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INSIDE

MONEY 10
EV FIRMS AGREE TO END
SUBSIDY AFTER EXISTING
SUBSIDY REGIME ENDS: GOYAL

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Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

CBI need not seek state consent: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a big win for Central Bureau of Investigation, the Supreme Court has said the CBI does not require the permission of State Governments to register an FIR against Central Government officials posted in the different jurisdictions of States. A bench comprising Justices CT Ravikumar and Rajesh Bindal on January 2 overturned the Andhra Pradesh High Court's order quashing the CBI investigations against two Central government employees over corruption. CBI is governed by Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act of 1946. According to this archaic Act, CBI needs "General Consent" from each State to start probe. Due to this provision, even in Central Government offices, CBI can't enter and many Opposition party ruled States denied "General Consent" to CBI, which is empowered to probe against corruption in Central Government offices. "Irrespective of the place of posting, the aforesaid factual position would go onto show that they were Central government employees/ Central government undertaking employees and allegedly committed serious offence under PC Act, which is a central act," said the Order of the top court, giving free hand to CBI. The case stemmed from the CBI FIRs against the Central Government employees



working in Andhra Pradesh. They had challenged the CBI's jurisdiction in the Andhra Pradesh High Court, arguing the general consent granted to the CBI under the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946 (DSPE Act), by the undivided state of Andhra Pradesh did not automatically extend to the newly formed state of Andhra Pradesh post-bifurcation. The High Court agreed with the accused, who were booked under the Prevention of Corruption Act, and quashed the FIRs insisting a fresh consent from Andhra Pradesh was required. Justice Ravikumar, who authored a 32-page judgment, differed with the High Court's interpretation, and ruled the latter had erred in asking for a fresh state consent for CBI's investigations. The top court framed a question-- if the CBI required the State Government's consent to register an FIR against a Central Government employee under a Central Act simply because the employee worked within the territory of a State -- as the central issue.

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PM Narendra Modi with beneficiaries of a housing scheme, during the foundation stone laying and inauguration ceremony of various development projects, in New Delhi. Photos: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

Modi kicks off Delhi election campaign, Kejriwal reacts

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a major push to Infrastructure ahead of the upcoming Assembly polls in Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday sounded the poll bugle for the BJP by inaugurating developmental projects worth of Rs 4500 crore including Economically Weaker Section (EWS) flats at Ashok Vihar, Sarojini Nagar government quarters, World Trade centre and new DU campuses and college. With this, the PM Modi has launched his model against the Kejriwal's model putting aside doubts about who would lead it. Winning Delhi is crucial for the BJP, which has now been out of power in the Capital for more than 25 years. Taking a jibe at the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convenor Arvind Kejriwal without naming him, PM Modi said he could have built a Sheesh Mahal for himself but chose to prioritise the people. "Mai bhi koi 'sheeshmahal' bana



sakta but. Lekin mere liye toh mere desh wasiyon ko pucca ghar mile, yahi ek sapna tha (I could have also built a sheeshmahal, but for me, it was a dream that my countrymen should get permanent houses). The country knows it well that Modi never built a home for himself but has built more than 4 crore houses for the poor," PM Modi said. The Prime Minister also coined a slogan "AAPda ko hatana hai, BJP ko lana hai". The Prime Minister said that by keeping Anna Hazare at the front, few 'kattar beimaan'

(bigoted dishonest) people have pushed the national capital towards the 'apda' (disaster). "These people used to talk about Delhi's development...Ye AAP, ye 'apda, Delhi par aayi hai', and hence the people of Delhi has waged a war against 'apda'. Voters of Delhi have made up their minds to free Delhi from this 'apda', the PM said while speaking at the event at Ashok Vihar's Ramlila Ground. Giving a call for AAP's defeat, Modi raised the slogan, "Apda' ko nahi sahenge, badal kar rahenge (we will not tolerate 'apda', we will remove it)". "Yeh kattar beimaan log... Ek to chori upar se seena zori (These staunchly corrupt people... They steal and then defend themselves brazenly)... Dilli ke log keh rahe hain, apda ki nahin sahenge, badal ke rahenge (The people of Delhi are saying they will not tolerate this disaster, but will usher in change)," PM Modi said.

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GRAP III INVOKED

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

As the air quality index plummeted to very poor at 371, the Commission of Air Quality Management (CAQM) invoked stage III of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) with immediate effect, amid a rise in air pollution. As part of the Stage 3 of the GRAP, for private vehicle owners who still drive in a BS 3 petrol car or a BS 4 diesel car, driving the vehicles in Delhi and NCR districts is out of bounds with immediate effect. However, people with disabilities are exempt from these restrictions. Moreover, non-essential diesel-operated medium goods vehicles with BS-IV or older standards are banned in the capital. The national capital, battling

WEATHER



LUCKNOW
MAX 17.02°C(-3.1)
MIN 6.6°C(-1.2)

the national capital's airport. Moreover, about 394 departures were also delayed at this airport. The number of delayed flights is expected to increase further. The minimum temperature was recorded at 7 degree Celsius while the maximum temperature stood at 21.2 degree Celsius in Delhi. Palam recorded the maximum temperature of 17.2 degree Celsius while the minimum temperature stood at 6.6 degree Celsius. According to forecasts from the India Meteorological Department and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, the air quality situation is predicted to deteriorate further owing to unfavourable meteorological conditions.

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Gifts to Biden family include \$20K diamond from Modi

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden and his family were given tens of thousands of dollars in gifts from foreign leaders in 2023, with Jill Biden receiving the single most expensive present: a USD 20,000 diamond from Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The 7.5-carat diamond from Modi was easily the most costly gift presented to any member of the first family in 2023, although she also received a brooch valued at USD 14,063 from the Ukrainian ambassador to the United States and a bracelet, brooch and photograph album worth USD 4,510 from the president and first lady of Egypt, according to an annual accounting published by the State Department on Thursday. The USD 20,000 diamond

was retained for official use in the White House East Wing, according to a State Department document, while the other gifts to the president and first lady were sent to the archives. The first lady's office didn't immediately respond to a request for comment about the diamond's use. The US president himself received a number of expensive presents, including a commemorative photo album valued at USD 7,100 from South Korea's recently impeached President Suk Yeol Yoon, a USD 3,495 statue of Mongolian warriors from the Mongolian prime minister, a USD 3,300 silver bowl from the sultan of Brunei, a USD 3,160 sterling silver tray from the president of Israel, and a collage worth USD 2,400 from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Union Carbide waste disposal: Protests rock Pithampur, two attempt self-immolation

PTI ■ DHAR (MP)

Two men were hospitalised after they set themselves afire on Friday amid a bandh call in Madhya Pradesh's Pithampur against the planned disposal of 337 tonnes of Union Carbide waste in the industrial town, an official said. During one of the protests against the waste disposal in the town in the Dhar district, two persons poured some liquid on their bodies and set themselves on fire, according to eyewitnesses and a video shot at the scene. Eyewitnesses said the two men, both aged around 40, were rushed to a hospital in Pithampur, about 30 km from Indore. "From the local facility, they have been moved to a private hospital in Indore. Both were out of danger. The situation is under control but tense," Dhar Superintendent of Police Manoj Singh told PTI over the phone from a protest site near Pithampur bus stand. Protests were also held at other places in the town, he said. Shops and markets remained closed in the town amid the bandh call by Pithampur Bachao Samiti, which claims that the planned incineration of the Carbide waste in the area would harm the local



people and environment. Pithampur has a population of about 1.75 lakh and its industrial area here has nearly 700 factories in three sectors. On the intervening night of December 2-3, 1984, methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas leaked from the Union Carbide pesticide factory in Bhopal, killing at least 5,479 persons and leaving thousands with serious and long-lasting health issues in Bhopal. The authorities have shifted 337 tonnes of waste from the Carbide factory to Pithampur for scientific disposal, though the move has triggered protests. The material from Bhopal reached an incineration unit in Pithampur on Thursday. Amid the bandh call in Pithampur, which saw shops and markets remaining closed on Friday, a group of protesters blocked the road near Eicher Motors, but

police prevailed over them and restored normal traffic with mild cane charge. Sandeep Raghuvanshi, who has been on a hunger strike at the bus stand since Thursday, said a large number of people have expressed solidarity with him over his protest against the disposal of the Union Carbide waste in Pithampur. The Madhya Pradesh High Court had on December 3 rebuked the authorities for not clearing the Union Carbide site in Bhopal despite court directives, including that of the Supreme Court. It had set a four-week deadline to shift the waste, observing that even 40 years after the gas tragedy, authorities were in a "state of inertia". The high court had warned the government of contempt proceedings if its directive was not followed.

