regarding the incident was filed by the Excise Department at the Sadar police station.



Reports said that police have detained some persons of the village and their questioning over the matter was ongoing. But the police or the senior excise officials are yet to issue any statement regarding the matter.

Phulbani bus owner dies in mishap

PNS ■ PHULBANI

In a tragic road accident at Phulbani Gandhi Chhak on Wednesday morning, a person identified as Trilochan Pradhan, who is a bus owner of the town, died.

As per the information, Pradhan was standing in front of his bus Suna Pratima when a speeding vehicle with registration No. OD 12-B-6582 from the opposite direction hit him. Pradhan was admitted to hospital in a critical condition

and died during treatment. It is learnt that the driver abandoned the vehicle and fled from the accident site. The police reached the spot and seized the vehicle and took it to the police station for investigation.

The president and secretary of the Phulbani Bus Owners Association, along with other members, expressed deep condolences on the demise of Pradhan. They have demanded better management of traffic in the town.

Maoist camp unearthed in Kandhamal



Guns, uniforms recovered

PNS ■ PHULBANI

A joint team of the Special Operations Group (SOG) of the Odisha Police and the CRPF carried out raids in Kandhamal and Kalahandi districts after getting information about Maoist presence. The security carried out combing operations in several areas

under the Balliguda and Tumudibandh police station areas of Kandhamal and M Rampur PS area of Kalahandi. During the search operation on January 6, the SOG team

found a Maoist camp near village Maduli under the Balliguda PS.

Kandhamal SP Harish BC said that further search operation was continuing and it was suspected that 10 to 15 Maoists were operating from that camp. The very next day, the security defused an improvised explosive device (IED) found at the spot. The team recovered Maoist articles like guns, solar plate, uniform and electric wires.

The security forces are using drones to track the ultras and they would break the back of Maoist movement in Kandhamal district, he asserted.

In Dhenkanal ATM looted, then set on fire by miscreants



PNS ■ DHENKANAL

Miscreants allegedly looted money from an ATM machine by using a gas cutter near the Panchupati area in Dhenkanal district late on Wednesday night.

Moreover, in an effort to destroy any evidence, the looters set the machine on fire by sprinkling petrol on it.

Getting information, the Sadar police reached the spot on Thursday morning and started an investigation into the incident.

The police were trying to

ascertain the amount of money stolen as the exact figure in the machine prior to the theft. Police intensified their search to track down those responsible for the crime.

Of late, the unguarded ATMs have become targets of the looters in various parts of the State with ATM loots becoming routine. The CCTV cameras fitted at the ATM kiosks are not being of much help to the police as the professionals gangs involved in the crime are damaging them to erase any evidence of the loot.

Strive to make J'suguda economic hub: Pradhan

PNS ■ JHARSUGUDA

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, addressing the Dulduli Mahotsav in Jharsuguda, called for a collective effort to transform Jharsuguda district into a major economic hub, emphasising on industrial growth, job creation and women empowerment.

Pradhan highlighted the importance of supporting the district's tribals and marginalised communities, underscoring the sacrifices made by families three times displaced under the Hirakud Dam project.

Pradhan noted that the district is witnessing significant progress, with ongoing development projects worth Rs 70 crore. He laid the foundation-stones for key initiatives, including a Rs16.79 crore Community Health Centre at



Kirmira, a Rs 54.89-crore bridge over the Ib river at Pachpada and the foundation-stone for the Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya in Mundrajor built at a cost of Rs 7.4 crore under the District Mineral Fund (DMF).

He also commended the district's support for industrialisation despite displacement challenges in areas like Jharsuguda, Brajrajnagar

and Lakhanpur. He assured that the double-engine government remains committed to addressing local issues, prioritising irrigation for farmers in Kolabira and Laikera and fostering peace and universal brotherhood.

The event also saw the inauguration of an old age home at Panchpada under the CSR initiative of NLC's Talabira project and the launch of an

organ donation initiative by AIMS Foundation.

Bargarh MP Pradeep Purohit praised the contributions of former Speaker Late Kishore Mohanty, urging collective responsibility for the district's development. MLA Tankadhar Tripathy lauded Pradhan's initiatives and pledged continued support from both the Centre and the State Government.

Officials, brokers in collusion Illegal land transfers in J'suguda ITDA blocks trigger row

RAJ KUMAR SHARMA ■ JHARSUGUDA

Allegations of irregularities in the sale of tribal (Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste) land in Jharsuguda have triggered a wave of concern among the tribal communities.

Despite legal restrictions under the Land Reforms Act, instances of unauthorised land transfers in Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) blocks have raised serious questions about the role of revenue officials and brokers in depriving tribals of

their ancestral land.

According to information obtained through the Right to Information Act, the Jharsuguda Sub Collector's office approved 142 cases of land transfer between January 2023 and February 2024, involving 65.695 acres of tribal land valued at over Rs 100 crore. One contentious case involves the approval of 3.81 acres of land in urban areas to a single individual, Mahendra Karali, prompting outrage from the tribal community.

Members of the Sammilita Adivasi Samaj, including its

advisor Prabhakar Oram, have highlighted the collusion between brokers and Revenue officials, accusing them of exploiting loopholes to facilitate these transfers. Madhav Singh Naik, president of the tribal society, has demanded a high-level inquiry to uncover the alleged irregularities.

The controversy has deepened following the declaration of Kirmira and Laikera blocks as ITDA zones on May 29, 2023. Under these provisions, tribal land transfers to non-tribals should be prohibited. However, cases such as the sale of 1.90 acres in Kirmira Tehsil

to Deepak Kishan has defied these restrictions.

Sub-Collector Sabyasachi Panda has clarified that no further permissions will be granted without explicit instructions from the State government. Concerns have also been raised over appeals being handled by the same official who approved the original transfers, now serving as Additional District Magistrate.

The tribal community continues to press for accountability, emphasising the urgent need for action to safeguard their land and rights.

Vedanta stall big draw at Chaiti fest

Showcases tribal art, craft

PNS ■ RAYAGADA

Vedanta Aluminium's stall at the 'Chaiti Mahotsav', organised in Rayagada district, was a major attraction at the festival that featured a captivating fusion of heritage art showcasing Saura paintings, Dokra art forms, traditional tribal art and crafts alongside products from self-help groups (SHGs) prepared by the Project Sakhi which empowers women as micro-entrepreneurs.

The stall garnered significant



interest from the visitors through its live Saura art hand painting counter.

Additionally, the stall featured an array of exhibits from Vedanta's newly-acquired

hockey team - Kalinga Lancers, the defending champions in the on-going Hockey India League (HIL). The display included the team's mascot, player highlights, and the trophy creating an impressive engagement platform that delighted the visitors.

The stall not only attracted over 25,000 visitors during the festival, but was also graced by dignitaries like MLA Rayagada Kadraka Allapaswamy, MLA Bisamcuttack Nilamadhab Hikaka, Collector and District Magistrate Parul Patawari and SP Swathy S Kumar, among others.

Emphasizing the significance of such an initiative, MLA Kadraka Allapaswamy remarked, "Vedanta Aluminium's involvement in Chaiti Mahotsav not only highlights their dedication to cultural heritage, but also plays a crucial role in enhancing the socio-economic fabric of our community."

Speaking on the initiative, Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Vedanta Aluminium Sunil Gupta said, "Our participation in Chaiti Mahotsav reflects our commitment to supporting the local artisans and promoting indigenous art forms."

Rs 480-cr campus dev project in CUO



PNS ■ KORAPUT

The Central University of Odisha (CUO) has achieved a major milestone with the launch of an ambitious infrastructure development project at its main campus. In a groundbreaking initiative, the CUO has awarded the Project Management Consultancy (PMC) contract to NBCC (India) Limited for constructing a Net Zero Energy Sustainable Campus.

The project, with an estimated cost of Rs 480 crore, is among the first of its kind in Odisha.

The project envisions state-of-the-art facilities, including an academic block, hostels, a sports complex, a cafeteria, a 1,200-seat auditorium, a shopping complex, a health centre, and an international guest house, with completion targeted for 2027-a significant step forward in CUO's developmental journey.

The Union Ministry of Education has allocated the required funds for the extensive development, which had been pending for several years. The breakthrough was made possible through the unwavering support of the Ministry and the persistent efforts of CUO Vice-Chancellor, Prof Chakradhar Tripathi.

The formal agreement for the PMC was signed on January 3 2025, in the presence of Prof Chakradhar Tripathi.

Representing CUO were Prof NC Panda, Registrar (I/c); Dr Ashok Kumar Sahoo, Finance Officer (I/c); and Er Sriram Padhi, Executive Engineer, CUO. On behalf of NBCC, RN Sinha, Senior General Manager, signed the agreement.

This milestone project underscores CUO's commitment to creating a world-class learning environment while promoting sustainable development.

ORC at FMU

Research needs networking under common platform

BHARAT BHUSAN PATNAIK

The inauguration of the Odisha Research Conclave (ORC) 2024 was filled with enthusiasm, optimism and a sense of purpose. It reflected the mood that research needs partnerships, networking, and a strategy of discussions under a common platform. Fakir Mohan University showcase platform included demonstration of products, patents and publications from collaborating institutes in India and Republic of Korea.

The showcase was enthralling, knowledge and innovation driven. Lots of interest was shown in the international collaboration.

Among the collaborating institutes, the National Rice Research Institute (NRII), Cuttack displayed the patents and products such as the alternate energy light trap, leaf colour trap, decomposer, liquid nitrogen fertilizer, tensi-

ometer and other biological control facilities.

Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT), Bhubaneswar represented by three extension scientists showed exhibits such as vermicompost/vermiwash, varieties of millets, bio-fertilizers, natural farming products, Azolla varieties, honey extractor and sticky trap among others. The ICAR-Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (CIFA) exhibited important technologies such as fish feeds, broodvac, attenuated Aeromonas vaccine and species/system diversification systems.

The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) represented by scientist Dr Anil Mohapatra and a few scholars /staffshowed a total of 16 zoological specimens identified by the team. The ICAR-Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (CIFRI) showed patents/products such as the springless apparatus for hold-

ing bivalves, identification and differentiation of Argulus species and other molecular biology kits for detection of bacterial/ viral infection.

To summarise, the versatility of the collaborating institutes were showcased in a common platform this ORC at the FM University and this should be a reflection of new innovation frontiers transcending boundaries and convergence of disciplines contributing to the State and Centre developmental policies.

Among the exhibits that attracted lots of attention at ORC-2024 was the Fakir Mohan Gallery, Fakir Mohan Sahitya Ghara (Literary house) and the national awards conferred in the name of the son of the soil, Fakir Mohan. A few literary publications such as the magazine 'Vyasa Sambhar' and 'Chamana Athaguntha' were praised by the visitors.

The exhibition also highlighted the research advance-

ments in 'rice', 'fish', 'betel', and the future prospects with the collaborating organisations. A total of hundred rice-crop varieties collected from 18 States were exhibited with additional 15 varieties from the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Philippines. Further, the exhibitions also showcased the betel vine germplasm (about 24 varieties from 5 districts of Odisha), fish research especially the zebra fish culture unit, marine fish molecular diversity and conservational study.

There were also exhibits from archaeology showing medieval sculptures, potteries etc., geology highlighting gemstones, minerals and ores, anthropology showcasing traditional crafts and other items and folklore museum showing jute-based crafts.

Additionally, scope was available to highlight the sustainable research strategies adopted by the Biosciences and Biotechnology division of

FM University such as the activities of Center for Research and Conservation in Indian Horseshoe Crabs (CRCIHSC), the black soldier fly culture facility targeting circular economy and the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs), and the lightning flash hazard forecasting. Another interesting facet was the FM University outreach programme and best practices such as social work initiatives, Achi Jadi Diya Nahi Jadi Niya, laptop lending to students, open library system etc.

The FMU Technology Business Incubator (TBI) and centre of excellence activities further glorified the research, innovation and commercialization interface for fostering scientific development.

At the end, ORC-2024 was blessed with display from PXE, DRDO, Chandipur that included rocket launchers, dummy rockets, mortars etc. showing the authority of In-

dian Defence system against external threats. Complementing PXE, DRDO armament capability was the dynamic missile range from ITR, Chandipur including Agni 1-5, Prithvi, Akash, Astra, Brahmos, Nag and MSRAM.

Hence a convergence of research and development, innovation and commercialized products marked the showcase of ORC-2024. Creating an atmosphere of research with a future of knowledge and innovation-driven economy was the objective, and with the able guidance of Vice-Chancellor Prof Santosh Kumar Tripathy and workaholic commitment of faculties, staff and students, the event was made memorable.

(Dr Patnaik is Associate Professor and Head PG Department of Biosciences and Biotechnology, Fakir Mohan University, Baleswar, Odisha) (With additional inputs from the collaborating organisations)

PM Modi to global community: India's heritage shows future lies in peace, not war

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHUBANESWAR

Asserting that the world today listens to India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said that due to the country's heritage, it is able to tell the international community that the future does not lie in 'yudh' (war) but in 'Budh' (Buddha). Addressing the diaspora at the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention in Bhubaneswar, Modi said India is not only the mother of democracy, but democracy is a part of people's lives here. He said the world today listens to India, which not only presents its own views strongly but also those of the Global South. Noting that at the time when the world was witnessing the expansion of empires by the power of the sword, Emperor Ashoka chose the path of peace, he said this was the strength of India's heritage. "Due to this heritage, India is able to tell the world -- 'bhavishya yudh mein nahi hai, Budh mein hai' (the future does not lie in war but



in Buddha)," he said. Modi said he has always considered the diaspora as India's ambassador to the countries they live in. "We are not just the mother of democracy, but democracy is part of our lives, our lifestyle. We don't

have to be taught diversity, rather, our life runs on diversity. That's why wherever Indians go, they become part of the society of that particular place. We respect the rules and traditions of that country and also honestly serve that

country and its society, contributing to its growth and prosperity. At the same time, our hearts continue to beat for India," he said. The PM said it was because of the diaspora, that he keeps his head high wherever he goes.

"I do not forget the love, affection and prestige I receive across the world. I would like to say thank you. This is because of you, I keep my head high across the world. During the last 10 years, I have met several leaders across the world. The

world leaders praise the Indian diaspora. It's because of the social values you add to their society," he said. "Your safety and welfare are our top priority. We consider it our responsibility to help our diaspora during crisis situations no matter where they are. This is one of the guiding principles of India's foreign policy today. Over the last decade, our embassies and offices have been sensitive and proactive," he said. Modi said that earlier in many countries, people had to travel long distances to access consular facilities and wait for days for help. "Now, these problems are being solved. In the last two years, 14 embassies and consulates have been opened. The scope of the OCI card is also being expanded," he said. The PM said the diaspora played a major role in Independence in 1947, and sought their help to make India a developed country by 2047. He said India is not only a young country but also a country of skilled youths.

Uttarakhand to implement UCC this month says CM Pushkar Singh Dhami



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BAREILLY/UP

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Thursday highlighted the various initiatives undertaken in the state, reaffirming the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the "Devbhoomi" this month. Uttarakhand is the first state in the country to have UCC Act, which seeks to establish a uniform and an equal set of rules on marriage, divorce, succession and inheritance for all citizens in the state, except the Scheduled Tribes (STs), irrespective of religion. It makes registration of all marriages and live-in relationships mandatory. "We have formulated the Uniform Civil Code law in Devbhoomi Uttarakhand. This is the state's first honour and will be implemented within this month," Dhami said during the inauguration of the 29th Uttarayani Mela in Bareilly. He compared the UCC to India's sacred rivers such as Sharda, Ganga, Saraswati and Kaveri, stating that just as they sustain life across the country, the UCC will work similarly. Regarding the state's tourism and infrastructure initiatives, Dhami said, "In Haridwar and Rishikesh, we are planning to develop the Ganga Corridor. Work on a corridor along the Sharda River has also begun." He added that Uttarakhand continues to see an increasing influx of devotees and tourists which would be bolstered by the reconstruction efforts in Kedarnath and the master plan underway at Badrinath

Dhami. Dhami also announced beautification and restoration efforts for temples in the Kumaon region and development at Purnagiri. "It gives me immense joy that more devotees from Uttar Pradesh visit Purnagiri. We are creating the Sharda Corridor, which will enhance the ghats and beautify the area," he said. The chief minister expressed hope for Uttarakhand becoming a hub for destination weddings and tourism, emphasising the state's growing reputation. "Handicraft products from Uttarakhand are gaining recognition among multinational companies and women in the state are doing excellent work. Over one lakh women in Uttarakhand are now earning a substantial income. We will provide them with interest-free loans," he said. On governance and security, Dhami shared progress on several legal reforms, including the anti-conversion law, the introduction of anti-riot legislation and measures to counter exam malpractice. "We have taken strong steps by enacting an anti-riot law. Any damages caused during riots will be recovered from the perpetrators. Similarly, with our anti-cheating law, over 100 individuals involved in exam malpractice have been jailed. This ensures fair opportunities for deserving candidates," he added. Dhami mentioned initiatives to combat "land jihad", stating that 5,000 acres of encroached land have been freed.

First case of HMPV detected in Lucknow, health department on alert

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow has reported its first case of Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) after a 60-year-old woman tested positive. A private laboratory confirmed the diagnosis, and her sample has been sent to King George's Medical University (KGMU) for further testing. The woman, a resident of the Cantt area, was initially admitted to Charak Hospital before being transferred to Balrampur Hospital late Wednesday night. She is currently in isolation in Ward 11, where her condition is being monitored. The detection of HMPV has put the health department on alert as 11 cases have been reported nationwide so far. Experts assure that there is no need for panic, as HMPV is a seasonal virus that causes symptoms like cold, fever, cough, and chest tightness. Dr. Shailendra Kumar, a senior health official, said that the infection is manageable with proper care and precautions. Human Metapneumovirus belongs to the Pneumoviridae family and has been present in the environment for decades, although it was officially identified in 2001. The virus is typically associated with winter seasons and flu-like symptoms. It was first confirmed in India in 2003 in children, as per studies conducted by BJ Medical College and the National Institute of Virology, Pune. While the virus is not new, health experts recommend staying vigilant.

India, Bangladesh border forces hold informal meeting at Petrapole to strengthen border coordination

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Amidst recent objections by the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) over the Border Security Force's (BSF) attempts to erect fences in certain areas along the India-Bangladesh border, the two forces held an informal meeting at the Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Petrapole in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district on Thursday. The pre-scheduled meeting, aimed at fostering mutual cooperation and enhancing coordination along the border,



was attended by BSF South Bengal Frontier inspector-general Maninder PS Pawar and BGB brigadier-general Mohammad Humayun Kabir. The discussions between the two forces focused on effective border management, measures to prevent illegal crossings, combating cross-

border crimes, and fostering a secure and peaceful environment in the region, a statement by the BSF South Bengal Frontier said. The meeting assumes significance in the wake of recent instances of BGB raising objections to BSF's efforts to build border fences in certain areas along the Indo-Bangladesh border. Pawar emphasised the importance of mutual cooperation in ensuring the stability and prosperity of border regions, while Kabir expressed the BGB's readiness to work closely with their Indian counterparts to resolve

issues amicably, the statement added. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral relations and pledged to enhance joint efforts to address border challenges, it added. The fencing work in Sukdevpur area of Malda's Kaliachak III block was briefly paused on Monday after the BGB claimed it was being conducted on Bangladeshi territory. However, the issue was resolved through discussions, and construction resumed without further disruptions on Tuesday.

Union Minister Chirag Paswan confident of alliance's victory in Bihar assembly polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA

Union minister Chirag Paswan on Thursday asserted that all constituents of the NDA in Bihar will "together" contest the assembly elections, due in less than a year. The Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) president was replying to queries from journalists on RJD president Lalu Prasad holding out an olive branch to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. "There are some people who may be dreaming of causing a rift in the NDA. But, that is not going to happen. No NDA partner is going to align with the opposition coalition," Paswan said. "I would also like to add that all five NDA partners in Bihar will fight the assembly elections together and win more than 225 seats (in the 243-member House)," the Hajipur MP said. The NDA in Bihar comprises the chief minister's JD(U), BJP, LJP(RV), Union Minister Jitan



Ram Manjhi's Hindustani Awam Morcha and Rajya Sabha MP Upendra Kushwah's Rashtriya Lok Morcha. Last month, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had, in an interview, cryptically said that the BJP's parliamentary board would take a call on whether to go without a chief ministerial candidate in Bihar. This was viewed, in political circles as well as a section of the media, as a signal from one of the most powerful leaders in the BJP to Kumar, who is in his 70s and has been chief minister for close to two decades.

US has independent criminal justice: Garcetti on proceedings against Adani

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI

US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti on Thursday declined to comment on the ongoing legal proceedings in the United States involving Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani and other executives. Talking to reporters in Mumbai, Garcetti expressed optimism about continuing collaborations between the US and India to enhance capacity-building efforts in the region. "No, I don't have any comment on that. Obviously, we have an independent criminal justice (system that is different) from our political (system). It's different than a lot of countries," Garcetti said when asked about the Adani issue. "We have had amazing partners with the great industrialists here, with the big companies. We have sometimes been funding directly, new factories, ports



and other things," said Garcetti, who was named the 26th US Ambassador to India on March 15, 2023. "And I would hope that that vision continues no matter what, because we are seeing a great new India being built. We are seeing a capacity of Indian companies to do that outside of India, whether it is in the

region, in places like Sri Lanka or whether it is in the eastern coast of Africa," he said. "I would hope we keep our eye on the ball. That is the most important thing, of who has the capacity, how can we partner and ensure that (instead of) debt traps and state-based, you know, more autocratic visions, we have

democratic-led industrialists from across both the nations," he said. US prosecutors have charged Adani for allegedly being involved in a scheme to bribe Indian officials with USD 265 million (around Rs 2,200 crore) in exchange for favourable solar power contracts.

Three Naxalites killed in Chhattisgarh encounter amid ongoing anti-naxal ops



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RAIPUR

Three Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Thursday, state Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma said. The security forces have achieved success in the anti-Naxal operation in Sukma, he said. So far, bodies of three Naxalites have been recovered and the search operation is still underway, Sharma, who holds the Home portfolio, told reporters in Raipur. Referring to the IED blast triggered by Naxalites on January 6 wherein eight security personnel and a civilian driver of their vehicle were killed in Bijapur district, the deputy CM said, "There is huge anger among security forces after what Naxalites have done." "I have met them (security forces). I reiterate that with the strength and courage of our jawans, the (Naxal) menace will be eliminated within the stipulated time," he said. Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday vowed to eliminate Naxals from the country by March 2026 and asserted that the sacrifice of those killed by the extremists in Chhattisgarh will not go in vain.

Ayodhya emerges as a thriving economic hub after Ram Mandir consecration

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ AYODHYA

Almost a year after the consecration of Ram Lalla at the grand Ram Mandir, Ayodhya has witnessed a remarkable transformation. Once known for its tranquil religious gatherings and modest economy, the city has become a bustling hub of economic activity. While standing as a symbol of devotion, the Ram Mandir has also emerged as the cornerstone of Ayodhya's economic resurgence. "The faith of millions has brought prosperity to Ayodhya," said Anil Shukla, a shopkeeper near the temple. "Earlier, people barely had enough to survive. Now, thanks to Ram ji ki kripa, everyone is earning well. Even



small vendors are flourishing." The influx of pilgrims has been staggering. Government figures reveal that from January 22 to September 30, 2024, Ayodhya received 13.77

crore visitors, outpacing even the Taj Mahal in footfall. The numbers are expected to exceed 16 crore by the end of the year, driving a wave of unprecedented economic activity. For local residents,

this transformation has brought prosperity and optimism, changing lives across sectors. Kamlesh Tiwari, a local shopkeeper, shared his experience: "Earlier, we earned just enough to make ends meet. Now, with so many tourists coming in, my income has tripled. It feels like Ayodhya is finally getting its due." Small businesses, from souvenir vendors to eateries, have thrived in this new environment. Vendors selling Ram Lalla photographs, puja materials, and prasad have reported record earnings. Many have expanded their operations, sourcing high-quality products to meet the growing demand. The state government's

redevelopment initiatives, worth ₹85,000 crore, have played a crucial role in facilitating this transformation. Infrastructure improvements, including better roads, public utilities, and transport facilities, are designed to handle a daily footfall of 3 lakh visitors. These developments have not only enhanced the tourist experience but also created thousands of jobs in retail, transport, construction, and food services. For residents, the economic boost is tangible. People are upgrading their lifestyles, purchasing vehicles, and investing in better homes. Mukesh Kumar, a prasad seller near the temple, said, "I used to earn ₹300 a day, but

now it's ₹2,000 on average. The number of visitors has changed everything for us." The rise in Ayodhya's profile has also attracted national and international brands. Global food chains like Domino's and Pizza Hut, along with retail giants like Reliance Trends, have set up outlets, catering to the growing number of tourists. Such developments highlight the city's evolving identity as not just a spiritual center but also a modern economic hub. Economists view Ayodhya's transformation as a blueprint for leveraging religious tourism for urban development. According to Dr. Arvind Mishra, an economic analyst, "The growth we're seeing in Ayodhya is a perfect example

of how faith and economy can work hand in hand. With increased tourism, disposable incomes are rising, and this ripple effect is boosting the local economy in ways we couldn't have predicted." The changes are visible everywhere, from the vibrant new markets near the temple to the busy streets lined with vendors. Local entrepreneurs, small-scale traders, and service providers all report significant growth in their earnings. Even roadside snack stalls, offering items like tandoori chai and sweets corn, are benefiting from the influx of tourists. Ayodhya today is a city transformed, with its faith-driven identity seamlessly merging with its newfound economic dynamism.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Breaking ice

The India-Afghanistan talks reflect India's shift from non-recognition of the Taliban to a pragmatic approach to engagement

In a significant step towards recalibrating ties, India and the Taliban-led Afghan government held a high-level meeting in Dubai. The dialogue, attended by India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Afghanistan's Acting Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, revolved around enhancing bilateral relations and addressing regional challenges. The talks, focusing on economic, humanitarian, and strategic cooperation, underscore India's pragmatic approach toward engaging with Afghanistan despite the complex political dynamics following the Taliban's return to power in 2021. India's relations with Afghanistan have been historically robust, characterised by cultural and economic collaboration. However, the Taliban's return disrupted bilateral ties, with India maintaining a cautious stance while continuing to provide humanitarian aid. The evolving geopolitical landscape, Pakistan's actions in the region, and Afghanistan's dire humanitarian crisis have necessitated a renewed engagement. The discussions also



gain relevance amidst regional tensions, notably Pakistan's airstrikes in Afghanistan, which New Delhi strongly condemned. This shared concern over Islamabad's destabilising actions further aligns Indian and Afghan interests, fostering mutual cooperation.

The Dubai meeting covered a wide range of topics. India reaffirmed its commitment to aiding Afghanistan's recovery. It pledged continued support in healthcare, food security, and disaster relief, building on its earlier contributions, such as 50,000 metric tonnes of wheat, medical supplies, and vaccines. Besides, both sides emphasised the strategic importance of Chabahar Port in Iran as a key trade and humanitarian supply route. The port offers Afghanistan access to global markets, bypassing Pakistan, and could serve as a stabilising economic lifeline for the war-torn country. India has expressed readiness to resume developmental activities, including infrastructure and capacity-building projects. This signals India's willingness to strengthen Afghanistan's socio-economic framework despite challenges posed by the Taliban's governance. The Afghan delegation addressed India's concerns about terrorism and regional stability, assuring cooperation to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for anti-India activities. The talks indicate a shift in India's approach. This may encourage other nations to adopt a similar stance, recognising the necessity of dealing with the Afghan government. But the biggest takeaway from this meeting indeed was Strengthening India-Afghanistan ties to counter Pakistan's influence in the region. Islamabad's strained relations with Kabul, exacerbated by recent airstrikes, present an opportunity for New Delhi to assert its role as a reliable partner. Reviving trade and development projects through Chabahar Port could bolster Afghanistan's economy and offer India strategic leverage in Central Asia.

importance of Chabahar Port in Iran as a key trade and humanitarian supply route. The port offers Afghanistan access to global markets, bypassing Pakistan, and could serve as a stabilising economic lifeline for the war-torn country. India has expressed readiness to resume developmental activities, including infrastructure and capacity-building projects. This signals India's willingness to strengthen Afghanistan's socio-economic framework despite challenges posed by the Taliban's governance. The Afghan delegation addressed India's concerns about terrorism and regional stability, assuring cooperation to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for anti-India activities. The talks indicate a shift in India's approach. This may encourage other nations to adopt a similar stance, recognising the necessity of dealing with the Afghan government. But the biggest takeaway from this meeting indeed was Strengthening India-Afghanistan ties to counter Pakistan's influence in the region. Islamabad's strained relations with Kabul, exacerbated by recent airstrikes, present an opportunity for New Delhi to assert its role as a reliable partner. Reviving trade and development projects through Chabahar Port could bolster Afghanistan's economy and offer India strategic leverage in Central Asia.

PICTALK



A commuter rides his bicycle through a mustard field on a winter morning, in Nadia

Navigating Trump redux: India's tightrope



BHOPINDER SINGH

While Trump's focus on countering China could strengthen Indo-US strategic ties, his erratic temperament and divisive policies present challenges

In India, there is a mix of excitement, tentativeness, and even concern, with the second coming of Donald Trump as the President of the United States. While Trump's excitable temperament is well known, he ought to be served better with hindsight of experience. But he may not. While India will remain resolutely relevant and critical in his foreign policy calculus, the handling of certain issues could test Indian reaction and patience. His inevitable fixation with managing China will necessitate nurturing the strategic 'pivot' of India as a counterbalance, Delhi's deep-rooted equations with countries like Russia or Iran, could earn his ire and vitriol.