Continued on page 8

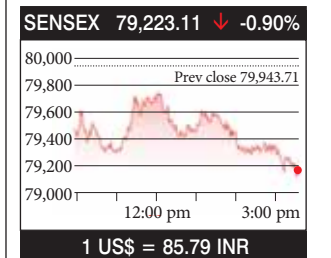
MeitY Invites Objections on Draft Data Rules

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has asked the public to send objections and suggestions to the draft rules proposed for the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025. The public feedback can be submitted on mygov.in; the draft rules will be taken into consideration after February 18, the Ministry said in a notification on Friday. Some of the salient features of the draft rules include greater consumer control over data; users can demand deletion of their data; companies should be more transparent with personal data; right for consumers to ask the reason why their data is being collected, and huge penalty of up to Rs 250 crore for data breach. Once implemented, the Act will empower consumers with greater control over their data. Companies handling user data will be required to disclose the information they possess, enabling users to request its deletion or specify usage preferences. Additionally, consumers will have the right to demand details on the purpose of data collection, permissible uses, and the timeline for its deletion. The draft, titled "Digital

Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025," applies to personal data processing within India and to entities offering goods or services to individuals in India. The rules encompass data fiduciaries, data processors, and consent managers, establishing detailed accountability measures. The rules are expected to provide clarity on various provisions of the law including notice by data fiduciary to individuals, registration and obligations of consent manager, processing of personal data of children and so on. The rules are also expected to provide clarity regarding the setting up of the Data Protection Board, appointment and service conditions of the chairperson and other members of the board. The regulations aim to address crucial aspects of data protection. These include how organizations must notify individuals about data collection, the framework for consent management, and safeguards for processing personal information. The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 was passed by the Parliament in 2023. The draft rules, once finalised and notified, will come into force.

MARKETS



Sensex, Nifty tank, ahead of earnings season

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty buckled under selling pressure to settle nearly 1 per cent lower on Friday as investors pared exposure to bank and IT stocks ahead of the earnings season starting next week. A depreciating rupee against strengthening US dollar overseas further weighed on sentiment, traders said. Despite a positive start, the 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 720.60 points or 0.90 per cent to close at 79,223.11. During the day, it slumped 833.98 points or 1.04 per cent to 79,109.73. The NSE Nifty tanked 183.90 points or 0.76 per cent to 24,004.75. On a weekly basis, the BSE benchmark jumped 524.04 points or 0.66 per cent, and the Nifty climbed 191.35 points or 0.80 per cent. "A sell-on-rally sentiment prevails in the market due to a strong US dollar, high valuation, and a shift towards a multi-asset investment strategy. Reducing US jobless claims and potential policy shifts in the US indicate that the Fed is not in a hurry to cut interest rates in the near term. "Looking ahead, the market is likely to focus on Q3 earnings, with expectations of improvement in earnings on a QoQ basis," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. From the Sensex pack, Zomato, HDFC Bank, Tech Mahindra, Adani Ports, Tata Consultancy Services, ICICI Bank, Sun Pharma, Larsen & Toubro, HCL Tech and ITC were the major laggards. On the other hand, Tata Motors, Nestle, Titan, Hindustan Unilever and Reliance Industries were among the gainers.

Continued on page 8

From begging to manning traffic, inspiring journey of 39 transgenders

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

From seeking alms on city roads to managing traffic at the same places, it has been an incredible journey of empowerment for 39 transgenders in Hyderabad who have been inducted as traffic assistants to help the city police. The transgenders, who have been appointed on a pilot basis, say they now get respect from citizens in contrast to the severe discrimination and insults they faced in the past. "It is wonderful that we manage traffic at places where we used to beg in the past," Nisha, a transgender traffic assistant, told PTI on Friday. Nisha, who works at Patny Centre here, thanked Telangana Chief

Minister A Revanth Reddy for the opportunity given to the transgender community. Nisha, who studied up to Intermediate, recalled facing discrimination from society at large, in college, with friends and even parents. "My parents did not accept me. But, they accepted me now. My friends used to avoid me. But, now they message me and keep in touch. After I got the job, my relations and others are appreciating. It is a wonder. I cannot describe in words," Nisha said. Sana, another traffic assistant, said it is a matter of pride for them that they get respect from citizens, while people earlier used to hesitate to even speak to them. P. Viswa Prasad, Additional



A transgender traffic assistant manages traffic, in Hyderabad

Commissioner of Police (Traffic), told PTI that the transgender traffic assistants are doing good and that there are no complaints or there is anything abnormal since they have been inducted about 10 days ago. It will take some time for them to get professional acumen. They want to get integrated with society and do well, he said. It all began when CM Reddy asked officials in November to appoint transgender persons as traffic volunteers at high-traffic areas in the city. During a meeting with officials, he said the services of transgenders should be utilised like home guards at traffic signals to prevent traffic violations. He told the officials to finalise a special dress code for

transgenders and also salary along the lines of home guards. While the CM on December 6, 2024, handed over 'enrolment papers' to the transgender persons who have been selected, they were formally inducted as traffic assistants on December 22. Hyderabad Police Commissioner C V Anand had earlier said transgenders face alienation even within their families and society. The state government had issued an order to inducting the transgenders as traffic assistants, he said. According to him, about 100 transgenders had applied for the posts and 44 of them were shortlisted after a selection process, including physical tests, while 39 successfully completed training.

PTI

Asma's kin demand death penalty for both accused

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The maternal side of the family of the Naka mass murder accused, Mohammed Arshad, has demanded death penalty for the accused and his father, Mohammed Badar, who is the co-accused. The brother of the deceased woman, Asma, who was the mother of Arshad, along with other family members, stated that they no longer wanted to see the faces of Arshad and Badar. Asma's brother Danish and other family members have called for strict action against both the accused. They demanded that a case be pursued against both of the accused in a fast-track court and that both be awarded the death penalty. Arshad's other

MASS MURDER

uncle, Faizan, said that on Friday morning, the bodies of his sister and niece were taken to the graveyard in the area for burial. The bodies of all five were buried there. It was surprising that no one from Badar's side attended the burial, Faizan said. Earlier, when the bodies reached the Mohalla Nawada area of Sambhal on Friday, there was a sombre atmosphere in the village. People from Asma's side of the family buried the bodies. To recap, Arshad, who lived in Tedhi Bagiya Mohalla in Islamnagar, Kuberpur, Agra, had been staying in room number 109 of Sharanjit Hotel in

Revidi Wali Gali, Charbagh, with his father Badar, mother Asma, and sisters Alshiya (19), Rahmin (18), Aksa (16), and Aliya (9). On the night of December 31, he, along with his father, allegedly killed his mother and four sisters. On January 1, he left his father near Charbagh station and surrendered himself after reaching Loka outpost. No one from Badar's family attended the post-mortem on Thursday to collect the bodies. Asma's maternal family, from Mohalla Nawada in Sarayatrain, Sambhal, collected the bodies. Danish and Faizan, Asma's brothers, said that their hearts were shattered on seeing the bodies.

Police interrogate Chinhat bank heist accused in jail

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After a warrant B was issued by the court against Vipin, the mastermind behind the recent Chinhat bank heist, a police team visited Ghazipur district jail on Friday to interrogate him. In addition, another accused, Arvind, who is currently incarcerated in Lucknow jail, has also been arrested. Inspector, Gomti Nagar, Rajesh Kumar Tripathi, who is leading the investigation, confirmed that the warrant B was issued by the court on Thursday. "An application has also been filed in court to request the police custody remand for other accused—Arvind Kumar, Balram Kumar, Kailash Bind, and Mithun—who are all in Lucknow jail. We are seeking eight days of custody for further interrogation," he said. The police anticipate that the court will soon grant their request for remand, allowing them to interrogate the accused in person. So far, the police have arrested Arvind Kumar (from Munger, Bihar), Balram Kumar (from Bhagalpur), Kailash Bind (from Munger), Vipin Kumar (from Sitapur), and Mithun (from Munger, Bihar). Additionally, two suspects—Sovind and Sunny Dayal—were killed in an encounter with the police. The police have also recovered stolen jewellery worth lakhs, cash, two cars, and a bike.

STF nabs rape accused who escaped from police custody

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) on Friday arrested Rakesh Jaiswal, a rape accused who had been on the run after escaping from Mumbai Police custody in October, 2024. Jaiswal, who had a reward of Rs 50,000 on his head, was apprehended near the Polytechnic crossing in Lucknow. Jaiswal, a resident of Nandlal Mansa Chhapar in Kushinagar's Jahta Bazaar police station area, was accused of kidnapping and raping a minor girl in Mumbai under the pretext of marriage. A case was registered against him under the POCSO Act and sections related to rape at Mumbai's Park police station. The accused was initially arrested by Mumbai Police on October 23 in Kushinagar. While being transported to Mumbai by train, he escaped near Lucknow's Aishbagh station by jumping off under the guise of using the bathroom. He then fled to Hyderabad after retrieving his belongings from his home. The STF tracked his movements and arrested him as he was returning from Hyderabad. The Government Railway Police (GRP) had also been searching for Jaiswal following his escape.