A lot will depend on 'Team Trump' who will aid and assist Trump as he attempts the shape his poll promises of MAGA i.e., Make America Great Again! However, unlike the first term when he did inherit and heed reputation and professionalism as the criteria for key jobs in the Trump administration (though subsequently, he developed a penchant for 'revolving door' ousters of many), this time the criteria only seem to be 'loyalty' to Trump, personally. There is a disconcerting and contradictory logic to many recent appointments that begs the question if it indeed will be 'business as usual' - something Delhi had got used to, irrespective of the dispensation in Washington DC. Sadly, that vital presence of 'adults in the room' from the first Trump administration who were able to navigate and manage Trump out of his outlandish and fickle ideas, will not be present anymore. If anything, in a room filled with 'loyalists' (read, obsequious staff), chances that someone will play the 'adult in the room' anymore, will be starkly lesser than before, as there could be competitive grovelling to valourise Trump's ideas, whatever be the portent. How will Trump's purported 'non-interventionist' preferences sit with Sino-wary countries like India, Japan or Australia (the other three from QUAD framework) that are in the direct line of Chinese belligerence and expansionism? Will Trump's 'non-interventionist'



ist' instinct embolden Beijing to finally bite the bullet on Taiwan and storm the same, knowing that beyond mouthing platitudes, Washington DC will not intervene militarily? The picture emerging out of a beleaguered (and potentially isolated) Ukraine does not seem reassuring from a security angle, as the possibility of America pushing its 'allies' under the bus, seems very plausible. Even disconcerting memories of the Summer of 2020 when the Chinese aggression pushed through Indian frontiers, with a seemingly disinterested Trump offering to 'negotiate a deal' instead of adopting a more assertive stance, are still raw. Indeed, the Americans had expedited the exports of weaponry to Delhi, but all that made imminent commercial sense to the die-hard businessman in Trump. Just how ramrod and unflinching will the Trump support be in meeting any such exigency in the future, is worth considering. Even in bilateral relations, there is a fresh bunch of unrestrained radicals who make up the Trump redux cabinet. They may or may not play by the traditional rulebook of diplomacy and could make comments that are unpalatable to Indian sensibilities. Delhi will be under immense pressure to moderate the bilateral

engagement and conversations, as the Indian democracy has its dynamics and imagined perceptions that will disallow unruly comments, even if they were to come from the USA. Adding to the complexity is the contradiction that many amongst this new Trump cabinet are trigger-happy interventionists (e.g., Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Elise Stefanik the Ambassador to UN etc.) a neoconservatives whom Trump rubbish repeatedly - how this contradiction will manifest will be interesting. Even on non-security issues like immigration, trade terms, or commitment towards the environmental issues, could be a very rocky ride for Delhi. India has made ambitious commitments towards the global environmental cause, whereas Trump's rhetoric has cockily been, "We're going to drill, baby, drill," and confirmed that, "I will terminate the green new scam". While India isn't on top of its target list on immigrant issues, it will only be a matter of time before the bogy "stealing your jobs" impacts India. Trump will be a mega populist who will dance to the 'redneck' wish list and this will impact relations with the world's largest democracy, a lot more gravely than other countries. Trump has demonstrated a ter-

ifying ability to shed responsibilities towards his allies (sovereign, coalition, and even personal) and also his moral responsibility by readily abandoning its vital geostrategic stakes (remember Afghanistan, and now Syria) with a thoughtless shrug of the shoulder and "not my problem" approach. This tests the will to invest in a transactional relationship like the one offered by Trump, as no support can be construed for sure. Owing to his polarising politics of identity and blind support for the likes of Benjamin Netanyahu, the narrative emanating from the White House could jeopardise and harm the societal fabric of a diverse country like India that needs to maintain an inclusive outlook. America itself is in for a tumultuous time with the President-designate having promised to close the border with Mexico and launch the largest deportation exercise in US history within hours (not days) of taking over. While Donald Trump's rhetoric is usually more bark than bite, India may find it difficult to accommodate his provocative talk and temperament, beyond a point. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views are personal)



THERE IS A DISCONCERTING AND CONTRADICTORY LOGIC TO MANY RECENT APPOINTMENTS THAT BEGS THE QUESTION IF IT INDEED WILL BE 'BUSINESS AS USUAL' - SOMETHING DELHI HAD GOT USED TO, IRRESPECTIVE OF THE DISPENSATION IN WASHINGTON DC

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INDIA'S GDP GAP WITH CHINA WIDENS

Madam — An analysis of the economies done by a start-up highlights the pressing necessity to boost India's lacklustre growth. In 1980, India's Gross Domestic Product was \$186 billion, close to China's \$303 billion. But, by 2024, India's GDP had grown 21 times to \$3.93 trillion, while China's GDP had surged to \$18.5 trillion—61 times its 1980 level. To put it differently, China's GDP in 2004 was 2.82 times greater than India's. In 2014, it was 5.13 times greater and in 2024, 4.71 times greater. India's GDP surged 2.94 times from \$694 billion to \$2,043 billion between 2004 and 2014, while it grew merely 1.92 times, reaching \$3,930 billion between 2014 and 2024. Had the GDP growth in the decade starting in 2004 persisted in the decade beginning in 2014, the GDP disparity would have further decreased. The decade before 2004 was a period of consolidation after structural reforms were initiated. India has to rejig its economic strategy to achieve a consistent 9-10 per cent rate of growth. India chose a mixed economic system, which combines the features of both socialist and free-market economic systems. The recent push towards private investment in government-owned assets has served only as an easy route for crony capitalists to enrich themselves into billionaires. Democratic India can consider a new economic system aimed at fostering faster growth. However, growth in Southern India, which accounts for about 31 per cent of GDP, has thrived under the current system and can accelerate further with adequate support from the Centre. Northern India needs to explore strategies to bridge the gap with the South. And the ostrich-like attitude and constant denials hinder progress in addressing realities. The nation must embark on a rapid growth path that creates jobs, elevates the living standard of common man and reduces inequality. Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

India's AI gets a leg-up



A golden chapter has begun in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in India. The announcement by Microsoft Chairman and CEO Satya Nadella to invest \$3 billion (approximately Rs 25,000 crores) marks a historic step toward elevating India's technological capabilities to new heights. This initiative will serve as a foundation for strengthening visionary programs like Prime Minister Narendra

Modi's 'Digital India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-Reliant India). The Government of India is already committed to promoting digital infrastructure, skill development, and startups. Microsoft's investment will further bolster these plans. The initiative to train 10 million Indians in AI over the next five years is a significant step to prepare the youth for global competition. This effort will create new opportunities in areas such as cloud infrastructure, data centres, and SaaS (Software as a Service). With the support of the government, Indian industries and startups will become global leaders in competition. The collaborative efforts of Microsoft and the government will not only place India in a leading position on the global AI map but also pave the way for entering a golden era of self-reliance and innovation. RK Jain | Barwani

STAMPEDE AT TIRUPATI TEMPLE

Madam — Six devotees, including four women, and many injured in a stampede near Vishnu Niwasam in Tirupati for getting tokens to visit Tirumala Srivari Vaikuntha Dwara is disturbing, tragic and appalling. A huge rush for getting tokens by devotees had caused the tragedy. But this accident at Tirupathy is unfortunate and could have been avoided. It is the utter failure of the state machinery. Mismanagement in the crowd governance system is a primary cause of the accident. An immediate investigation should be conducted into this incident. Officials should be made accountable for negligence of duty. People were accommodated in temporarily constructed compartments and neatly provided darshan. This token system is ill-advised and should be dispensed with. All safety measures should be put in place so that people have a hassle-free Vaikunta Ekadasi Darshan, which is to run for the next ten days. Savana Ramachandran | Chennai

EARTHQUAKE IN TIBET

Madam — Powerful Tibet earthquake near Nepal kills 53, injures 62; tremors also felt in Bhutan and northern India, including Delhi-NCR and parts of Bihar. The impact of the temblor was felt across the region of 800,000 people, which is administered by Shigatse, the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama, one of the most important figures in Tibetan Buddhism. Can we ever forget the havoc the Nepal earthquakes wreaked back in 2015, killing about 9,000 people, or the huge quake in China's Sichuan province in 2008 that killed almost 70,000 people? Today (on January 7, 2025), a 7.1 magnitude earthquake, near the Nepal-Tibet border, was felt in North India. India's geographical position at tectonic plate boundaries makes it prone to earthquakes, particularly in the Himalayan and Northeast regions. Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

How India's healthcare sector is accelerating towards Viksit Bharat 2047



P N ARORA

As India embarks on its journey toward becoming a \$35 trillion economy by 2047, the healthcare sector emerges as a critical pillar in this transformation.

As India aims to achieve its ambitious goal of becoming a \$35 trillion economy by 2047, the healthcare sector stands as the cornerstone of this transformation. With aspirations to increase the average life expectancy from 71 to over 85, India's vision of Viksit Bharat aligns closely with the sentiment of "Swasth Bharat, Viksit Bharat, and Niramaya Bharat." It considers a robust healthcare system not just as a necessity but as the foundation for a healthier, more productive nation. **A Visionary Healthcare System** As part of its vision, the government strives to establish a healthcare system capable of addressing the diverse needs of a population exceeding 1.4 billion. Not only are efforts underway to improve physician and hospital bed ratios, expand access to affordable healthcare, and ensure universal health insurance coverage but the inclusion of senior citizens over 70 years through the Ayushman Bharat Vay Vandana Card highlights the commitment to an inclusive healthcare approach. India's



Viksit Bharat 2047 journey builds upon substantial achievements in the healthcare sector. Since independence, the nation has witnessed notable reductions in neonatal, infant, under-five, and maternal mortality rates, reflecting improved healthcare outcomes. Flagship initiatives such as Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres, the establishment of new AIIMS, and a growing network of medical colleges have bolstered healthcare delivery. Moreover, digital advancements through initiatives like CoWIN, the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, and e-Sanjeevani have revolutionized healthcare accessibility, particularly in rural areas. **Role of the Pharmaceutical Sector**

India's pharmaceutical leadership has further solidified the country's position as a global healthcare contributor. As a leading producer of vaccines and generic medicines, the nation plays a pivotal role in ensuring global healthcare equity. Coupled with its steadily increasing medical tourism industry, India continues to attract patients worldwide, offering advanced care at affordable costs. The private sector continues to play a crucial role in complementing public healthcare efforts. Innovation, R&D, and cost-effective healthcare models spearheaded by private players have extended quality healthcare to remote and underserved regions. Technological advancements, from AI and robotics to telemedicine and wearables, are shaping the future of healthcare delivery, making it more accessible. **Roadmap of Viksit Bharat 2047:** Looking ahead, the roadmap to Viksit Bharat 2047 includes priorities such as workforce development through the expansion of medical and nursing colleges, further integration of cutting-edge technologies, and an

emphasis on preventive care, mental health, and holistic wellness. The transition from mass-produced to biotech-based personalized medicine, supported by advancements in CRISPR and nano-technology, is set to redefine pharmaceutical practices. India's healthcare system is also poised to transform its business models, shifting from predominantly out-of-pocket expenses to public and insurance-funded frameworks. This evolution will not only strengthen the healthcare sector but also ensure equity and affordability for all. As India strives toward its 2047 goals, public-private partnerships and an unwavering commitment to equitable healthcare are vital. India's healthcare providers remain dedicated to contributing to this transformative journey. By fostering innovation, enhancing accessibility, and ensuring quality care for all, the sector aims to play an integral role in building a healthier, stronger, and more prosperous India. (The writer is CMD, Yashoda Super Speciality Hospitals, Kaushambi, Ghaziabad; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

TRUMP 2.0: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ASEAN

With Trump's return, Southeast Asia finds itself bracing for another era of US ambiguity



KUMARDEEP BANARJEE

With the return of Donald Trump to the US presidency, Southeast Asia braces for another era of unpredictability in American foreign policy. Southeast Asian nations, while expressing formal congratulations following Trump's victory, are now focusing on how his administration will impact their economies and strategic interests. As the region's governments gear up for a distinctly different governance style than the one under President Joe Biden, the potential for dramatic shifts in trade relations, diplomatic ties and regional stability is palpable. The ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—spanning from Indonesia to Myanmar—are acutely aware that Southeast Asia may not be at the top of the new administration's priority list.

Trump is a known figure for his transactional and often unpredictable style of diplomacy. ASEAN countries, while understanding the volatility that a Trump administration can bring, remain cautiously optimistic that his return might lead to a return to serious trade talks. Many regional leaders believe that Trump's preference for direct, bilateral negotiations could lead to more favourable deals for specific countries, particularly those that are not bound by multilateral negotiations, like those seen under Biden's tenure. Yet, for many in Southeast Asia, the most pressing concern remains the US-China relationship. Since Trump's first term, ASEAN nations have had to balance their relationships with both China and the US, seeking to maintain economic growth and regional security without angering either side. The dynamic has changed considerably in the



post-pandemic era, as China and ASEAN emerged as each other's largest trade partners. The direction of US-China relations will have profound consequences for Southeast Asia's economic stability and security.

Under Trump, this relationship was tense, marked by the trade war and military posturing, and the nomination of headline China critics, such as Marco Rubio for Secretary of State and Mike Waltz as National Security Advisor, signals that the US will continue to confront China head-on in ways that could disrupt regional dynamics. While many ASEAN leaders are concerned about the economic impact of a hard-line US-China policy, there is also hope that Trump's presidency could bring much-needed attention back to Southeast Asia's trade and strategic importance. This could be particularly appealing to resource-rich nations like Indonesia and the Philippines, which are in high demand for critical minerals used in electronics and green technologies. On the other hand, a significant worry for ASEAN countries is that they may become collateral damage in the US's efforts to reduce its trade deficit.

Despite these uncertainties, ASEAN's primary goal will remain stability and balance. ASEAN countries will push for steady relationships with both global powers, aiming to shield themselves from the worst effects of US-China tensions while seeking to expand their own economic and diplomatic space. To avoid being left behind, India is watching the space closely, as it is well aware that Trump will target Delhi soon.

Delhi is trying to rebuild bilateral relationships with several ASEAN groups of countries, even as it participates with full vigour on the multilateral platform. The chief guest for 2025 Republic Day would be the President of Indonesia, a key country in ASEAN. India's exports to the US could be hit due to Trump's overtures and it needs to find new markets for its products, while gently easing out domestic compliances and trade barriers. The region's future relationship with the US will depend not only on Trump's domestic agenda but also on how ASEAN and India navigate the delicate balance between American and Chinese influence in the years to come.

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

The courage to tell untold stories on the celluloid

Despite the challenges, a new wave of filmmakers continues to illuminate untold stories, challenging entrenched narratives and bringing forgotten truths to light



SANTANU GANGULY



Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has praised the film *The Sabarmati Report* produced by Ekta Kapoor and her Balaji Motion Pictures. Before this also PM has been praised films - *The Kashmir Files* and *The Kerala Story*. It took almost seventy years after the independence of India, for a few courageous filmmakers like Vivek Agnihori to make *Buddha in a Traffic Jam*, *The Tashkent Files*, *The Kashmir Files*, and *Vaccine War*; Sanjay Puri to make *72 Hoorain* and Sudipto Sen to make *The Kerala Story* and *Bastar: The Naxal Story* both produced by Vipul Shah. Fortunately, most of these films have been celebrated among the audiences overwhelmingly. The group of pseudo-secular, those who still control the fake narratives to spread one-sided, false propaganda throughout the world, have also been super active in dismissing these films.

But not all filmmakers are lucky enough; forget about PM's praise to release their films, get proper distribution channels or theatres, or the cooperation from the local authorities, governments and positive reviews by film critics. It is almost swimming against the tide. After the success of those films, some independent filmmakers got the courage to tell the true stories, incidents which were unfortunately never been part of our history syllabus. The incidents were not discussed, or debated much by the elite of the society or the so-called liberal, secular, intellectual groups. Very few filmmakers dare to make films on those subjects, because, in most cases, the victims are the majority Hindu community while the oppressors are from other communities. Since the last many years there has been a tendency among the liberals, that whenever the Hindus are the victim, the stories have been buried with all extra efforts so that the so-called peace should be maintained in society.

Even if there has been immense loss of human lives, property, rape of women, and permanent displacement from the homeland, nothing is much more impor-



SINCE THE LAST MANY YEARS THERE HAS BEEN A TENDENCY AMONG THE LIBERALS, THAT WHENEVER THE HINDUS ARE THE VICTIM, THE STORIES HAVE BEEN BURIED WITH ALL EXTRA EFFORTS SO THAT THE SO-CALLED PEACE SHOULD BE MAINTAINED IN SOCIETY

tant than the pseudo ideology of keeping peace in the society to just appease the particular community.

That is why so far whatever films have been made on the partition of India very few films portrayed the true stories. Most of the films are sugar-coated to portray that the victims belong to both communities and it was a loss for everyone. No doubt the partition of India was a great loss for all the communities but why do we feel ashamed to point out the faults and the responsible people? Neither our history books nor the literature or cinema have been ever so brave as to tell the actual stories of our society.

Filmmaker M K Shivaaksh made the film *Accident or Conspiracy: Godhra* which is based on the infamous case of Godhra in Gujarat, where fifty-six Ram devotees were burnt alive in a train coach of the Sabarmati Express by one particular community. Again the film became the victim of the ecosystem and got a very limited release so the film can't be seen by many people in the country. While *The Sabarmati Report* not only got praise from the PM but also Yogi Adityanath, Pushkar Singh Dhami and Naib Singh Saini took time to watch the film along with the crew and casts and made the film tax-free in their respective states UP, Uttarakhand and Haryana because of Ekta Kapoor - Smriti Irani connection. But Shivaaksh was not that lucky at all.

He had planned to release his film *Accident or Conspiracy: Godhra* in February but the censor board delayed the process for seven months. They have asked for literally all the evidence and the makers have provided all the related evidence based on the

Nanavati - Mehta Commission Report, Court Verdicts, eyewitness records as well as all the supporting documents.

To study the material the censor board took seven months and even after that they gave the certificate where they chopped about fifty per cent of the content, informed Shivaaksh. Unfortunately, some renowned actors also took advantage of the situation from these novice young independent filmmakers to bully them, those who have good connections with the government agencies as well as some strong political backing. Initially, they talk big to bag the role and comparatively good remuneration, but after the film is completed, instead of helping the film for smooth sailing, they even discourage the other co-actors from not promoting their film just pretending to be secular. Forget to help with the censor process, they don't even come forward to promote the film, nor even post on social media.

Pushpendra Singh director of *Ajmer 92*, Kamal Chandra director of *Humare Baraah* and Shivaaksh, all of them have the same terrible experiences with some of their actors. Akashaditya Lama's *Bengal 1947* described the hardships faced by the displaced Hindu refugees from the then East Pakistan now Bangladesh to the completely unknown, unfamiliar terrain of present days Chhatisgarh.

A few political leaders' high ambitions divided the country into three different territories and created devastating for the crores of innocent people in the country. The film was released in very limited theatres. Akashaditya said that when he made the film in Chhatisgarh, the then Congress government helped him a lot

without imposing many terms and conditions, then Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, told him only not to show Pundit Nehru in a bad light.

Even a cabinet minister came to receive the shooting team at the airport, and arranged the full-proof security for the entire team, with overwhelming hospitality. By the time the film got ready to release BJP government came to power in Chhatisgarh, but unfortunately, the film never got any special attention or tax rebate from the local government. However, the films have been screened at various film festivals. In the same manner, another film *The Diary of West Bengal* directed by Sanoj Mishra has suffered massively at the hands of the government and political elements of West Bengal.

Finally, the film was released, which too a very limited release by the order of the court. All of these films are not only talking of the great human rights violations by one particular religious community towards the majority Hindu community but also these films are unbiased, true documentation of time a political era as well as the impact on society. Unfortunately, none of these films got any recognition, big awards or even tax rebates from the government. In this situation, a special section "The untold stories" could have been curated in the just concluded International Film Festival of India (IFFI) which would have been very much appropriate to showcase the film to the larger audiences, as well as the screening at IFFI would have certainly boosted the morale of the filmmakers.

(The writer is a Delhi based Film Festival curator. The views expressed are personal)

What gaming regulation can learn from SEBI'S F&O regulations

India's gaming sector stands at a critical juncture. Thoughtful regulation can help it realise its immense potential while safeguarding consumers

Two seemingly disparate sectors—India's gaming industry and capital markets—are drawing significant attention in public policy discourse. Both sectors hold immense promise: gaming contributes to job creation, while capital markets foster capital formation. However, both also pose substantial challenges. Gaming can lead to habit formation and addiction, while the Futures and Options (F&O) segment of capital markets carries risks of speculative losses. Policymakers have tackled these challenges differently, with contrasting approaches in gaming and F&O regulation.



MANDAR KAGADE

around 568 million players—and employing 15,000 developers. The sector's revenue is projected to grow from \$3 billion in 2023 to \$6 billion by 2028, potentially creating 250,000 new jobs over the next decade. With development costs in India nearly 50 per cent lower than the global average, gaming has the potential to generate significant export revenues. However, this growth depends

on balanced regulation, particularly concerning gaming's habit-forming nature. Unfortunately, current proposals by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), and other stakeholders lean toward rigid, prescriptive measures, drawing inspiration from China's heavy-handed regulatory framework.

Flaws in Current Gaming Regulation

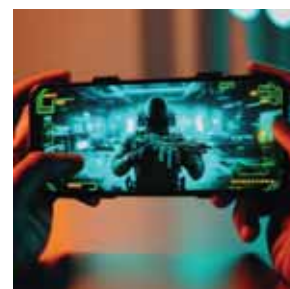
1. Time and Age Restrictions
Proposals to impose strict time limits and age restrictions on gaming apps are touted as innovative but raise significant concerns. Forcing intermediaries to monitor minors' activities infringes on privacy and contravenes the data minimi-

sation principle of India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDPA). Such policies may inadvertently lead to surveillance overreach, compromising minors' online privacy.

Parents, who have a far greater vested interest in their children's wellbeing, are better positioned to manage their gaming habits. Handing this responsibility to unelected bureaucrats not only undermines parental discretion but also risks creating intrusive and overly broad policies.

2. Blanket Warnings and Advertising Restrictions

The Ministry of Education's 2021 advisory linking online gaming to "gaming disorder" is an overgeneralisation. Such broad statements, without clinical substantiation, stigmatise



gaming and equate it with gambling. Similarly, ASCI's restrictions on advertisements portraying gaming as a viable career path stifle creativity. These measures lump educational and cerebral games with gambling-like activities, disincentivising developers from creating "good habit-forming" games. This could slow innovation and limit the gaming sector's growth potential.

Learning from SEBI'S Approach to F&O Regulation

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) faced a similar challenge with F&O trading, where explosive volumes exposed retail investors to speculative risks. Instead of resorting to outright bans,

Key Steps by SEBI:

Increased Contract Sizes: Raising the minimum investment size by 50 per cent reduced speculative trading by retail investors.

Disclosure Requirements: Brokers were mandated to display potential downsides prominently, promoting informed decision-making.

Structural Adjustments: Limiting weekly expiries to one per exchange curbed excessive speculative activity. These steps exemplify a bal-

anced approach—relying on nudges and incentives rather than bans. SEBI recognised that heavy-handed policies could undermine broader goals, such as increasing equity market participation.

India's gaming sector can benefit from SEBI's measured approach to F&O regulation. Policymakers must embrace strategies that balance innovation, consumer protection, and industry growth. Here are three actionable recommendations:

1. Nudges and Incentives Over Mandates: Rather than micromanaging user behavior, regulators can incentivise responsible gaming through voluntary measures. For instance, gaming platforms could offer rewards for adhering to healthy gaming limits.

2. Transparent Education Over Stigma

Policymakers should prioritise honest disclosures about gaming's potential downsides instead of messaging that fosters shame. Clear and factual communication can empower gamers to make informed choices without demonising the industry.

3. Consideration of Unintended Consequences:

A tunnel-vision approach risks stifling innovation and creating barriers to growth. Policymakers must evaluate how restrictive measures might deter investment, hinder creativity, or drive users to unregulated platforms.

(The writer is Founder & Principal, Black Dot Public Policy Advisors; views are personal)

Hollywood Hills fire breaks out as deadly wildfires burn out of control across Los Angeles

A fast-moving fire broke out in the Hollywood Hills on Wednesday night, threatening one of Los Angeles' most iconic spots as firefighters battled to get under control three other major blazes that killed five people, put 100,000 people under evacuation orders and ravaged the city from the Pacific Coast to inland Pasadena.



Los Angeles Fire Department firefighters work to extinguish a house fire as the Palisades Fire ravages a neighborhood amid high winds in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood of Los Angeles.

sections of the city. Actors lost homes: The flames marched toward highly populated and affluent neighborhoods, including Calabasas and Santa Monica, home to California's rich and famous. Hollywood stars. Mandy Moore, Cary Elwes and Paris Hilton are among the stars who said Wednesday they had lost homes.

"PUBLIC NOTICE FOR LOST DOCUMENTS"

To Whomsoever It May Concern My clients (1) Smt. Lata Mittal, W/o Sh. Susheel Mittal, R/o F-395, Sudarshan Park, New Delhi-15 and (2) Mr. Shrey Mittal, S/o Sh. Susheel Mittal, R/o F-52, Bali Nagar, New Delhi-15 are registered owner of a PROPERTY known as C-101, area measuring 152 sq. yards, part of Khasra No. 732 Min., situated in the estate of Village NAWADA, New Delhi-59 abadi known as Block-C, Mohan Garden, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059.

This PROPERTY was purchased by them from Shri Pradeep Dahiya and Shri Naveen Dahiya both sons of Shri Prem Singh Dahiya, R/o B-82, Teachers Colony, Samaipur, Delhi-42 vide regd. Sale Deed as document no. 5816, Book no. 1, vol. no. 4178 on pages 41 to 49, regd. on 19-03-2019 regd. in the office of The Sub-Registrar IIB, Janakpuri, New Delhi. Since then this PROPERTY is in the possession of my clients, Pradeep Dahiya and Naveen Dahiya acquired the same from their sister Smt. Sunita, D/o Sh. Prem Singh, R/o B-82, Teacher Colony, Samaipur, Delhi-42 through registered GPA in blood relation. It has come to our notice that some previous documents/chain of the PROPERTY documents are lost/misplaced by Smt. Sunita. The details of original documents lost are mentioned below:-

- 1. Original Agreement and Affidavit both dated 19.11.1998 executed by Shri Kali Ram, S/o Sh. Rihal Singh in favour of Smt. Sunita, D/o Sh. Prem Singh. 2. Original GPA, Agreement to Sell and Affidavit, all dated 27.11.1990 executed by Smt. Ram Ratti, W/o Sh. Jai Pal Rathi in favour of Sh. Kali Ram, S/o Sh. Rihal Singh. 3. Original GPA, Agreement to Sell, Affidavit and WILL, all dated 04.03.1987 executed by Sh. Shori Lal, S/o Sh. Ram Chand in favour of Smt. Ram Ratti, W/o Sh. Jai Pal Rathi. 4. Original GPA, Agreement to Sell, Affidavit and WILL, all dated 22.12.1986 executed by Sh. Sewa Ram, S/o Sh. Chaman Lal in favour of Sh. Shori Lal, S/o Sh. Ram Chand. 5. Original Sale Deed dated 03.07.1972 executed by Sh. Subey Singh, S/o Sh. Tulsi Ram in favour of Sh. Sewa Ram, S/o Sh. Chaman Lal.

A Police complaint for above said missing/lost documents is registered under FIR / LR No.2030806/2018 dated 22-08-2018.

If anyone has these documents with him/her or have any information regarding these lost documents, he/she may inform to my client at 9871394810 or 9871394811. If anyone has any claim on the said property, the same is informed to me at the below given address by regd. post within 15 days from the date of appearance of this Notice in the Newspaper.

I request all concerned parties to take note of this public notice and not to deal with any person claiming to be the owner of the said property without the written consent of my clients.

Sanjay Rana, Advocate (Mob: 9811031327) Enr. no. D-2803/08, Delhi High Court Add.: Plot no. 15, Gali No. 1, Mahavir Vihar Colony Near SDM/DC Office, Kanjhawala, Delhi - 110081

SRF LIMITED Regd. Office: The Galleria, DLF Mayur Vihar, Unit No. 236 & 237, 2nd Floor, Mayur Vihar Place, Noida Link Road, Mayur Vihar Phase I Extn, Delhi-110091 Corporate Office: Block-C, Sector 45, Gurugram, Haryana-122 003 Tel. No (Regd office) : (+91-11) 49482870; Fax : (+91-11) 49482900 E-mail: cs@srf.com, Website: www.srf.com; CIN: L18101DL1970PLC005197

NOTICE NNnotice is hereby given that Share Certificates pertaining to shares of the Company detailed below have been reported lost and request(s) for issue of duplicate Certificates in lieu thereof have been received by the Company :-

Table with 5 columns: Sl. No., Folio No., Name of the Share Holder / Legal Heir (Claimant), Cert.No., Dist.No., Last Shares. It lists multiple entries of lost share certificates.