LDA clerk suspended for playing truant

Lucknow (PNS): The Lucknow Development Authority has

launched an initiative to improve staff discipline, focusing on punctuality and adherence to duty hours. This effort began on Friday, with the first action taken against a clerk, Ashutosh Malik, who was absent without informing his immediate supervisor or following the proper leave application process. LDA Vice-Chairman Prathmesh Kumar announced that Malik was suspended and a chargesheet was served on him. Executive officer Vadana Pandey has been tasked with investigating the incident. Kumar stated that Pandey would handle future cases of staff members arriving late for work. The incident came to the VC's attention when he visited the head office in the morning

to review the attendance registers. He was surprised to learn that Malik had been absent for an extended period without notifying his supervisor or completing the formalities for leave. When the VC inquired with his colleagues, they confirmed that Malik had been absent for a long time, but no one knew the reason for his absence. After confirming that Malik had violated service rules, the VC took action by suspending him. He further emphasised that strict disciplinary measures would be implemented for staff members who arrive late, take leave without following the proper procedure, or leave the office during working hours. This move is part of LDA's broader effort to streamline its operations and enforce discipline among staff.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that my client, SMFG India Home Finance Co. Ltd. intend to grant loan on the property scheduled below of equitable mortgage by deposit of title deed. All persons having any claim in respect thereof by way of sale, exchange, mortgage, charge, lien or otherwise whatsoever are hereby requested to make the same known in writing to be undersigned within a period of 7 days from the date of publication hereof, failing which, the claim of such person/s will be deemed to have been waived and/or abandoned. Schedule Part of House No. 43/193 (Area 59.58 Sq.Meter), Meston Road, Kanpur Nagar. (Shiva Kant Dixit) Advocate Ph.: 09415403399

NOTICE

I Agavanthi Devi M/o Suresh Kumar (No. JC-857499N) Do Affirm that in my Son's Army Service record my name and D.O.B. was wrongly entered as Agavanthi Devi correct name Bhagavanti Wrong D.O.B. 05.09.1947 Correct D.O.B. 01.01.1947 Vide Affidavit No.94AE420241 Before Kanpur Courts Only

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Kareem to Kareem Khan. In future me known as Kareem Khan S/o Rafeek. Alampur, Fatehpur 212659.

OBITUARY

NAIK WAIKHOM SHANTA SINGH 07 FEB 1991-15 AUG 2024

ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS SOLEMNLY PRAY TO THE ALMIGHTY TO BESTOW PEACE TO THE DEPARTED SOUL AND GRANT STRENGTH TO THE BEREAVED FAMILY TO BEAR THE GREAT LOSS OF NAIK WAIKHOM SHANTA SINGH WHILE SERVING WITH 24 UK GIRLS BN NCC. FROM: LT GEN SHIVINDER SINGH AND ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

OBITUARY

NAIK SATAV ASHOK NAMDEV 01 DEC 1984-17 AUG 2024

ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS SOLEMNLY PRAY TO THE ALMIGHTY TO BESTOW PEACE TO THE DEPARTED SOUL AND GRANT STRENGTH TO THE BEREAVED FAMILY TO BEAR THE GREAT LOSS OF NAIK SATAV ASHOK NAMDEV WHILE SERVING WITH BH DELHI CANTT. FROM: LT GEN SHIVINDER SINGH AND ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

OBITUARY

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OBITUARY

SEPOY BHOSALE AVINASH HARISH CHANDRA 18 NOV 1993-21 OCT 2024

ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS SOLEMNLY PRAY TO THE ALMIGHTY TO BESTOW PEACE TO THE DEPARTED SOUL AND GRANT STRENGTH TO THE BEREAVED FAMILY TO BEAR THE GREAT LOSS OF SEP BHOSALE AVINASH HARISHCHANDRA WHILE SERVING WITH 4002 FD HOSP. FROM: LT GEN SHIVINDER SINGH AND ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

OBITUARY

HAVILDAR GUNDARAM SRINIVAS 24 APR 1985-26 AUG 2024

ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS SOLEMNLY PRAY TO THE ALMIGHTY TO BESTOW PEACE TO THE DEPARTED SOUL AND GRANT STRENGTH TO THE BEREAVED FAMILY TO BEAR THE GREAT LOSS OF HAV GUNDARAM SRINIVAS WHILE SERVING WITH 310 FD HOSP. FROM: LT GEN SHIVINDER SINGH AND ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

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SGPGI gets NAAC A++ grade

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGI) has been accredited with an A++ grade by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), Director Dr RK Dhiman said here on Friday. "SGPGI is the first medical institute in Uttar Pradesh to receive an A++ from NAAC. The highest grade (A++) will go a long way for the development and perception of the Institute. SGPGI is the first government university to receive A++ in the first cycle of accreditation," he said. Expressing her happiness, UP Governor Anandiben Patel congratulated SGPGI. She said it is a moment of pride for the people of the state and is inspiring for other universities and colleges in the state and the country. Dr Dhiman thanked the governor for the guidance and support that, he said, led to this accomplishment. The institute has been accredited with a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 3.66. Nodal officer, NAAC, Prof Vinita Agrawal, said that as required, SGPGI had completed all documents in June this year and had an on-site peer

team visit in November 2024. She said this was possible only due to proper guidance, meticulous planning, collective effort, and hard work by stakeholders at all levels of the institute. Dr Dhiman said SGPGI has always stood up for all challenges and needs of the hour and had established UP's first apex-level Covid care facility, showcasing its commitment to public health and crisis management.

NEXT-GEN TB TESTING FACILITY INAUGURATED

Culture drug susceptibility testing and molecular next generation sequencing tuberculosis laboratory, a centre of excellence, has been inaugurated at SGPGI. Dr Richa Mishra is the nodal officer and incharge of the laboratory, which has been built under the guidance of Director Dr RK Dhiman. It covers an area of 3,000 square feet at an approximate cost of Rs 3.5 crore. An MoU has also been signed between Indian Oil Corporation Limited UP State Office 1 (UP SO 1) and SGPGI under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative. Dr Dhiman said that the fully equipped, state-of-the-art lab,

with the most recent molecular diagnostic techniques, will provide a huge impetus to the goal of eliminating TB in Uttar Pradesh by 2025. It will benefit not only the patients being referred to SGPGI but will also become the apex lab for difficult-to-treat drug-resistant patients from several districts of UP, he added. Dr Richa Mishra said that the lab is the first of its kind in UP and, as a centre of excellence for TB, it is equipped with the most recent molecular diagnostic tests, on par with any lab in the world. Apart from the culture and automated drug susceptibility testing, the lab has the fully automated facility for expanded testing of all the first-line anti-tubercular drugs through the Line Probe and XDR CBNAAT assay. She said that the next generation sequencing technology that is being established through the support of IOCL SO1 is the most recent and the first to be established in UP. "It is approved by the World Health Organization as the most recent molecular technique for comprehensive testing of drug-resistant tuberculosis patients and accurate tailoring of treatment," she said.

Four employees of showroom booked after tiff with buyer over car's colour

Lucknow (PNS): A dispute

broke out on Thursday night between a car buyer and the staff at a showroom in Vikas Nagar over the colour of the car. A video of the incident later surfaced on social media. When the situation escalated, cops reached the scene and took both parties to the police station. The argument continued late into the night. On Friday, the police registered an FIR based on a complaint and arrested four employees of the showroom: Imran Ahmed (40), Gyanendra Singh (34), Mohd. Aman (28), and Shivendra Pratap Singh (25), according to a press statement from Lucknow police. According to the Vikas Nagar police, Vishnu Prakash Verma, a resident of Laharpur Tikona in Sitapur, had gone to the showroom near Tedhipuliya to collect the car he had booked. However, he became involved in a dispute with the staff when he was given a car in a different colour than the one he had chosen. The police intervened, attempting to calm both parties, but when the other party did not settle down, they were taken to the police station. The police said, "When attempts were made to calm the situation, Verma agreed to calm down, but Imran Ahmed and the other staff members continued to get agitated, creating a disturbance. To prevent the situation from escalating into a serious offence and to maintain public order, they were taken into custody and charged under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)." Complainant Vishnu Prakash alleged that he had originally booked a white car, but the staff was offering him a car of a different colour and demanding extra money for it. When he refused to pay the additional charge, the staff reportedly assaulted him.