Public is hereby cautioned against dealing with the aforesaid share certificates.

for SRF LIMITED Sd/- RAJAT LAKHANPAL Sr. VP (Corporate Compliance) & Company Secretary Place: Gurugram Date: 09-01-2025

major fire leveled entire blocks, reducing grocery stores and banks to rubble in the Pacific Palisades, a hillside area along the coast dotted with celebrity homes and memorialized by the Beach Boys in their 1960s hit "Surfin' USA." More than 1,000 structures were destroyed in the Palisades fire, the most destructive in the modern history of LA. Many people were hurt, including

first responders, LA County Fire Chief Anthony Marrone said. The scope of the destruction was just becoming clear: Block after block of California Mission Style homes and bungalows were reduced to nothing but charred remains dotted by stone fireplaces and blackened arched entryways. Ornate iron railing wrapped around the smoldering frame of one house. The apocalyptic scenes spread for miles.

Body of Israeli hostage found in Gaza, possibly alongside his son's remains

Israeli soldiers recovered the body of a 53-year-old hostage in an underground tunnel in southern Gaza, the military said Wednesday, and the army was determining if another set of remains belongs to the man's son. The discovery of Yosef AlZayadni's body comes as Israel and Hamas are considering a ceasefire deal that would free the remaining hostages in Gaza and could halt the fighting. Israel has declared about a third of the 100 hostages dead, but believes as many as half could be alive.

The family are members of the Bedouin community, part of Israel's Palestinian minority who have Israeli citizenship. The traditionally nomadic community is particularly impoverished in Israel and has suffered from neglect and marginalisation. Palestinians make up some 20 per cent of Israel's 10 million population, and millions more live in Gaza and under Israeli military occupation in the West Bank. Eight members of Israel's Bedouin minority were abducted in the October 2023 attacks.

ated "comes far too late for Yosef - who was taken alive and should have returned the same way." "Every day in captivity poses an immediate mortal danger to the hostages," the group said in a statement. The bodies of around three dozen hostages have been recovered in Gaza, including the two on Wednesday, and eight have been rescued by the army. Many of the families fear their loved ones' fate is at risk as long as the war in Gaza rages on. Israeli forces are pressing their air and ground war against Hamas, and Palestinian medics said Israeli airstrikes killed at least five people in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday, including two infants and a woman. Israel's military says it only targets militants, accusing them of hiding among civilians.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS CHANGE OF NAME

I, Prahalad Singh, Father of JC-472773K Sub Udai Singh, R/o VPO- Pritampuri Via Kanwat, Teh- Neem Ka Thana, Dist- Sikar, Rajasthan-332708, have changed my name from Prahalad Singh to Prahalad Singh vide affidavit dated 09/01/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

I, Kamala Devi, Mother of JC-472773K Sub Udai Singh, R/o VPO- Pritampuri Via Kanwat, Teh- Neem Ka Thana, Dist- Sikar, Rajasthan-332708, have changed my name from Kamala Devi to Kamla Kanwar vide affidavit dated 09/01/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

I, Joginder Lal Narang S/o Om Parkash Narang, R/o D-87, Lord Krishna Road, Adarsh Nagar, Delhi- 110033, declare that Krishna Narang is my son, in his documents, my name is erroneously written as Jugender Narang & Jugender Lal Narang, whereas my correct name is Joginder Lal Narang, all these names pertain to one and same person, i.e. myself.

I, Tejas Makhija S/o- Pratap Makhija, R/o- Flat No. 328, Sanskriti Apartments, DDA Multistorey, Sector- 19 B, Dwarka, South West Delhi, Delhi- 110075, declare that in my Passport (No. # C6639300), my name is erroneously written as Tejas, whereas my actual name is Tejas Makhija, which may be amended accordingly.

I, JC-736560K Nb/Sub Obbalarreddi Manga Raju, R/o- D.No-17-1-112/1, Velama Veedhi, Revenue Ward No.- 12, Narsipatnam, Anakapalli, A.P.- 531116, have changed my mother's name from Varahalu to Varahalu Obbalarreddi for all future purposes, vide affidavit dated 09/01/2025 before Executive Magistrate, Delhi Cantt.

I, Rajesh Sharma S/o Manoj Sharma R/o House No.RZ-26, Gali No.3 Phase-2, Nangloi Raod Najafgarh Jai Vihar South West Delhi-110043 have changed my minor daughter name ARCHNA alias KHUSHI KUMARI aged 16 year to KHUSHI KUMARI

Impeached President Yoon's lawyers warn detention may spark 'civil war'

South Korean opposition parties introduced a bill Thursday calling for an independent investigation into impeached President Yoon Suk Yeo's brief martial law declaration, as thousands of his supporters and critics held tense rallies near his residence ahead of his potential detention. The bill, jointly submitted by six parties, including the main liberal opposition Democratic Party, proposes that a special prosecutor investigate whether Yoon's martial law decree on December 3 constituted an attempted rebellion. The bill also calls for an investigation into opposition claims that Yoon sought to provoke a clash with North Korea by allegedly flying drones over Pyongyang or discussing the possibility of shooting down trash-laden balloons launched from North Korea across the border, to justify a power grab at home. Yoon's lawyers and the South Korean military have denied the suspicions. Yoon remained holed up at his official residence in the capital city of Seoul, where the presidential security service has fortified the grounds with barbed wire and rows of vehicles blocking the roads, anticipating another attempt by law enforcement to detain him after last week's failed effort.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials, leading a joint investigation with police and the military, has pledged to work with police to make a more forceful effort to detain Yoon. It has warned that members of the presidential security staff could be arrested if they obstruct attempts to apprehend the embattled president. Yoon's lawyers argued against bringing him to custody, claiming he isn't a threat to flee or destroy evidence. They claimed that images of him being dragged out in handcuffs could spark a "civil war" in the divided country. At a news conference Thursday, Seok Dong-hyeon, a lawyer on Yoon's legal team, highlighted the fervent protests by Yoon's supporters and claimed that the anti-corruption office's "reckless" attempts to detain Yoon would "provoke a significant backlash from outraged citizens."

China concerned over new Syrian regime appointing Xinjiang Uygur militants to top military posts

China said it is greatly concerned over the new Syrian government appointing foreign terrorist fighters, especially from the banned Uygur militant group "the East Turkestan Islamic Movement", to senior military ranks. The East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) is active in China's volatile Xinjiang province. These remarks were made by Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN, at the UN Security Council Briefing on Syria on Wednesday. China is greatly concerned about the reports that said the Syrian Army has recently granted senior military ranks to a number of foreign terrorist fighters, including the head of Council, a listed terrorist organisation, the Turkistan Islamic Party, also known as the ETIM, Cong said. He called on Syria to fulfil its counter-terrorism obligations and to

prevent any terrorist forces from using Syrian territory to threaten the security of other countries, according to official media reports here. Reports from Syria say that the new Syrian regime headed by de-facto leader Ahmed al-Sharaa has appointed 50 new military officials of which six were foreign fighters, including that of ETIM. The Army is being re-organised by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the Islamist group that is now effectively in charge of the country following the overthrow of former President Bashar al-Assad earlier this month. Based on the names that have been published, they are said to include Chinese Uyghurs, a Jordanian and a Turkish national. All are said to have been given high-ranking positions as colonels or brigadier-generals, BBC reported. China has supported the Assad regime and was caught unawares by its sudden fall. Assad himself fled to Russia where he was granted asylum. Thousands of fighters from many different countries joined the uprising against Assad as it became an all-out armed conflict when mass protests were met with violence by the security forces. The new appointments appear to have been made in order to reward those fighters - whether from Syria or elsewhere - who played a significant role in the final triumph over the regime. The issue is just one of many that could complicate any successful transition to a new political and social framework in Syria, the BBC report said. For China, ETIM is a red rag as it blames the Uygur militant group for a number of militant strikes in different cities in China and Xinjiang where the Uygur Muslims who constituted the majority were restive over the large-scale settlements of ethnic Huns from other provinces. For over a decade China has deployed thousands of security forces to control the militancy.

Zelensky, Austin say military aid to Ukraine must continue under Trump

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin used their final meeting Thursday to press the incoming Trump administration to not give up on Kyiv's fight...

Austin leaves a consortium that now has more than a half dozen independent coalitions of those countries who are focused on Ukraine's longer-term security capabilities and who have committed to continuing to stand up those needs through 2027.

Globally, countries including the US have ramped up domestic weapons production as the Ukraine war exposed that all of those stockpiles were woefully unprepared for a major conventional land war.

Taiwan demonstrates sea defences against potential Chinese attack

Taiwan on Thursday demonstrated its sea defences against a potential Chinese attack as tensions rise with Beijing, part of a multilayered strategy to deter an invasion from the mainland.

The island's navy highlighted its Kuang Hua VI fast attack missile boats and Tuo Chiang-class corvettes in waters near Taiwan's largest port of Kaohsiung, a major hub for international trade considered key to resupplying Chinese forces should they establish a beachhead on the island.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Be it known to all persons that my client Smt. Mamata Tiwari, wife of Smt. Shyam Narayan Tiwari is the only legal owner of the property measuring 200 Sq. Yards comprising Plot Nos. B-178 and B-179, Shyam Kunj, Near Goyla Village, New Delhi-110071...

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENT e-TENDER CALL NOTICE No. AD/OE/6L-85/2016(PL/III)/2788 Dtd: 31.12.2024

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENT e-TENDER CALL NOTICE No. AD/OE/6L-85/2016(PL/III)/2788 Dtd: 31.12.2024

BEFORE THE ADDITIONAL SUB COURT AT CHENGALPATTU IN STATE OF TAMIL NADU I.A. NO. 3 OF 2024 IN O.S. No. 86 of 2024

BEFORE THE ADDITIONAL SUB COURT AT CHENGALPATTU IN STATE OF TAMIL NADU O.S. No. 86 of 2024 M/s. CENTURY LEATHERS (P) LIMITED REP BY ITS AUTHORISED REPRESENTATIVE MS. GEETA MOHANTY

PUBLIC NOTICE: This is to inform the general public that Flat No. B 10/107, B. Udoyagiri 2 Sector-34, No. 100/33 sq. mtrs. out of Kharsa No. 215, situated at Village Saini Pargana & Tehsil Dadri District Gautam Budh Nagar U.P. Through Registered Gift Deed Dated 07.01.2025 executed by Mr. Rajeev Vide Reg. No. 681 at SR-DADRI U.P. the above-mentioned property is going to be mortgage with FNBank Financial Services Limited.

ESAF GOLD AUCTION NOTICE: Notice is hereby given for the information of all concerned that Gold ornaments pledged with ESAF Small Finance Bank and not redeemed by borrowers, despite repeated reminders and notices, of our branches, are listed below. This will be auctioned as per the details given below.

PUBLIC NOTICE: My Client Mrs. Pinki w/o Mr. Rajeev owner of a Double Storey House area measuring 120 sq. yds i.e. 100/33 sq. mtrs. out of Kharsa No. 215, situated at Village Saini Pargana & Tehsil Dadri District Gautam Budh Nagar U.P. Through Registered Gift Deed Dated 07.01.2025 executed by Mr. Rajeev Vide Reg. No. 681 at SR-DADRI U.P. the above-mentioned property is going to be mortgage with FNBank Financial Services Limited.

BRANCHES & LOAN ACCOUNT NUMBERS: Faridabad: 75240001213933, 1600854. Customers who are interested to release the ornaments by paying the total due amount may do so, at the respective branches, on or two days before the date of the auction.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Whereas, M/s Vatika Seven Elements Pvt. Ltd. (Formerly known as Strong Infrabul Pvt. Ltd. & Others) is developing a Residential Group Housing Colony over an area measuring 14.30 acres in the revenue estate of Village Harsaru & Hayatpur, Sector-89A, Gurugram, Haryana, in accordance with the provision of license No. 41 of 2013 dated 06.06.2013 granted by Director, Town & Country Planning, Haryana, Chandigarh.

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-I, DELHI 4th Floor, Jeevan Tara Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001

BANK OF INDIA Applicant VS M/S SWADESHI ALUMINIUM CO P LTD Defendants (1) SOHNATH BHUTANI, 50, H/4/5, SUDVIDHAKUNJ, PITAMPURA, DELHI-110088

CONSTRUCTION, P. WAY AND FORMATION WORKS IN KATHIAR DIVISION: Tender Notice No. 1 KIR/Engg./01 of 2025, Dated: 03-01-2025, E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work:

Tender Notice No. 1 KIR/Engg./01 of 2025, Dated: 03-01-2025, E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: Tender No. 1: Brief Description of Work: At New Jalpaiguri: Construction of one coach length sick line - 2 Coach holding (Extension - 1). Tender Value: ₹.4,79,07,958.84/-; Bid Security: ₹.3,89,500/-; Tender No. 2: Brief Description of Work: Kathihar - Teznarayanpur - Provision of RGM Sidling - 2 stations under the jurisdiction of SR.DENIVI/Kathihar.

छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल पर्यावरण भवन, सेक्टर- 19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला-रायपुर (छ.ग.) 492002 Email - hoccecb@gmail.com

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, BHOPAL, DIST BHOPAL (M.P.) (Sewerage Project of PACKAGE-1) (FIRST CALL) Notice Inviting E-Tenders

Equinox India Tapir Constructions Limited (CIN: U70200DL2014PLC267441) Extract of Unaudited Financial Results for the quarter and nine months ended 31 December 2024

Table with 4 columns: Sl. No., Particulars, Quarter ended 31 December 2024, Corresponding quarter ended 31 December 2023, Previous year ended 31 March 2024

Notes: 1 The above results have been reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors (the Board) at its meeting held on 09 January 2025. 2 The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly / Annual Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 52(8), read with 52(4) of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly/ Annual Financial Results are available on the Company's website (https://equinoxindia.com/td) and on the website of BSE (https://www.bseindia.com) and NSE (https://www.nseindia.com).

MANIBHAVNAM HOME FINANCE INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED POSSESSION NOTICE (Appendix IV) Rule 8(1) Whereas the Authorized Officer of Manibhavnam Home Finance India Pvt. Ltd., a (hereinafter referred to as "MBHF"), MBHF, which has duly been Authorised by the Central Government, vide a notification dated 17.06.2021, to be treated as a Financial Institution, for the purposes of the "The Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, having its registered office at: 2nd Floor, W-2, South Extension Part-I, New Delhi-110049, under the persons of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 OF 2002) (hereinafter referred to as "Act") and in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 13(2) of the Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice to the following borrowers and co-borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

China routinely sends ships and planes to challenge Taiwan's willingness and ability to counter intruders, prompting Taiwan to scramble jets, activate missile systems and dispatch warships. Taiwan demanded on Wednesday that China end its ongoing military activity in near-by waters, which it said is undermining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and disrupting international shipping and trade. Mountainous Taiwan's strategy is to counter the much larger Chinese military with a relatively flexible defense that can prevent Chinese troops from crossing the strait. Landing sites are few on Taiwan's west coast facing China, forcing Beijing to focus on the east coast.

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot (Ph.D SECTION) BABA FARID UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES, FARIDKOT Ph.D ENTRANCE TEST (PHDET) - Jan 2025

Online fresh applications in the prescribed format are invited through University website w.e.f from 10/01/2025 to 30/01/2025 for admission to Ph.D Courses in faculties of Medical /Allied Health/Dental/ Nursing/ Physiotherapy/ Pharmaceutical Sciences, alongwith fee of Rs. 3000/- + 18% GST through University payment gateway. The date of Entrance Examination will be notified on University website later on. For eligibility/ detail/ updates visit at University at: www.bfuhs.ac.in

E-TENDER ARE INVITED FOR THE PROCUREMENTS OF FOLLOWING ITEMS UP TO 23/01/2025 1) Sign the rate contract for supply of Radiopharmaceuticals in Nuclear Medicine department 2) Tender for supply and Installation of NCT Machine 3) Tender for supply and Installation of Electrocauter machine 4) Patient Bath Trolley 5) OCT machine 6) Special repair of old pharmacy Block (Shed) in GGSMC, Faridkot 7) Tender for procurement and Installation of Neurosurgical Electric Drill

PUBLIC NOTICE: Be it known to all that I, RAJESH KUMAR SAXENA S/o SH. GANESH LAL SAXENA, allottee of JANTA FLAT NO.223, SECOND FLOOR, BLOCK-D, POCKET-11, JASOLA, NEW DELHI have applied for Certified Copies of the aforesaid flat vide File No./J21(1549) 2004/JHS/JL in DDA. The original documents i.e. DEMAND-CUM-ALLOTMENT LETTER, POSSESSION LETTER and NOC to water and electric of the above said flat has been lost. An NCR/LR No.2451374/2024 dated 31.12.2024 to this effect has been lodged in P.S. Crime Branch, Delhi. Any persons claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write to/ contact with above named person at above Address/Phone No.639614059 within 15days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to this property, can personally inform or write to Deputy Director (H) or Director (H),D.Block, Vikas Sadan, New Delhi

E-TENDER ARE INVITED FOR THE PROCUREMENTS OF FOLLOWING ITEMS UP TO 30/01/2025 1) Diagnostic Middle for analyser 2) Computerized Speech Laboratory with Speech 3) Digital Stroboscope with swallowing (Fees) workstation 4) Nasometer 5) Books and Journals for Central library GGS Medical college 6) procurement of Implants material at GGSMCH, Faridkot 7) Providing Fire Fighting & Fire Detection Service for Super Speciality Block in GGS Medical College & Hospital Faridkot 8) Providing 11KV Substation Including DG Set, Transformer and Electrical works for Super Speciality Block at GGS Medical College & Hospital, Faridkot 9) Construction of Sarai and Main Entrance Gate Opposite Emergency Block of GGS Medical Hospital Faridkot 10) Supply of different electrical, material under rate contract with BFUHS for its constituents College for day to day repair. 11)Testing & Commissioning of 4 Nos. lifts in Super Speciality Block in GGS Medical College, Faridkot. 12) Providing & fixing Automatic Sprinkler System of Fire Safety in Mother Block of MCH Building at GGS Medical Hospital, Faridkot

SAGAR SMART CITY LIMITED, SAGAR Registered Office : Sagar Smart City Office, 2nd Floor, ICCG Building New Collectorate Premises, Sagar, M.P.-470002 Phone : 07582-242850, E-mail : smartcitysagarp@gmail.com

NOTICE INVITING TENDER Sagar Smart City Ltd. (SSCL) invites online Bids from eligible Bidders for "Selection of an Agency for Construction and Development of Road- Tilli Junction to Girdharipuram Sagar under Smart Cities Mission". Tender No. 2025/SSCL/143

FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS Abhishek Rajnath Surve Executive Director

THE KANGRA CO-OPERATIVE BANK LTD. C-29, Community Centre Pankha Road, Janakpuri, New Delhi-110058 Phone: 911-25511942, 25511943, 25511944 E-mail: legal@kangrabank.com, legal1@kangrabank.com, Website: www.kangrabank.com

India has potential to increase organic products' exports to ₹20,000 Crore in 3 years: Goyal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India has the potential to increase exports of organic products up to Rs 20,000 crore in the next three years, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday. He said this while releasing the eighth edition of National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) with new regulations aimed at enhancing clarity and transparency in organic product standards as well as aligning with global standards. "Currently, our organic product exports are at Rs 5,000-6,000 crore. In the next three years, we can easily achieve Rs 20,000 crore exports, about 3-3.5 times increase from the current level," Goyal said at an event organised in partnership with industry body Ficci. He said the global demand for these products is about Rs 1 lakh crore, which can grow up to Rs 10 lakh crore in the coming years, a unique opportunity India should not miss. India already has one of the largest numbers of farmers in the world undertaking organic farming.



He also asked startups to come out with solutions that help in growth of the sector. The NPOP has undergone several revisions since its inception in May 2001. The eighth edition marks a significant update to the regulatory framework governing organic products in India, with the last revision occurring in 2014. Key features of the eighth edition of

Mohol, Minister of State for Commerce Jitin Prasada and Cooperation Secretary Ashish Kumar Bhutani were also present at the event. NPOP plays a crucial role in enhancing the credibility of organic products in both national and international markets. It ensures that agricultural products labelled as "organic" meet stringent standards, thereby protecting consumer interests and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. It is overseen by the Commerce Ministry, with the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) managing its implementation. TraceNet 2.0, an upgraded traceability platform of NPOP for seamless operations and enhanced tools for regulatory oversight, was also launched. On the occasion, a dedicated NPOP portal was launched for more visibility and ease of Operations for Organic stakeholders. An upgraded redesigned APEDA portal as well as an agri exchange portal were also unveiled.

NPOP include farmer-friendly regulations, streamlined certification, enhanced transparency and revamped traceability system. The eighth edition aims to bolster India's organic export sector, with an ambitious target of reaching USD 2 billion in organic food exports by 2030. Ministers of State for Cooperation Krishan Pal Gurjar and Murlidhar

Govt to soon launch new credit guarantee scheme for MSME sector

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju on Thursday said the government would soon launch a new credit guarantee scheme for the MSME sector covering loans up to Rs 100 crore. "We are likely to come up with a scheme, which was announced by Finance Minister in her last Budget, that could provide loans up to Rs 100 crore without guarantee, if they are already having the enterprise," he said at the concluding day of Grameen Bharat Mahotsav. The scheme is expected to be placed before the Union Cabinet soon for its approval. "For facilitating term loans to MSMEs for purchase of machinery and equipment without collateral or third-party guarantee, a credit guarantee scheme will be introduced. The scheme will operate on pooling of credit risks of such MSMEs. A separately constituted self-financing guarantee fund will provide, to each applicant, guarantee cover up to Rs 100



crore, while the loan amount may be larger," the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced in Budget 2024-25. The borrower will have to provide an upfront guarantee fee and an annual guarantee fee on the reducing loan balance, she had said. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector employs 50 million people, he said. MSMEs exports have witnessed a remarkable rise, increasing from Rs 3.95 lakh crore in 2020-21 to Rs 12.39 lakh crore in 2024-25, underscoring their critical role in boosting India's economy and strengthening global trade. The MSME sector in India has consistently demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability, significantly contributing to the nation's GDP over the years. The Gross Value Added (GVA) by MSMEs in India's GDP was 29.7 per cent in 2017-18, rising to 30.1 per cent in both 2022-23. To promote entrepreneurship in rural India, Nagaraju said, the government is very keen to lend more to rural areas through its various schemes. As the country surges ahead, he said, there is need to focus on four things, quality, linkages for exports, capacity building, and support to achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat.

Inflows into mutual funds' equity schemes increase 14 per cent in December

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Inflows into mutual funds' equity schemes increased by over 14 per cent on-month to Rs 41,156 crore in December, even as market volatilities continued. The small and midcap schemes of mutual funds continued to attract investor interest with inflows touching record highs during the month, despite the concerns being expressed about the two segments for the risk they portend, industry body Amfi said. Inflows into systematic investment plans came at Rs 26,459 crore, up from November's Rs 25,320 crore. The SIP assets under management stood at Rs 13.63 lakh crore, which is around a fifth of the overall. The overall assets under management of mutual funds came at Rs 66.93 lakh crore as on December 31, 2024, which was down from Rs 68.08 lakh crore in the month-ago period.



Venkat Chalasani, chief executive of the Association of Mutual Funds of India (Amfi), attributed the decline in market-to-market losses on corrections as well as outflows of Rs 1.27 lakh crore in debt schemes, which is in line with previous experience of a pull out at the end of a quarter. Responding to a question on the continued interest in equity funds and what to expect in the future, Chalasani acknowledged that there are uncertainties which may

influence the market, like the change in the US administration with Donald Trump as the President in January, but added that Indian investors continued to repose faith in the equity market. Pointing to the continued interest in SIPs, Chalasani said these inflows illustrate the optimism of the investors in the Indian markets over a long term. Asset management companies launched a total of 33 new fund offers during the month

through which over Rs 13,643 crore of money was mobilised, Amfi said, adding that this was higher than the 18 schemes that collected over Rs 4,000 crore in November. "Culmination of NFOs, SIPs and lump sum purchase led to an increase in net sales numbers. Investor confidence on mutual funds are an efficient tool for investments continue to remain strong," Kotak Mahindra AMC's national head for sales, marketing and digital business Manish Mehta said. Within the equity schemes, sectoral or thematic category attracted investors with the highest net inflow at Rs 15,331 crore, which is almost double of the Rs 7,658 crore in November. The midcap category saw inflows of Rs 5,093 crore in December 2024, while the smallcap category saw inflows of Rs 4,667 crore, Amfi said, adding that these are record inflows.

Government to give ₹35,000 Crore LPG subsidy to IOC, BPCL, HPCL

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government is likely to provide a subsidy of Rs 35,000 crore to state-owned Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) to make up for losses they incurred on selling the fuel this fiscal, sources said. The three fuel retailers have kept the price of domestic LPG unchanged at Rs 803 per 14.2-kg cylinder since March 2024 despite a rise in input raw material cost. This led to under-recoveries on LPG sales, and the resultant drastic fall in their earnings in the April-September (first half of current 2024-25 fiscal year). The total under-recovery on LPG sales for the industry in the current fiscal is estimated at about Rs 40,500 crore. Against this, the government is likely to provide Rs 35,000



crore in total spread over two financial years, two sources with knowledge of the matter said. IOC, BPCL and HPCL are likely to get Rs 10,000 crore during the current 2024-25 fiscal and the remaining Rs 25,000 crore in the next, they said, adding that provision of the subsidy is likely to be made in the Union Budget for 2025-26 that Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present on February 1. Sources said there is an under-

recovery (or loss) of about Rs 240 per 14.2-kg cylinder that the state-owned fuel retailers sell to domestic households at the current price of Rs 803. Prices of domestic LPG are regulated by government to insulate domestic households from high market rates. Regulated prices are lower than the Saudi CP - the international benchmark used to price domestic LPG. This is because domestic LPG production is not sufficient to meet the local demand and the fuel has to be imported. This leads to under-recoveries and consequent losses to the fuel retailers. Government from time to time compensates IOC, BPCL and HPCL for these losses. The three were previously paid Rs 22,000 crore compensation for 2021-22 and 2022-23 fiscal year. This was against Rs 28,249 crore of under-recovery. Of the Rs 40,500 crore under-recovery estimated for the current fiscal, IOC is likely to account for Rs 19,550 crore, HPCL Rs 10,570 crore and BPCL Rs 10,400 crore, according to sources. Domestic LPG prices have remained unchanged since March 9, 2024, when they were cut by Rs 100 per 14.2-kg cylinder just before general elections were announced. Sources said international LPG prices have remained moderately high in 2024, even during summers, leading to under-recoveries.

Software migration caused error in gold import computation; issue largely rectified: Sources

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government's initiative to migrate SEZ data from NSDL software to ICEGATE system for streamlined reporting of import data caused double counting of gold imports, resulting in inflated figures and the issue has now been largely rectified, government sources said. The downward revision has provided the actual picture of trade deficit (difference between imports and exports), which was earlier looking very high. The deficit for November will now be revised downwards from USD 37.84 billion to about USD 32.8 billion. Similarly, there

will be a revision in overall import numbers as well. On account of the correction, the commerce ministry has revised downwards the gold import data for November by USD 5 billion to USD 9.84 billion and for the first eight months of the current fiscal by USD 11.7 billion to USD 37.38 billion. The double counting occurred as imports into the country and the clearances from SEZs (special economic zones) to domestic tariff area (DTA) were counted twice due to technical glitches. The double counting which occurred on account of migration of NSMDL to ICEGATE has now being

largely rectified, but the migration is still underway, the sources said. "Correction and revision of data is part and parcel of framework of statistics world over. The data compilation is a complicated process as it involves collection of data from over 500 locations and over 2.5 lakh transactions take place every day," they said. They added that corrections and revisions of data is a standard practice and an integral part. "Revision and corrections do happens in data. This is a normal drill of statistics," they said. Exports and imports take place mainly from two places



— airports and seaports. SEZ (special economic zones) numbers were earlier counted separately (on NSDL system) as these zones are treated as foreign entities in terms of

provisions related to customs. In May last, it was decided to migrate from NSDL to ICEGATE. India's trade data compilation process starts with exporters

and importers filing Shipping Bills (for exports) and Bills of Entry (for imports) through the Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) system at Customs. All the data comes to the server of ICEGATE. The Indian Customs Electronic Gateway (ICEGATE) is the national portal of Indian Customs of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) that provides e-filing services to trade, cargo carriers and other trading partners electronically. Customs officials verify these documents for compliance and assign a unique transaction number upon clearance. The verified data is

then transmitted to the DGCIS in real-time. DGCIS validates the data to correct errors and aggregates it by commodity, trade partner, port, and mode of transport. The data is standardised into a consistent format, with trade values converted to USD for global comparability. The Kolkata-based DGCIS prepares a preliminary monthly trade report, which is reviewed and shared with government departments. After further validation, the final data is published in reports such as Monthly Trade Statistics, Annual Reports, and Country-wise Trade Data. This data is disseminated

through DGCIS press releases, government websites, and the Export-Import Databank, and is also shared with global agencies like WTO (World Trade Organisation) and IMF (International Monetary Fund). Trade data is periodically revised to incorporate updates from Customs. Key agencies involved in this process include DGCIS, CBIC (Customs), the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). This comprehensive process ensures accurate and reliable trade data for policymaking and analysis.