Fresh assignments to 46 IAS officers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government, on Thursday, carried out a major administrative reshuffle, transferring 46 Indian Administrative Services (IAS) officers to different departments and Sanjay Prasad, who served as principal secretary to the chief minister will now head the Home Department, replacing Deepak Kumar, who has been relieved of the charge of additional chief secretary of Home, Visa, Passport, Vigilance departments. He has been given additional charge of principal secretary of the Basic Education and Finance departments. L. Venkateshwarlu has been given additional charge of principal secretary, Social Welfare and Sainik Welfare departments, Tribal Development, Uttar Pradesh, Managing Director, UP CIDCO, Director, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute and Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj Research and Training Institute, along with his current post. Rajesh Kumar Singh has been posted as principal secretary, Home Guard. BL Meena has been relieved of the charge of principal secretary, Home Guard and will continue to be principal secretary,

Horticulture, Silk, Food Processing. Alok Kumar has been relieved of the charge of principal secretary, Handloom and Textile Industry, Khadi and Village Industries, Public Enterprises, Technical Education, Vocational Education, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship departments, and has been given additional charge of principal secretary, Infrastructure and Industrial Development Department. Narendra Bhushan has been relieved of the charge of secretary, Panchayati Raj Department, and given charge of principal secretary Technical Education Department. Veena Kumari Meena has been relieved of the charge of principal secretary AYUSH Department. Sanjay Prasad has been given additional charge of principal secretary Home, Visa and Vigilance departments along with his current post. Anil Garg has been relieved of state divisional nodal officer of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana and given charge of principal secretary, Irrigation and Water Resources, Land Development, Prison Administration and Reforms Services departments. He will continue as chairman, pack state nodal officer of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana and managing director of Uttar Pradesh Land Reforms Corporation.

Schools up to Class 8 closed till January 11

Lucknow (PNS): In view of the cold weather conditions, District Magistrate Surya Pal Gangwar has given directions that all schools till Class 8 will remain closed till January 11. For Classes 9-12, the district magistrate has given direction for conducting online classes from January 4 to

January 11. In those schools where there is no arrangement for online classes for Class 9 to 12, the schools will open at 10 am and close by 3 pm. The district magistrate said that the schools will make arrangements to keep the classes warm and no activities will be conducted in the open.

HDFC BANK Department for Special Operations : HDFC Bank Ltd, 2nd Floor Experio Building, Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh-226010.

APPENDIX-IV-A [See proviso to rule 8 (6)]

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of HDFC Bank Ltd. Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on 07-02-2025, for recovery of Rs.62,99,628/- o/s as on 15-07-2021 along with further interest and charges applicable due to the HDFC Bank Ltd. Secured Creditor from (i) MRS. RASHMI VANDANA MISHRA (BORROWER & MORTGAGOR), (ii) MR. SATISH KUMAR MISHRA (CO-BORROWER). The reserve price will be Rs. 80,10,000/- and the earnest money deposit will be Rs.01,000/-.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

HOUSE BUILT ON PLOT NO 7, OVER PART OF KHASRA NO 241, HAVING AREA 167.286 SQ MTR, SITUATED AT GRAM BAHADUR PUR, WARD SHANKARPURWA, TEHSIL & DISTRICT LUCKNOW.

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in HDFC Bank Ltd. Secured Creditor's website: <https://www.hdfcbank.com/personal/resources/important-notices>

Date: - 03.01.2025, Place: - Lucknow Authorised Officer, HDFC Bank Ltd.

राष्ट्रीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, कुरुक्षेत्र

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(Under the Ministry of Education, Govt. of India)
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Advt.No.03/2025

Special PhD Admission Drive for SC/ST in Even Semester of Academic Year 2024-25

National Institute of Technology, Kurukshetra invites online applications via Google Form from Indian and Foreign nationals for admission in the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Degree Programs on Full Time (Institute/CSIR-UGC-NET-JRF), Self-Financed Full Time and Part Time seats for Academic Year 2024-25. (Number of Seats, Online Application Form Link, and other relevant details along with Ph.D. Regulation are available on the Institute website: www.nitkkr.ac.in under Admission 2024-> Ph.D. tab. All interested candidates may fill the Google Form latest by **January 10, 2025, 03:00 PM**. If the application is incomplete or any information is found misleading/false at any point during or after the admission process, the candidate's candidature/admission will be cancelled and the application fee will not be refunded in any case. Please visit Institute website regularly for any announcement or updates in this regard.

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Admissions are open for following UGC-DEB entitled courses in fully Online Mode under Directorate of Online Studies, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. The candidates may visit the Directorate's website (<http://gndu-online.in>) for filling online application form and further details.

Under Graduate Degree	- B.CA - B.A. - B.Com
Post Graduate Degree	- MBA - MBA (Financial Management) - MBA (Marketing Management) - MBA (Human Resource Management) - MCA (2 Years) - M.Com. - MA (English) - MA (Punjabi)

Admission is Open for Academic session Jan-2025 batch and LAST DATE to apply online is 28th Feb 2024

All Courses are approved under entitled category by UGC-DEB, New Delhi vide letter No. F.No.2-1/2024 (DEB-II) dt. Nav. 2024

For any enquiry please contact the Directorate office via email, onlineprogram@gndu.ac.in, contact-us@gndu-online.in or via phone/whatsapp@+91-7658875661/5005287819, 0183-282-3113

Note: Any corrigendum / Addendum to the Admission notification may be issued, if required, as per rules & regulations of the University, will be published on the Director website only.

Dean Academic Affairs

Prof. Dr. Subheet Kumar Jain, Director, Directorate of online Studies, GNDU, Amritsar

Parveen Kumar, Director, Public Relations Department, GNDU, Amritsar

NA/12/27281/2023/40468 Dated CHD :- 1/3/2025

verka

THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD. S.C.O 153-155, SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022, EPABX NO. 0172-5041812,66

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1.	For Verka Head Office, Chandigarh a) L22 Containers b) Maize hybrid - Bajra hybrid (Multicut seeds) c) Thermoforming packaging film for vacuum packing of paneer.	Annual/ 252 No's 1228.07 Qtls 468.17 Qtls Bottom web: 45 MT Top film: 18 MT
3.	For Verka Bathinda Dairy i. 80 ML paper cone sleeve with sugar rolled. ii. Strawberry iii. Black Current iv. Caramel b) Lids for 80 ML Ice Cream Cone i. Strawberry ii. Black Current iii. Caramel c) Ice Cream Cones 40 ML for Ice Cream i. Butter Scotch ii. Chocolate d) Lids for 40 ML for Ice Cream Cones i. Chocolate ii. Chocolate e) 125 ML IML cups for Ice Cream i. Cookies and Crumb ii. Rabri Kulfii iii. Mango Bar iv. Cola Bar v. Orange Bar vi. Mango Duet vii. Black Current viii. Rajbhog ix. Pista x. No Added Sugar g) Used corrugated waste, can steels, Polyliner/Polyfilm Scrap (milk, curd, lassi, butter etc). Assorted used curd/kheer cups/ misc bottles scrap, assorted used matka scrap, empty glass tins, glue jars, plastic tray, powder tins, SMP/WMP craft paper and liner, PVC cutting rolls, primary and secondary packaging material, Misc. used Cannies (Capacity 1 to 15 litre) Scrap, Misc used Cannies (capacity above 20 to 50 litres) scrap.	05 Lacs 05 Lacs 05 Lacs 05 Lacs 05 Lacs 20 Lacs 20 Lacs 20 Lacs 20 Lacs 50000 No's 50000 No's 50000 No's 50000 No's 50000 No's 50000 No's 20000 No's 20000 No's 20000 No's 20000 No's 2500 kg 1000 kg 500 kg 500 kg 1000 kg 1000 kg 500 kg 2000 kg 2000 kg 2000 kg Annual Rate contract Half Yearly Rate contract

NOTE:

1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in.

2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.

NA/12/27285/2023/40473 Dated CHD :- 1/3/2025 Dy. General Manager (Purchase)

New sports culture has emerged under Modi's leadership: Yogi

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, speaking on Friday, highlighted how a new sports culture has flourished across the country under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the past decade.

He credited transformative initiatives like Khelo India, the Fit India Movement, and Sansad Khel Pratiyogita for fostering this positive change. The chief minister emphasised that the Uttar Pradesh government is equally committed to promoting sports and supporting athletes within the state.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony of Gorakhpur's first mini sports complex in Bhati Vihar Colony, Chief Minister Yogi reiterated the government's dedication to expanding sports infrastructure and opportunities. "In order to encourage sports and players, the state government has launched the Rural Sports League. Sports environments are being created in villages through Yuvak Mangal Dals and Mahila Mangal Dals," he said.

He further mentioned that sports fields are being constructed in every village, and funds and land are being provided for the creation of mini-stadiums at the block level and full stadiums at the district level.