TCS Q3 net profit rises 11.95 per cent to ₹12,380 Crore, employee base dips

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's largest IT services company TCS on Thursday reported an 11.95 per cent jump in net profit at Rs 12,380 crore in the December quarter while the overall workforce reduced by over 5,000 employees. The Tata Group company had reported a net profit of Rs 11,058 crore in the year-ago period, and Rs 11,909 crore in the preceding September quarter. The company's revenue grew 5.6 per cent to Rs 63,973 crore as against Rs 60,583 crore a year earlier. However, it was down from Rs 64,259 crore in the September quarter. New order bookings came at USD 10.2 billion in what is termed as a seasonally challenging quarter due to the holiday season. Chief Executive K Krithivasan said the new orders were across industries,



geographies and service lines, which lends a "good visibility to long-term growth". He said the banking, financial services and insurance, along with consumer businesses are returning to growth and there are early signs of a revival in discretionary spend in some verticals. These two trends, along with continuing strong growth in regional markets makes the company confident for the future, he added. The operating profit margin came at 24.5 per cent as against 24.1 per cent in the quarter-ago period, but still lower than the aspirational

bracket. The overall workforce reduced by over 5,000 employees during the three months under review, and the overall base stood at 6.07 lakh as of December this year. The IT services attrition stood at 13 per cent. Chief Human Resources Officer Milind Lakkad said campus hirings are going according to plan and the company is preparing to onboard a higher number of campus hires next year. The company board announced a dividend of Rs 76 per share, including a special dividend of Rs 66 per share. TCS also announced the acquisition of land bank in Bengaluru from a Tata Group company for Rs 1,625 crore. The TCS crop closed 1.72 per cent down at Rs 4,036.65 apiece on the BSE on Thursday, as against a 0.68 per cent correction on the benchmark.

Rupee recovers from record low to settle four paise higher at 85.87 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee recovered slightly from its record low and settled with a gain of 4 paise at 85.87 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday amid firm American currency and elevated level of crude oil prices. According to forex analysts, relentless selling in domestic equities and outflow of foreign capital kept the local unit under pressure, while dollar strengthened on improved macroeconomic prospects in the US. They said, uncertainties related to trade restrictions ahead of the change in US administration under President Donald Trump continued to fuel dollar demand, while concerns over Federal Reserve's move to delay interest cut kept the country's benchmark treasury yields elevated. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at its historic low level of 85.94 and touched an intra-day peak



of 85.84 before ending the session at 85.87 (provisional) against the greenback, 4 paise higher from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee plunged 17 paise to settle at its all-time low closing level of 85.91 against the dollar. Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said the surge in US bond yields and FII outflows pressured the rupee. The US macroeconomic data was mixed, with weekly unemployment claims favouring the greenback while non-farm employment data was disappointing. "We expect rupee to trade with a negative bias on weak

domestic markets, strong dollar and rising US treasury yields. Elevated crude oil prices and FII outflows also put downside pressure on the domestic currency. However, any RBI intervention may support rupee at lower levels. Investors may watch out for non-farm payrolls report. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 85.75 to Rs 86.10," Choudhary said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.05 per cent higher at 108.98. The 10-year US bond yields also remained elevated at 4.67 per cent. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.03 per cent to USD 76.14 per barrel in futures trade. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined sharply by 528.28 points, or 0.68 per cent, to settle at 77,620.21 points, while the Nifty dropped 162.45 points, or 0.69 per cent, to 23,526.50 points.

INBRIEF

POWERGRID SIGNS MASTER AGREEMENT WITH EPRI, USA FOR STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a 'Maharatna' Public Sector Enterprise under Ministry of Power, Government of India, has taken a significant step towards collaborative technical research by signing a 'Master Agreement' with independent, non-profit energy research and development organization EPRI, USA.



BIMA SAKHI CROSSES 50,000 MARK

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched LIC's BIMA SAKHI Yojana at Panipat, on December 9, 2024. Bima Sakhi Yojana is a step towards Viksit Bharat through women empowerment which will provide social security to the families. LIC of India is proud to be a partner in Viksit Bharat by including women as partners in the nation's progress by providing them with opportunity of becoming BIMA SAKHI and self-reliant.

UNITING HEARTS, BRIDGING CULTURES: THE LEGACY OF SYCORIAAN MATRIMONIAL SERVICES

LUCKNOW: Sycoriaan Matrimonial Services is proud to celebrate 28 years of excellence in matchmaking, connecting people across cultures and continents to create lasting relationships. With a focus on personalised services, Sycoriaan has become a trusted name in the matrimonial industry, blending tradition and modern technology to foster meaningful connections.

A GLIMPSE INTO WANCHO CULTURE

JANUARY READS



Myth, Memory & Folktale of the Wancho Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh explores the cultural heritage, myths and challenges of the Wancho community, says SAKSHI PRIYA

Myth, Memory & Folktale of the Wancho Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh by Tara Douglas and Jatwang Wangsa is a remarkable work that provides readers with a rich and insightful exploration of the Wancho tribe, a prominent indigenous community from the hilly regions of Arunachal Pradesh, India. This book serves as a vital document of the tribe's deep-rooted cultural heritage, values and social dynamics. The authors combine thorough research with a nuanced narrative, bringing to life the tribe's traditions, worldview and their historical context in a way that resonates with readers from various backgrounds. A standout feature of the book is the authors' deep dive into the animistic belief system of the Wancho tribe. The book illustrates how the Wanchos view nature not simply as a physical environment, but as an interconnected and spiritual entity. In the tribe's worldview, animals, plants and natural features like rivers and mountains possess spirits that are integral to the tribe's existence. This perspective is explored through a variety of captivating myths, such as the story of Ganghan, the sun and his younger brother Katgong. These stories embody the tribe's philosophy of balance between humans and nature. The authors succeed in conveying the depth of this belief, which challenges the modern

tendency to view nature as a resource to be exploited, making it especially relevant in today's environmentally conscious world. The authors also offer a historical perspective that highlights the tribe's warrior culture, especially the practice of headhunting and its role in the tribe's defense against external threats. One of the most compelling historical accounts in the book is the detailed retelling of the Nyinu massacre of 1875, where the Wanchos ambushed British surveyors and killed 80 of them. The authors provide a balanced view of the event, contextualising it within the tribe's broader resistance to colonial forces. Rather than painting the tribe as "savage" or "violent," the book reframes the incident as an act of self-defense and an effort to protect their land and way of life. This nuanced portrayal is an important contribution, as it challenges reductive and one-sided portrayals of indigenous people in history. In addition to the grand myths and historical narratives, the book also provides intimate stories that offer a glimpse into the everyday lives of the Wancho people. These personal tales of love, sacrifice and family serve to humanise the tribe, making their culture more relatable and accessible. For instance, the stories of tribal elders, who hold deep connections to the land and community, underscore the importance of kinship and collective memory within the

Wancho society. These stories are not only culturally enriching but emotionally engaging, as they capture universal themes that resonate with readers on a personal level. Moreover, the book does not shy away from addressing the challenges the Wancho tribe faces in the modern world. One of the more poignant aspects of the book is its examination of the tensions between traditional practices and the pressures of

modernisation. As younger generations drift away from their ancestral ways, the tribe's rich oral traditions and cultural practices are at risk of being lost. The authors acknowledge this tension and highlight efforts within the community to preserve its heritage. This theme of cultural preservation is one of the book's most powerful messages, as it calls attention to the fragility of indigenous cultures in the face of rapid societal changes. The book emphasises the importance of safeguarding these cultural traditions, which offer valuable lessons for the contemporary world.

In terms of writing style, the authors strike a delicate balance between scholarly rigor and engaging storytelling. The book is accessible and enjoyable to read, making it suitable for both academic audiences and casual readers with an interest in indigenous cultures. The authors work the myths, histories and personal stories together in a way that is both informative and captivating, ensuring that readers stay engaged while gaining valuable insights into the Wancho culture.

Myth, Memory & Folktale of the Wancho Tribe stands as a comprehensive and insightful portrayal of the Wancho people, their beliefs, traditions and struggles. Through meticulous research and a compassionate understanding of the tribe's way of life, Tara Douglas and Jatwang Wangsa have created a significant contribution to the documentation of indigenous cultures in India. The book provides not only a deeper understanding of the Wanchos but also a broader perspective on the importance of preserving cultural diversity in a rapidly changing world. This book is highly recommended for anyone interested in anthropology, folklore, indigenous studies or the preservation of cultural heritage. It is a valuable resource that offers both academic insight and emotional resonance, making it an important read for those who seek to understand the depth and richness of indigenous cultures.

ABOUT THE BOOK
 Book: Myth, Memory & Folktale of the Wancho Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh by Tara Douglas and Jatwang Wangsa
 Publisher: Niyogi Books
 Price: ₹599

Book: Muffin: A Love Story
 Author: Rahul Sharma
 Publisher: OM International Books
 Price: ₹295

Book: Ex Object: The art of Holding on, Letting go
 Author: L. High and Anshulika
 Publisher: OM International Books
 Price: ₹695

Book: Liberal Hearts
 Author: Nayantara Violet Alva
 Publisher: Ebury Press
 Price: ₹350

Book: The Drowning
 Author: Nidhi Upadhyay
 Publisher: Ebury Press
 Price: ₹299

Book: Maupassant and a Cigar
 Author: Tho Mu Ragnathan
 Publisher: Niyogi Books
 Price: ₹620

LOVE, LOSS AND PSYCHE

BY TEAM VIVA

Rithwik Aryan's *Out of Madness* is a riveting debut that masterfully intertwines themes of mental health, love, loss and the fragility of human sanity. It is a novel born from an extraordinary journey of self-discovery, research and lived experience, offering readers an unfiltered glimpse into the complexities of the human psyche. Aryan's path to writing *Out of Madness* is as unconventional as the book itself. A dropout from Harvard Extension School, Aryan chose the



unpredictable path of storytelling over academia, immersing himself for over a year in the raw and unsettling environment of India's most notorious mental asylums. This decision infuses the novel with an authenticity that is rare and striking. The narrative follows Mason Moron, a psychology professor at Nalanda University who stages his death after discovering his wife's infidelity. He and Bahubali, an eccentric politician who is bent on shooting a cult adult film, get sucked into the tornado of insanity that compels their trip to a mental hospital, alongside a man blighted by normalisation, Mr. Staci, who is also trying to face her inner demons. Critiques of Aryan are equally accompanied by Aryan's own ability to navigate through and critique

Aryan's anguish, the same sheds light on how men are coerced into hiding their feelings. Using Aryan's masculinity and its portrayal through the character of Mason and Barbrugio, Aryan contemplates on how masculinity comes with grief and vulnerability, wherein, Aryan poses those males do not have to stoically conform to societal gender norms. Aryan in a more sensitive manner showcases the effect of societal pressures and expectations in suppressing feelings in men. What can be termed as one of Aryan's strongest suit shines in this very novel, the other novels that Aryan has penned encapsulate emotion through an extremely fact-based and observational lens. Aryan unlike many others who idealistically view and comment on other's pain, stayed in a

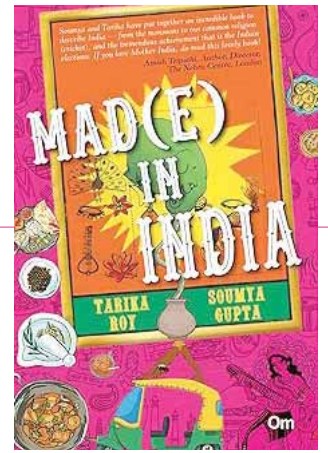
mental asylum while conducting empirical research, the combination of these two polarising views helped him stably sit in the middle. Aryan's characters are multifaceted, each grappling with their own struggles. Mason's existential crisis, Bahubali's delusional ambition and Staci's haunting past create a web of intersecting narratives that challenge readers to reflect on the nature of obsession, love, and redemption. The book's philosophical undertones deepen its impact, as Aryan delves into profound questions about freedom, identity and the human condition. The interplay of grief and desire, sanity and insanity, creates a narrative that is as thought-provoking as it is emotionally charged. The novel is not without its quirks. Its wild plot twists, dark humor and sometimes surreal narrative might alienate readers seeking a more conventional storyline. However, these elements make *Out of Madness* stand out as a fearless work that refuses to conform. *Out of Madness* is a bold debut that challenges societal norms and delves deep into the human psyche. Aryan's unflinching honesty, coupled with his evocative prose, makes this a must-read for those interested in mental health, emotional complexity, and the chaos of human existence. Rithwik Aryan has crafted a tale that is as much a reflection of his own journey as it is a story of his characters. With its raw emotion, intricate storytelling, and philosophical depth, *Out of Madness* cements Aryan's place as a writer to watch.

The Essence of Indian Life

BY GYANESHWAR DAYAL

Mad(e) In India penetrates the rich and amusing psyche of Indianness and Indian people. More than the politics of the nation, it presents the very essence of a nation - its people, its peculiarities, its multitude of caste systems, languages, superstitions, and an even bigger multitude of Gods and Goddesses worshipped. It provides a vivid illustration of the chaotic nature of the Indian metropolitan areas, the obsession inherited by its people with movie stars and their characteristics, and the Indian concept of optimistically doing whatever it takes to solve or fix a problem, termed 'jugaad'. It also underlines Indian culinary art, the diversity of the cultural and traditional practices of society, and the various forms of art present in the nation, showcasing how the integration of such diversity unifies the country, even in terms of conflicted domains. Out of a combination of satirical humour, perceptive and nuanced observations, and a repository of Indian expressions, the authors have come up with an engaging and illuminating account of the intricate web that is India. This, in turn, makes the book very interesting and highly recommended for someone who wants to discover the informatic and spiritual side of

India. *Mad(e) In India* humorously and cleverly depicts what it is to be Indian and how it is to live in this country. The authors of the book discuss Indian life and its various aspects, such as the panoply of languages spoken, the various cultures and religions, and even the everyday life and the unique approaches to solving problems, also known as jugaad, as per Indian traditions. The book takes note of the idiosyncratic lifestyles of people living in different metropolises of the nation, their compulsive fandom for movie stars, and the motley of food, customs, and ethnic handicrafts within the country. The authors demonstrate how one thread generalises the millions of complexities that exist in the Indian fabric - the ability of India to hold within itself so many differences. One can sense that the authors are writing in a conversational yet humorous way, which in many places comes laced with Indian expressions, making *Mad(e) In India* an interesting read even for those who merely seek entertainment. In case you have ever wondered how the Hindi film industry has always had a glamorised image of this country, *Mad(e) In India* is fun and informative, providing a comprehensive look at how such misconceptions arise and helping to clear them.