On this occasion, the chief minister announced that the state government will build an international cricket stadium in Gorakhpur. Additionally, in a few months, construction of a large sports centre will begin in the Raptinagar area, covering 33 acres, he added. He also mentioned that a mini-stadium is under construction in Sahjanwa, and the process of building mini-stadiums in other areas is underway. The chief minister further shared that the Mini Sports Complex at Bhati Vihar will be managed under the public-private partnership (PPP) model, providing players with excellent training and facilities.

Chief Minister Yogi emphasised that sports is also an excellent way to build a career. The state government directly offers government jobs to players who win medals at the Olympics, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and World Championships, he pointed out. He mentioned that Lalit Upadhyay, a member of the Indian hockey team who won a medal at the 2022 Tokyo Olympics, was appointed as a

Yogi hits bullseye on first attempt at shooting range

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR

During the inauguration of the newly-constructed Mini Sports Complex in Bhati Vihar Colony, Gorakhpur, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath demonstrated his sharpshooting skills at the shooting range. His accuracy left everyone around him astounded, as he hit the bullseye on his very first attempt, achieving a perfect shot. The chief minister has a keen interest in sports, especially traditional Indian games and shooting. His passion for shooting is often seen in public when he visits military exhibitions, sports academies or sports centres.

On Friday, during the inauguration of the Mini Sports Complex in Bhati Vihar Colony, Gorakhpur, the chief minister took a turn at the 10-metre rifle shooting range. His



first shot was a perfect bullseye, leaving everyone around him amazed and smiling. This is not the first time that Chief Minister Yogi has tried his

hand at shooting; he has also practiced during his visits to the Mini Sports Complex and the inauguration of the Military School in Gorakhpur.

deputy superintendent of police. Similarly, Rajkumar Pal, a player of Olympic-winning hockey team, will also be appointed as a deputy superintendent of police, he added. The chief minister further shared that over 500 players have been given jobs in the UP Police and other government departments. Addressing the financial rewards for athletes, the chief minister stated that the state government awards cash prizes to players from Uttar Pradesh who win medals in Olympic individual events: Rs 6 crore for a gold medal, Rs 4 crore for silver, and Rs 2 crore for bronze. For team events, the rewards are Rs 3 crore, Rs 2 crore and Rs 1 crore respectively. Medal winners in the Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and World Championships also receive cash prizes, along with incentive awards for participating players in these events.

While mentioning the players selected for sports awards, the chief minister highlighted that this year four prominent athletes have been chosen for the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna award. Among them is Praveen Kumar, a player from Uttar Pradesh who won a gold medal at the Paralympics. Additionally, the Arjuna Award has been given to Murlikant Petkar, a player who won a gold medal in the Paralympics during the 1970s. Although he had been

forgotten by many, Prime Minister Modi recognised his achievement. The chief minister also emphasised the importance of sports for a healthy life. "Most people who fell victim to COVID-19 were those who led a sedentary lifestyle. For a healthy life, hard work is essential, and sports serve as a significant medium for this. Only a fit youth can lay the foundation for a healthy and strong society and nation, and the energy of a fit youth benefits the nation as a whole," Yogi added.

The chief minister also inspected the Mini Sports Complex built in the name of Baba Raghav Das. He reviewed the facilities, including a gym for indoor games, an administrative block, a badminton court, rifle and pistol shooting ranges, a multi-purpose hall, a 300-metre synthetic running track for outdoor games, and lawn tennis courts. Pleased with the arrangements, the chief minister expressed satisfaction that government funds had been wisely utilised for the benefit of players. He particularly praised the shooting range, noting that shooting athletes will no longer have to travel outside to enhance their skills. The Mini Sports Complex has been constructed by the Gorakhpur Development Authority (GDA) on a 2-acre land, at a cost of Rs 5.96 crore.

Of this, Rs 3 crore was contributed by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath from his MLA fund, while the remaining amount was provided by GDA. The inauguration ceremony was addressed by Mayor Dr Manglesh Srivastava. At the end of the event, Divisional Commissioner Anil Dhingra and GDA Vice-Chairman Anand Vardhan presented the chief minister with a memento. During the inauguration ceremony, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also distributed sports kits to 10 athletes. The recipients of the sports kits from the chief minister included Shagun, Anika Gautam, Pari Gupta, Harshit Bansal, Anshuman Mall, Azhar Ali, Utkarsh Srivastava, Riya Tripathi, Malvika Dwivedi and Akanksha Pandey. On this occasion, MLC and Bharatiya Janata Party state vice president Dr Dharmendra Singh, MLAs Fateh Bahadur Singh, Vipin Singh, Sarwan Nishad, local councillor Dharmdev Chauhan, BJP metropolitan president Rajesh Gupta, Mahant Ravindra Das of Kalibari, GDA Board members Radheshyam Srivastava, Durgesh Bajaj, Pawan Tripathi, block heads Sanjay Singh and Sanjay Yadav, along with officials from the administration, GDA and police, players, and a large number of sports enthusiasts were present.

Natural method of water purification will clean rivers and save crores: CM

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday inaugurated a Rs 2.70-crore water purification project undertaken by the municipal corporation to treat drains flowing into the Rapti river using the natural method of phytoremediation technology. Speaking at the event, the chief minister highlighted the transformative potential of the initiative, stating that it will not only purify the river but also save crores of rupees in costs. "There will be neither electricity nor maintenance cost in this," he added. Chief Minister Yogi praised the efforts of the municipal corporation in ensuring the Rapti river in Gorakhpur remains uninterrupted, pure, and its water clean and pristine. "This is a commendable initiative," he said, and added, "It is a significant step towards preserving fertility and sustaining life." Highlighting the critical importance of clean water, he recalled that between 1977 and 2017, polluted water and unhygienic conditions caused diseases like encephalitis and vector-borne illnesses, leading to the tragic deaths of 50,000 children in eastern Uttar Pradesh, including Gorakhpur.

The chief minister credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for inspiring nationwide initiatives like the Swachh Bharat Mission, the Amrit Mission in urban areas, and the Jal Jeevan Mission in rural regions, all aimed at ensuring access to clean drinking water. Through the Har Ghar Nal Yojana, the government has worked tirelessly to deliver pure drinking water to



every household.

Chief Minister Yogi further highlighted the success of the Namami Gange project in reviving river ecosystems, initiated under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi. He said, "This commitment to preserving India's river culture has culminated in the upcoming Maha Kumbh, the world's largest religious and spiritual gathering, set to take place at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati rivers in Prayagraj from January 13 to February 26," he added.

Reflecting on Gorakhpur's heritage, the chief minister remarked, "Our civilisation and culture thrive along the banks of rivers. Gorakhpur, nurtured by the Rapti and Rohini rivers, is reclaiming its essence as we purify the very rivers that sustain our way of life." The chief minister highlighted

that the National Green Tribunal had previously been imposing fines on the municipal corporation due to the discharge of polluted water into the Rapti river. In response, the municipal corporation had planned to construct a sewage treatment plant at a cost of Rs 110 crore.

However, the chief minister advocated for the adoption of natural water purification methods. He said, "Today, the positive results of this approach are evident. Previously, the water's biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) level had reached 350, making it more toxic than hazardous waste and unsuitable even for irrigation. After employing natural purification methods, the BOD level has now been reduced to a pure state, with the water at the end of the process having a BOD level of just 22." Chief Minister

Yogi further emphasised that the entire Rs 2.7 crore cost of this natural water purification project is a one-time expense. In the long run, it will save crores of rupees in electricity and maintenance costs. He expressed confidence that this method could be implemented more extensively, calling it a model for sustainable development. "By applying this natural model to every drain, we can successfully preserve the purity of water-the most essential resource-while achieving superior results at a fraction of the cost," he said.

Chief Minister Yogi reviewed the municipal corporation's water purification project using the natural phytoremediation technique before its inauguration. He examined the project's design and visited the site to observe the condition of the treated water.

'Take immediate action on problems of public'

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR

Despite the bitter cold on Friday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held the first Janata Darshan of the new year at the Gorakhnath temple, where he met with the public, listened to their grievances and assured them of prompt and satisfactory resolutions.

The chief minister emphasised that no one would face injustice and directed officials to take immediate action on each case brought forward by the citizens. Chief Minister Yogi met around 150 people during the Janata Darshan, personally listening to their grievances. He referred their applications to the officials

concerned, instructing them to ensure prompt and satisfactory resolutions. He assured everyone that the government is committed to addressing the issues of every individual.

Due to the adverse weather conditions, the Janata Darshan was held in the auditorium of the Mahant Digvijaynath Smriti Bhawan in the temple complex. The chief minister personally approached the seated complainants, meeting each one to hear their concerns.

During the Janata Darshan, many people approached Chief Minister Yogi for financial assistance for medical treatment. The chief minister assured them of full government support for their treat-

ment. He handed over their applications to the officials concerned, directing them to expedite the process of preparing treatment estimates and submit them to the government promptly.

The chief minister also stressed on resolving revenue and police-related matters with complete transparency and fairness. He instructed that no one should face injustice and warned that strict legal action should be taken against individuals forcibly occupying someone else's land.

During his stay in Gorakhpur, Chief Minister Yogi followed his traditional routine at the Gorakhnath temple on Friday morning. He began his day by worshipping Guru

Gorakhnath and then paid his respects at the samadhi sthal of his guru, Brahmaling Mahant Avedyanath.

He visited the temple's gaushala, spending time with the cows. As he walked through the gaushala, he called the cows by their names, his voice instantly recognised by them. Hearing his affectionate call, several cows came running to him. Chief Minister Yogi lovingly stroked their foreheads, caressed them and personally fed them jaggery.

The chief minister also enquired about the health and nutrition of the cows from the gaushala workers, issuing specific instructions to ensure their well-being during the cold season.

UP sets record during Good Governance Week, resolves over 6L public grievances

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath-led government has achieved a historic milestone by resolving over 6,08,617 public grievances during the Good Governance Week 2024, securing the top position in the nation. Maharashtra and Rajasthan claimed the second and third spots with 2,33,892 and 2,13,415 grievance resolutions, respectively.

This remarkable achievement reflects the administrative efficiency and unwavering commitment of the Yogi government towards public service. Uttar Pradesh also led the country in organising workshops at block and headquarters levels, with Madhya Pradesh following in second place. Good Governance Week is celebrated nationwide from December 19 to 24 every year to commemorate the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The initiative, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, aims to promote transparency, efficiency and accountability in governance. During the Good Governance Week, workshops were organised nationwide at block, tehsil, district and headquarters levels to address public grievances, raise awareness, and promote transparency in administrative work. Uttar Pradesh stood out by organising the highest number of workshops — 16,997 — securing the top position in the country. Madhya Pradesh came second with 13,128 workshops, while Rajasthan took third place with 5,810 workshops.

All India Kisan Congress to take out 'Kisan-Mazdoor Samman Evam Nyay Yatra'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The leaders and workers of All India Kisan Congress will take out 'Kisan-Mazdoor Samman and Nyay Yatra' in UP from January 18. A preparatory meeting related to the yatra was held at the UP Congress headquarters here under the chairmanship of UPCC president Ajay Rai. The meeting was conducted by national coordinator of Kisan Congress, Prabal Pratap Shahi.

Giving this information here on Friday afternoon, Rai said that to ensure that the 'Kisan-Mazdoor Samman Evam Nyay Yatra' was conducted in a planned and disciplined manner in UP, the national coordinators of All India Kisan Congress had been appointed as the coordinators at the divisional level, and the officials of Kisan Congress from other states of the country, including the national officials, had been appointed as the coordinators at the district level. Along with this, the officials of Kisan Congress from UP have been appointed as coordinators at the district level and have been entrusted with the responsibility of successfully conducting the yatra, he added. Addressing the meeting, Rai said that the present Central government and the Uttar Pradesh government were suppressing farmers, labourers, workers, women farmers-labourers and artisans in different ways. He said during the farmers' movement, the Central government had promised legal guarantees of minimum support price

(MSP) to all the farmers of the country, but today the government was silent on it.

"After all, why did this open fraud happen with the farmers? The families of the farmers who were martyred in the farmers' movement have not received compensation till date, rather Prime Minister Modi publicly insulted their martyrdom by calling them 'Khalistani' and 'agitators'," he said.

Through this 'Kisan-Mazdoor Samman Evam Nyay Yatra', Kisan Congress will mainly raise issues related to legal guarantee of MSP, formation of cost board, loan waiver for farmers, equitable distribution of land saved from ceiling, subsidy on seeds and manure, supply of electricity for irrigation, government arrangements to save crops from stray animals and regional issues related to farming, to make people aware and unite them to get the rights of farmers and labourers. The yatra will be taken out on different dates in all the districts of Uttar Pradesh, Rai asserted. The yatra will start from Ghaziabad's Loni border in UP on January 18, 2025. During the yatra, 300 'Kisan Nyay Warriors' will be made from each district. After the conclusion of the yatra, a conference of 22,500 'Kisan Warriors' from all 75 districts of UP will be held. Rai claimed that in the next year, they will create 300 'Kisan Nyay Warriors' in every assembly constituency and before the 2027 assembly elections, they will organise a Kisan Maha Sammela of 1,20,900 'Kisan Warriors'.

Govt committed to providing facilities to the last person: Yogi

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasised on Friday that in any civilised society, efforts must be made to provide facilities to the last person. He assured that the government is working with full commitment in this direction. While addressing a gathering at the inauguration of a newly-constructed shelter home (night shelter) by the municipal corporation in Transport Nagar, built at a cost of Rs 2.17 crore, Chief Minister Yogi stated that the government's resolve is to ensure that no one is forced to sleep in the open or endure the harsh cold during severe cold waves. "To achieve this, all necessary arrangements have been made, including shelter homes and the distribution of blankets," he added. He also distributed blankets and food packets to the underprivileged and

homeless. The event commenced with the chief minister inaugurating the shelter home amidst Vedic chanting and inspecting its facilities. He remarked that providing shelter to the homeless during a severe cold wave is one of the greatest acts of virtue. The newly-inaugurated facility adds to the several operational shelter homes already serving the city's vulnerable population. During the inauguration of the night shelter, approximately 1,000 people received blankets and food packets in the presence of the chief minister. Personally handing out these items, Chief Minister Yogi also blessed children, offering them chocolates and kind gestures of affection. He directed municipal corporation officials to ensure that anyone who missed out on receiving a blanket during the event was identified and provided with one afterwards.

CM performs Rudrabhishek, prays for welfare of nation

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Friday, performed Rudrabhishek at the Gorakhnath temple and offered prayers to Lord Shiva for the well-being and prosperity of the people of the state.

On the occasion of Shukla Paksha Chaturthi (Vinayak Chaturthi) in the month of Paus, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath performed the Rudrabhishek at the Gorakhnath temple, which included a havan.

At the Shakti temple on the first floor of the Gorakhnath temple, Chief

Minister Yogi offered 'bilva patra', lotus flowers, 'durva', and other sacred materials to Devadhivev Mahadev. He then performed the Rudrabhishek using milk, curd, ghee, sugar and holy water brought from various pilgrimage sites. The temple's priests concluded the ritual by chanting the Mahamantras from the Rudrashtadyayi of the Shukla Yajurveda Samhita.

After Rudrabhishek, the chief minister performed a havan amidst the recitation of Vedic mantras. Once the rituals were concluded, he offered prayers to Lord Shiva, seeking the welfare of the nation and wishing all citizens a healthy, happy, prosperous and peaceful life.

Awas Plus App to help more families own homes

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the Uttar Pradesh government continues its efforts to uplift the poor and deprived communities by integrating them into the mainstream and ensuring a dignified life for them. As part of the ongoing initiatives, significant measures have been introduced to enhance the transparency and effectiveness of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural).

To ensure a fair selection process for beneficiaries, an online survey will be conducted in rural areas before January 10. This survey will be facilitated through the recently launched Awas Plus App, designed to ensure transparency in the selection

of beneficiaries while simplifying the process of providing housing under the scheme.

Secretaries of all gram panchayats will participate in the survey through the Awas Plus App. They will be provided with unique login credentials and face authentication features to verify both the identity of the surveyor and the beneficiary. Additionally, beneficiaries will have the option to self-register using the app, making the process more accessible and inclusive.

In a major policy shift, the eligibility criteria for PM Awas Yojana have been expanded to ensure the scheme benefits a larger section of society. Previously, individuals earning above Rs 10,000 per month or those owning a bike, mobile phone,

or refrigerator were considered ineligible. However, the criteria have now been revised, extending the eligibility to families earning up to Rs 15,000 per month.

Earlier, beneficiaries were required to apply both offline and online by visiting government offices. Now, the application process has been simplified further. Applicants can register themselves directly by downloading the PMAY Mobile App on their phones. After completing the online registration, they will need to submit their documents at the tehsildar's office for verification.

To uphold transparency in the selection process, district-level meetings will be held under the chairmanship of the district magistrate. The chief development officer will ensure the dis-

semination of all scheme-related information through the media.

Additionally, the revised eligibility and ineligibility criteria will be widely publicised in rural areas during Tehsil Diwas and Thana Diwas to ensure no deserving individual is left out. A Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Rural Beneficiary Selection Register 2024 will also be maintained to document all eligible beneficiaries systematically.