ABOUT THE BOOK
 Book: Mad(e) In India by Tarika Roy and Soumya Gupta
 Publisher: Om Publishers
 Price: ₹499

ABOUT THE BOOK
 Book: Out of Madness by Rithwik Aryan
 Publisher: Ocam (an imprint of BluOne Ink)
 Price: ₹499

Tottenham beats Liverpool 1-0 in English League Cup semifinals

PTI ■ LONDON

Lucas Bergvall's first goal for Tottenham secured a 1-0 win over Liverpool in the on Wednesday in a first-leg match notable for a serious-looking injury to Rodrigo Bentancur and the first in-stadium announcement by a referee in the English game. The 18-year-old Bergvall slotted home the winner in the 86th minute following a pass from Dominic Solanke, who thought 10 minutes earlier that he had given Tottenham the lead. That goal was ruled out after a VAR check for offside and referee Stuart Attwell communicated the decision via a wireless microphone to spectators inside Tottenham Hotspur Stadium and to TV viewers. In the sixth minute, Bentancur — the Uruguay midfielder who plays for Tottenham — fell to the ground and lay prone after landing awkwardly when

attempting a header from a corner. He was carried off on a stretcher, to applause from around the ground, after receiving treatment during a 10-minute delay and Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou confirmed after the game that Bentancur was "conscious" and talking. The second leg is at Anfield on Feb. 6. Newcastle leads Arsenal 2-0 after the first leg of the other semifinal match. Liverpool, the defending League Cup champion, saw its 24-match unbeaten run in all competitions come to an end and there was a hint of controversy about only the team's second loss of the season. Visiting players and manager Arne Slot were unhappy that Bergvall was on the field to score what proved to be the winning goal after he escaped collecting a second yellow card for a foul on Kostas Tsimikas moments earlier. Indeed, Tsimikas was off the field, waiting to come



back on having received treatment following Bergvall's tackle, when the Sweden midfielder tucked home his finish. Slot earned a yellow card himself for his protests, though he shook Attwell's hand after the final whistle. "The decision he made had a lot of impact on the result tonight," Slot said. Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk said it was "quite obvious" that Bergvall deserved a second yellow card. "And a minute later he scores the winner," Van Dijk said. "He (Attwell) made a mistake, in my opinion. And I told him that." It was a busy end to the match for Attwell, who took center stage after there was a video review following Solanke's strike in the 76th minute. After being notified that Solanke was offside, Attwell used the public address system to declare the goal had been ruled out, in an NFL-style announcement.

The League Cup semifinals were chosen to pilot a process in England that has been widely used in other sports, and in soccer at the Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand in 2023 and other FIFA events. **Kinsky's dream debut** Three days after signing from Sparta Prague, Antonin Kinsky — a 21-year-old goalkeeper from the Czech Republic — was handed his debut by Tottenham and he kept a clean sheet after producing a string of great saves, notably from Liverpool substitute Darwin Nunez. His parents and sister were in the crowd to watch him play his first match in English soccer and he was emotional after the game. "I have never dreamed this," Kinsky said. Tottenham signed the highly rated Kinsky with first-choice goalkeeper Guglielmo Vicario currently out injured.



Aiming for hat-trick of SA20 titles: Markram

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

Skipper Aiden Markram says his side is pumped up to make it a hat-trick of titles at the SA20 as it faces MI Cape Town in its opening game. Markram's team has won both the editions of the competition so far. The tournament begins days after South Africa blanked Pakistan in a Test series at home. "Definitely still really pumped to try and get a third one this year. Obviously, (there are) no guarantees and it's a hugely competitive tournament, so hopefully in a month's time something cool can happen," Markram said during the Captains' Day press conference here. Former South Africa captain Faf du Plessis said his side Joburg Super Kings haven't got the ideal weather to finalise its preparations as it has rained for the last few days in Johannesburg, but his players are surely up for a fight. "From my side, the weather has been a bit of a downer down in Joburg, it's been pretty wet. But from a squad perspective, some great signings in Joburg too, and you know the likes of Jonny Bairstow, Devon Conway, (Matheesha) Pathirana," du Plessis said. "Those three guys and

(Tabraiz) Shamsi, obviously, have a lot of experience that comes with them. So, all in all, our squad are looking very balanced. Two injuries, that wasn't ideal for our pace attack for Nandre Burger and Lizaad Williams. But we still feel we have enough options to put out a well balanced team," he added. MI Cape Town's Rashid Khan said his side was determined to put a better show in the third edition. "I think from the first year we had some really close games and it just didn't go our way. We had some great cricket last year as well, some wonderful cricket," he said. "But it was just more about the result, it didn't come our way. In the fresh year, we'll go with a fresh mind. We have some new faces in the team. We're looking forward to the new challenges and hopefully this year it won't be the same in the last few years." Paarl Royals' captain David Miller said the competitiveness in the league has benefitted South African cricket to a major extent. "It's been two special years for us, but also for the competition itself. Just playing with the competitive juices that we have, all the games are really fun to be a part of, as well as having incredible overseas players, all the coaches are around," he said.

I think he will be the next captain: Gavaskar on Jasprit Bumrah

PTI ■ SYDNEY

The legendary Sunil Gavaskar is in awe of Jasprit Bumrah's leadership qualities and reckons the peerless fast bowler will succeed Rohit Sharma as the next captain of the Indian team following his extraordinary display in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Bumrah recently produced one of the best-ever bowling performances by an overseas pacer in Australia and picked 32 wickets over five Tests. He was also captain during India's only victory in the series, helping the visitors to a convincing win at the Optus Stadium in Perth in the opener. "He could be the next man. I think he will be the next man. Because he leads from the front, he has got a very good air about him, the air of a leader but not somebody who is going to pressure on you," Gavaskar



aired his views on Channel 7. The batting great added, "Sometimes, you have captains who put a lot of pressure on you. With Bumrah you can see that, he expects the others to do what their job is, why they are in the national team, but it doesn't seem to pressurise anybody." Bumrah has been spearheading the Indian pace attack for some years now and his guidance has helped the

midway through Australia's first innings at the SCG in the final Test. In Bumrah's absence, the home team chased down 162 on the third day to win the series 3-1. The lead pacer was handed the captaincy in the final Test after the out-of-form Rohit Sharma "opted out" but a back spasm prevented Bumrah from bowling on the crucial third day. Bumrah destroyed Australia in Perth with eight wickets, grabbed six wickets in the first innings at the Gabba, and nearly turned the Boxing Day Test on its head with his exploits on the fourth afternoon at MCG. In the series decider at SCG, Bumrah sent back Usman Khawaja and Marnus Labuschagne early in Australia's first innings but could only bowl one over after lunch on the second day when the game was evenly poised.



McSweeney returns to Australia squad for Sri Lanka tour

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Nathan McSweeney was recalled to Australia's test squad on Thursday to tour Sri Lanka, less than three weeks after being dropped from the top order. Australia's selectors announced their squad Thursday for the two-test tour, with several fresh faces added to the group that played India in Sydney last week. Australia won the five-test series 3-1 and clinched a spot in the World Test Championship against South Africa at Lord's in June. Steve Smith will lead the squad to Sri Lanka while regular skipper Pat Cummins is on leave as his wife awaits the birth of the couple's second child. Australia's selectors concentrated on spin for the two Sri Lanka tests, with uncapped 21-year-old Cooper Connolly among the seven full or part-time slow bowling options in the 16-man squad. Connolly, a left-arm allrounder, has represented Australia in limited-overs cricket and has been called up for his maiden test campaign along with specialist spinners Todd Murphy and Matthew Kuhnemann. McSweeney scored 72 runs at

an average of 14.4 in his first three tests against India, before being replaced by Sam Konstas for the Melbourne Cricket Ground test starting Dec. 26. The 25-year-old McSweeney has batted at No. 3 for South Australia this season — averaging 97 — but has previously batted further down the order. Cricket Australia also said Cummins was "focusing on an ankle issue which was managed through the test summer" and fellow pacerman Josh Hazlewood was continuing his recovery from a calf injury. Mitchell Marsh was omitted for the tour, joining Hazlewood in focusing on the 50-overs Champion's Trophy in Pakistan which immediately follows the test tour. The first test begins Jan. 29 and the second Feb. 6, both at spin-friendly Galle International Stadium. A one-off one-day international is scheduled for Feb. 13, also at Galle. "Sri Lanka is a challenging and exciting place to tour given the different conditions players may be presented with," selector George Bailey said. "This squad provides several ways to structure the XI depending on what type of wickets we may encounter in each match."

Mandhana-led India eye dominant show in first-ever bilateral series against Ireland

PTI ■ RAJKOT

Riding high on a dominant performance against the West Indies, India under Smriti Mandhana will look to carry forward their winning momentum when they take on Ireland in the first-ever women's bilateral series, with the opening ODI scheduled here on Friday. India had swept the West Indies 3-0 in the ODI series, following a 2-1 triumph in the T20 series. Mandhana emerged as the top run-scorer across formats, scoring 148 runs in the ODI series, including two half-centuries, and 193 runs in the T20s, with three successive fifties. Notably, she scored five consecutive half-centuries, only missing out in the final ODI and Mandhana will look to bring the same form as she leads the team in the absence of regular captain Harmanpreet



Kaur, who has been rested alongside fast bowler Renuka Singh. With Kaur and Renuka missing, the responsibility shifts to the rest of the batters, including Harleen Deol, Pratika Rawal, and Jemimah Rodrigues, to step up. Deol was the top scorer in the ODI series with 160 runs, including a brilliant 115, while Rawal and Rodrigues also had solid

outings, scoring 134 and 112 runs, respectively, with a fifty each in the ODIs. In the bowling department, Renuka's absence will be felt as she was the leading wicket-taker with 10 wickets in the ODI series against the West Indies. The onus will now fall on newcomers Titas Sadhu and Saima Thakor to make their mark. Sadhu, 20, who has three wickets in ODIs and 13 wickets in T20Is, will be expected to provide early breakthroughs, having impressed with her pace and swing in domestic and recent international cricket. Saima, 28, will also look to continue her good form after taking seven wickets in eight ODIs so far. Vice-captain and off-spinner Deepti Sharma will be crucial, especially after her career-best bowling performance of 6 for 31 in the third ODI against the West Indies. Priya Mishra and Tanuja Kanwar will play key roles in supporting Deepti.

Australian Open 2025: Cases involving Jannik Sinner and Iga Swiatek make doping a top topic

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

It is a topic that shadowed tennis in 2024 and is still a talking point as the 2025 Grand Slam season opens at the Australian Open on Sunday (Saturday EST): doping and the cases involving Jannik Sinner — which actually is still not fully resolved — and Iga Swiatek. Both spent much of last year at No. 1, and Sinner still will hold that spot in the ATP rankings when he steps on court at Melbourne Park to begin the defense of his championship, one of two major trophies he won over the past 12 months. Swiatek, a five-time Slam champ and the woman leading the WTA rankings most of the past three seasons, is currently No. 2 behind Aryna Sabalenka, who will be chasing her third consecutive title in Australia. "Obviously, there are going to be some negative comments," Swiatek said. "You're not going to avoid that." Most current players prefer to remain silent when asked

about the cases. But there are those who have been happy to weigh in, including 24-time major champion Novak Djokovic, raising questions about whether Sinner and Swiatek were treated the same as other players facing similar circumstances and why their situations were kept under wraps for months. "I sit and wonder, Why such a big difference in treatment and judgment?" was two-time major champion Simona Halep's reaction to Swiatek's punishment. "I can't find, and I don't think there can be, a logical answer." Halep initially was banned for four years after testing positive for the banned drug Roxadustat at the 2022 U.S. Open, then had that penalty reduced to nine months on appeal — although she already had been off the tour longer than that. She was supposed to compete at Melbourne Park for the first time in three years, but withdrew from qualifying because of knee and shoulder pain. No one has been louder about the subject lately than Nick



Kyrgios, the 2022 Wimbledon runner-up who missed nearly all of the past two seasons because of injuries. He has been commenting regularly, in real life and online, even taking a jab (that he said was in jest) at Cruz Hewitt after the 16-year-old son of Australian Davis Cup captain Lleyton posted a photo with Sinner from a practice session. "It's been handled horrifically in our sport. Two world No. 1s, both getting done for doping, is disgusting for our sport," Kyrgios said at the Brisbane International, the first event of his comeback. "It's a horrible look." Where do things stand with Jannik Sinner's positive drug tests? Sinner was the dominant player in men's tennis last year, and there's little reason to think that won't continue. In 2024, he went 73-6 with eight titles, including at the U.S. Open, and led Italy to the Davis Cup. He heads into the Australian Open on a 14-match winning streak. Hanging over it all is this: Two positive tests for a trace amount of an anabolic steroid in March were made public in August; the International

Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) determined he shouldn't be suspended because the exposure to Clostebol was considered accidental — the result of a massage from a trainer who used the substance after cutting his own finger. The World Anti-Doping Agency was not entirely convinced about the exoneration and thinks a ban of one to two years would be appropriate. Its appeal, lodged in September, is still pending, and a final determination is expected after the Australian Open ends. "It's in (my) head a little bit," Sinner said, adding that he is confident everything will go his way. What happened with Iga Swiatek's failed doping test? Swiatek accepted a one-month suspension in late November after testing positive for a banned heart medication known as TMZ. She failed an out-of-competition test in August, and the ITIA accepted her explanation that it was caused by the contamination of a nonprescription

medication, melatonin, that Swiatek was taking for jet lag and sleeping issues. She missed three tournaments — although the real reason wasn't revealed at the time — and finished serving her punishment after the season was done. "This whole process was pretty abstract sometimes and hard to understand," Swiatek said, surely speaking for many observers.

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Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No: Online- 10-OF 2024-25

1. Name of the work	: Building works (As per Annexure-'A')
2. Amount put to Bid Excluding GST	: As per Annexure-'A'
3. Class of contractor	: 'D' 'C' & 'B'
5. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal	: From Dt. 13.01.2025 at 10.00 A.M.
6. Last date & Time for receipt of bids in the portal	: Dt. 22.01.2025 up to 04.00 P.M.
7. Last date of seeking clarification	: Dt. 21.01.2025 up to 5.00 P.M.
8. Date & Time of bid opening	: Dt. 22.01.2025 at 05.00 P.M.
9. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid	: Executive Engineer, R.W.Division, Padampur, AI/PO-Padampur, Dist- Bargarh, Ph-768036

(1) Other details can be seen from DTCN available in website www.tendersodisha.gov.in
(2) Corrigendum if any shall only be published in the above website

Executive Engineer,
Rural Works Division, Padampur

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, JAIPUR AT JARAKA

1st CORRIGENDUM TO TENDER CALL NOTICE NO. TENDER ONLINE JJPR-II-08 OF 2024-25

The following modifications are made in respect of the Tender Call Notice No. "Tender Online JJPR-II-08 of 2024-25" due to some unavoidable circumstances .

- The Tender Call Notice No. Tender Online JJPR-II-08 of 2024-25 will be available for online bidding from dt-10.01.2025 at 11.00 A.M to 18.01.2025 upto 4.00 P.M instead of dt-07.01.2025 at 11.00 A.M to 13.01.2025 upto 5.00 P.M .
- The last date & time of seeking tender clarification will be 17.01.2025 upto 4.00 P.M instead of dt-10.01.2025 upto 5.00P.M .
- The date of opening of Technical Bid of tender shall be 18.01.2025 at 4.30 P.M. instead of 13.01.2025 at 5.30 P.M. .
- If situation arises, the transparent lottery will be held among all the qualified bidders on dt.-31.01.2025 at 11.30 A.M .

All other terms & conditions remain unchanged.
The above corrigendum shall only be published in the Govt. website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Yours Faithfully
Executive Engineer
Rural Works Division-II
Jaipur At Jarak

OIPR-25080/11/0014/2425