Chief Minister Yogi is committed to ensuring that every poor family in Uttar Pradesh secures permanent housing. His government has not only focused on providing shelter but also on restoring self-respect and ensuring a secure future for the underprivileged. This initiative under the PM

Awas Yojana aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Housing for All' and reflects a major step toward eradicating poverty and empowering marginalised communities.

The launch of the Awas Plus App and the revised eligibility norms have made the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural) more effective, transparent and accessible. This initiative is expected to significantly benefit homeless families while contributing to making Uttar Pradesh a self-reliant and poverty-free state. This proactive step by the Yogi government exemplifies the principle of Antyodaya, focusing on empowering the most deprived sections of society through inclusive development and improved governance.

Khanna's emphasis on solving traffic issues in Varanasi city

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A review meeting was held under the chairmanship of UP Finance and Parliamentary Affairs Minister and Minister in charge of Varanasi Suresh Khanna regarding various projects going on in the district and the contribution of the district in making the state a one trillion dollar economy. First of all, he instructed Commissioner of Police (CP) Mohit Agarwal to make proper arrangements by ensuring installation of grills on the roadsides in collaboration with the Municipal Corporation to solve the problem of traffic jam in the city. Khanna said that proper solution should be ensured so that the traffic on the main road is not disrupted. "During the Maha Kumbh, a large number of devotees will come to Varanasi, in view of which proper traffic arrangements should be made so that the devotees do not face any problem. In view of cyber crime, the general public should be made aware by running an awareness campaign every Wednesday and ensure proper action in this regard by holding regular meetings with the banks", Khanna instructed. He informed that the GDP of UP in 2024-25 was ₹25 lakh crore whereas as per the estimate of the central government, the GDP of UP is 27.51 lakh crore. "The growth rate of the state has been more than 12 per cent for the last seven years and the industrial growth rate is 22.1 per cent which has been released by the Indian Statistical Institute which is more than many developed states of the country", he added. The minister in charge directed the registered FPOs to continuously promote farm exports and sandalwood plantation. "We should continuously



Minister in charge Suresh Khanna reviewing progress of development works in Varanasi on Friday.

ly promote the production and export of those products which can strengthen our economic condition", the minister said, directing all public representatives to publicise the schemes of the Fisheries department and the DM to organise a workshop in this regard so that the general public can be informed about the schemes of the department. "Various schemes of Silk Department, Handloom, Powerloom should be promoted and information about this should be given to public representatives so that employment opportunities can be provided in rural areas", he said. While reviewing the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Khanna said selection in the housing scheme should be done as per the government order. Information regarding the health facilities of the district was given to the minister in charge by the chief medical officer (CMO). The municipal commissioner was directed to improve the cleanliness system so that the streets and drains look clean and a surprise inspection should also be done. Expressing deep displeasure over the lead district manager (LDM) not being aware of the rejected applications for loans of the beneficiaries, he directed the district magistrate to

personally look into it. "No application related to loan for industry or self-employment should be rejected. Continuous talks should be held with the banks to get the loan," he said, adding that it should be ensured that the needy definitely get the loan. "The priority of the government is to provide employment. The maximum focus is on this. Ensure proper results while implementing the schemes on the ground", he said. Earlier, at the beginning of the meeting, the minister in charge was welcomed by the CP and district magistrate. Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal gave information about various schemes being run in the district to the minister through a presentation. In the meeting, Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Stamp and Court Fee, Registration Ravindra Jaiswal and City South MLA Dr Neelkanth Tiwari made a strong demand to make all possible efforts for the establishment of a textile park in the district and to promote the schemes of the Handloom Department so that the ancient industry of Kashi can be revived. On the other hand, UP

Minister of State (Independent Charge) for AYUSH, Food Security and Drug Administration Dr Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu' stressed on promoting Gangatri cows and to promote the growth of mahogany plants under the free breed improvement scheme of artificial insemination in animals. MLA T Ram stressed on preparing a proposal for the construction of a trauma centre near the ring road and to ensure the availability of benches for the students of primary schools. MLC Dharmendra Singh stressed on making proper traffic arrangements in view of Maha Kumbh, and to mark land for parking of big vehicles. MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma said that it should be ensured that only the right candidates are selected in the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY). Mayor Ashok Tiwari, Zila Panchayat Chairperson Poonam Maurya, MLA Saurabh Srivastava, Joint Commissioner of Police Dr K Ejlarsen, Additional Commissioner of Police S Chinnappa, Vice-Chairman (V-C) of Varanasi Development Authority (VDA) Pulkit Garg, Municipal Commissioner Akshat Verma, DFO Varanasi Swati Singh and officers of various departments were also present in the meeting.

Minister inspects ongoing ropeway project

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

UP Finance and Parliamentary Affairs Minister and Minister-in-charge of Varanasi Suresh Khanna inspected the under-construction ropeway project at Rathyatra here on Friday. He took information from the project manager on the number of labourers working daily and in how many shifts the work is going on, the capacity of the ropeway, the time of completion of the construction work and other important points and gave necessary guidelines. The project manager said the construction work is



Minister in charge Suresh Khanna inspecting progress of ropeway project in Varanasi on Friday.

being done in two shifts. The work will be completed by May 2025. After the review meeting, the minister-in-charge inspected the Varanasi treasury and observed the

ongoing works and directed to ensure construction of toilets with facilities for pensioners. The minister directed to dispose of the bills received from various departments as per rules and mark them systematically in the register and gave appropriate guidelines to the departmental officers. Before the review meeting, Khanna expressed strong displeasure while inspecting the road and sewerage works of Ravindrapuri. He instructed the superintending engineer of Jal Nigam to complete the work as soon as possible by working in three shifts for 24 hours continuously.

UPHC Durgakund declared first runner-up in Kayakalp Scheme

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Varanasi (PNS): Under the National Health Mission (NHM), Urban Primary Health Centre (UPHC) Durgakund has won the title of first runner-up in the Kayakalp Scheme 2023-24. Under this, an award distribution ceremony was organised in which CMO Dr Sandeep Chaudhary also inaugurated the address of the Urban PHC through QR code. By scanning the QR code, the complete address of the hospital will be available. The CMO also inaugurated a separate NCD clinic in the hospital for non-communicable diseases, in which any beneficiary can get his BMI, blood sugar, blood pressure and other body tests done free of cost. Dr Chaudhary said joint efforts made with dedication and honesty bring great success. He said all the health workers of this health centre deserve congratulations, whose hard work and joint efforts got this PHC the 'Kayakalp Award'.

UPSIDA focuses on expediting development projects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA) is making significant strides in upgrading the state's industrial infrastructure, a key component of Uttar Pradesh's ambitious goal of becoming a \$1 trillion economy. UPSIDA is focusing on expediting development projects within the Construction Division-Ist, Ghaziabad and surrounding districts, with initiatives designed to benefit industrialists, local communities and drive job creation. The key highlights of UPSIDA's ongoing projects include: **Road and Drain Upgrades:** Major investments are being made in the maintenance and upgrade of roads and drainage systems across several industrial areas. The projects include: Bulandshahr Road Site-I (₹80.37 crore), Loha Mandi (₹24.78 crore), SSGT Road (₹16.79 crore) and Sahibabad Site-IV (₹15.25

crore). All projects are expected to be completed by June this year. In Industrial Area Loha Mandi and Bulandshahr Road Site-I, Ghaziabad, significant progress has been made, with GSB, WMM and DLC work completed and PQC work ongoing, adhering to MoRTH specifications. **Comprehensive Industrial Area Development (DPR Works):** Under the Atal Infrastructure Mission, two industrial areas are slated for complete upgrades: Kavi Nagar, Ghaziabad (₹41.15 crore) and Partapur & Udhogpuram, Meerut (₹55.12 crore). These projects, targeted for completion by June this year, aim to enhance the Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) by improving overall infrastructure. **New Entry Gate Construction:** To improve security and access control, new entry gates are being constructed at: MG Road, Hapur; Pilkhani, Saharanpur; Begrajpur, Muzaffarnagar; Shahibabad Site-IV, Ghaziabad.

These projects are also scheduled for completion by June. **Annual Maintenance and Drain Upgrades:** The ongoing annual maintenance work is being conducted in Industrial Area (IA) MG Road Hapur, IA Pilkhani and IA Begrajpur, including drain cleaning, culvert maintenance and road sweeping. Additionally, a tender of ₹60.34 crore is in process for upgrading drains and constructing RCC box culverts in IA MG Road, Hapur. CEO Mayur Maheshwari said under the leadership of CM Yogi Adityanath, UPSIDA is committed to continuously upgrading the state's industrial infrastructure. These initiatives are designed to attract major industrialists to UPSIDA's industrial areas and contribute to UP achieving its goal of a \$1 trillion economy. The projects underway in Ghaziabad and surrounding districts will not only benefit industrialists and local communities but also boost industrial growth and create valuable job opportunities.

DRM inspects Jhusi, Prayagraj Rambag stns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In view of the expected heavy rush of devotees in the Maha Kumbh Mela-2025 to be held this year at Prayagraj Sangam, Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) of North Eastern Railway (Varanasi division) Vineet Kumar Srivastava is continuously inspecting with the divisional officers to provide ease, safety and proper facilities to the passengers coming to the fair so that the devotees do not face any kind of problem. Srivastava, along with his divisional officers, conducted a window trailing inspection of the Banaras-Prayagraj Rambagh rail section on Thursday and tested the safety and operational speed of this rail section. The DRM also conducted a thorough inspection of Jhusi and Prayagraj Rambag stations for ensuring management of Kumbh special trains and to provide proper passenger facilities to the devotees coming to the Maha Kumbh Mela. During the inspection of Prayagraj Rambag station, he thoroughly inspected the new passenger reservation centre, unreserved ticket counter, permanent passenger shelter centre, temporary food and water vending stalls, waiting rooms, additional ticket counters, tea stalls, water booths, entry and exit routes, permanent and temporary platforms, passenger sheds, RCC benches, renovation of old foot over bridge, temporary passenger and offi-



DRM VK Srivastava inspecting Maha Kumbh preparations at Jhusi station of Varanasi division (NER)

cer rest room, passenger waiting rooms, CCTV surveillance, barricading and boundary walls for security and control room for proper management of crowd and passenger facility development works constructed for the convenience of fair passengers and gave necessary instructions to the concerned. Earlier, during the inspection of Jhusi station, the divisional railway manager thoroughly inspected the passenger shelter centre built in the circulating area of the second entry gate of the station, RCC boundary walls built for security, high mast lights for proper lighting, permanent toilets and bathrooms built for the fair passengers, temporary toilets, approach road and electric lighting system for the movement of passengers at night and gave necessary instructions to the officials concerned. In the said inspection, the

DRM, along with the Senior Divisional Security Commissioner, conducted a field inspection for the safety of the fair passengers and confirmed the strong security arrangements. Senior Divisional Signal and Telecommunication Engineer Rajat Priya, Senior Divisional Security Commissioner (SDSC) S Ramakrishnan, Senior Divisional Engineer (SDE/Coordination) Rakesh Ranjan, Senior Divisional Engineer-III Anuj Verma, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (General) Pankaj Kesharwani, Divisional Commercial Manager (DCM) Rajesh Pandey, Assistant Divisional Operations Manager (Coaching) Heera Lal, Public Relations Officer Ashok Kumar and senior observers were also present. Meanwhile there will be some arrangements on the first two

bathing dates of Paus Purnima and Makar Sankranti during Maha Kumbh Mela. At Prayagraj Rambag station, entry will be given only from the main entrance from the side of Hanuman Mandir Chauraha (crossing) and exit will be given only towards Louder Road. Ticket arrangements will be available in the passenger shelters in the form of unreserved ticket counters, ATMs and mobile ticketing. At Jhusi station, entry and exit facility will be provided from both sides of the station. Ticketing arrangements will be in the form of unreserved ticket counters, ATMs and mobile ticketing in passenger shelters. This arrangement will continue from one day before to two days after the main bathing days, informed Public Relations Officer (PRO/Varanasi) Ashok Kumar.

Shiv Sena to launch signature campaign during Maha Kumbh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde faction) will launch a signature campaign during Prayag Maha Kumbh to raise its demand for making India a Hindu nation, said party's newly-appointed state media in charge Om Prakash Mishra here on Friday. Mishra was given a rousing welcome and felicitation by the workers when he arrived in the city. During a press conference at a hotel in the Cantonment area, Mishra said to make India a Hindu nation, thousands of Shiv Sainiks had performed Kar Seva of Shri Baba Kashi Vishwanath on September 2 last year and a resolution has been taken to make India a Hindu nation. In this context, Shiv Sainiks will run a signature campaign to make a Hindu nation in the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj, he said, adding that after this, the said signature campaign will reach Delhi and its banner will be handed over to the President. Shiv Sena leader said Madhav Rao Dhaurahra of Kashi is known as Madhavra Bina which has been taken over by the Archaeological department and due to 'pressure' from a particular section, the Indian



tricolour could not be hoisted at the said place even today. "Shiv Sainiks had hoisted the tricolour at the said place 20 years ago due to which they were sent to jail. Even today, whenever Shiv Sainiks go to hoist the tricolour at the said Madhav Rao Dhaurahra in Kashi has been decided to be organised by the Shiv Sainiks because it is a part of India. Mishra added that Shiv Sena will continue to organise some programme or the other throughout the year and will spread it among the people. Shiv Sena deputy chief Gaurav Shukla Shaheed and dozens of Shiv Sainiks were also present in the press conference.

Youth's death shrouded in mystery

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A youth died under mysterious circumstances in a hotel room under Nazirabad police station area where he had gone to celebrate new year party with friends. His partly-naked body was recovered from the bathroom of the hotel room. His friends took him to a hospital where the doctors declared him dead. His kin accused his friends of killing him. Police and forensic team rushed to the spot and carried out investigation before initiating further action in the matter. Gaurav (22) of Bhananapurwa, Chamanganj, was employed in a cafe in Swaroor Nagar. His family members said he had gone to a hotel for a new year party with friends where they had booked two rooms. After consuming liquor, all friends left leaving Gaurav in the hotel. Suddenly, one of them returned to hotel to collect his mobile charger when he saw the partly-naked body of Gaurav lying in the bathroom. Thereafter, friends took him to the hospital where he was declared dead by the doctors. On hearing the news of his death, friends had an argument with the doctors following which the hospital management informed the police. Swaroor Nagar inspector Suryabali Pandey rushed to the spot and informed Nazirabad inspector Aman Singh about it. Kin rushed to the hospital and staged an agitation accusing their son's friends of murder. Nazirabad inspector Aman Singh said

prima facie investigation suggests that Gaurav died due to overdose of liquor during new year party. However, based on the allegations of kin, CCTV footages and call details etc. are being checked to ascertain facts of the incident. On the basis of investigation and autopsy report, further action will be initiated in the matter, he said. **SUICIDE:** A youth committed suicide by hanging himself in Govind Nagar police station area on Thursday evening after his girlfriend stopped talking to him. Police have started investigating the matter. Reports said Seema Gupta, a native of Jairam Nagar, Fatehpur, lives with son Aman Gupta (22) in a rented house in Gujaini. Seema is employed in a leather factory in Rania while her younger son Anuj lives in Jairam Nagar, Fatehpur, with wife. The sister of the deceased Hoshita informed that Aman had to go for work on Friday. He had a love affair with a girl from Lucknow. For the past few days she had stopped talking to Aman due to which he became upset and became addicted to liquor. On Thursday, Seema had gone to factory. In the evening, when cousin Aryan reached home he found Aman hanging. Hoshita said mother had called Aryan to counsel Aman. In another incident, a teacher of a primary school committed suicide by hanging herself under mysterious circumstances in Shyam Nagar. Family members had gone to the market and on return found her hanging and informed the police.

Innovative method for producing bioethanol discovered

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In a remarkable advancement towards sustainable energy solutions, researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) has discovered an innovative method for producing bioethanol from potato peel waste. This 'waste-to-wealth' approach not only demonstrates a path to reducing food waste but also contributes significantly to India's quest for energy independence and environmental sustainability. The research, led by Dr Abhishek Suresh Dhoble, assistant professor at the School of Biochemical Engineering, alongside M Tech student Unnati Gupta, explores the potential of utilising potato peel waste as a feedstock for bioethanol production. Bioethanol, a renewable bio-fuel, plays an essential role in mit-

igating the nation's dependence on crude oil imports while promoting cleaner, sustainable energy alternatives. The innovative process highlights the dual benefits of addressing both the challenges of food waste and the pressing need for sustainable fuel sources. Dr Dhoble informed that ethanol blending in petrol has reportedly increased from 1.53 per cent in 2014 to 15 per cent in 2024, with a goal of achieving 20 per cent by 2025. Additionally, research is being conducted to assess the feasibility of blending 15 per cent ethanol in diesel. These efforts are part of the government's broader strategy to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, driven by the need to cut India's annual ₹22 lakh crore fossil fuel import bill, especially in the face of global geopolitical uncertainties. He further informed that

India produces an average of 56 million tonnes of potatoes annually. Of this, approximately 8-10 per cent (around five million tonnes) is processed into chips, fries and dehydrated products. However, post-harvest losses in potato production are significant, estimated at 20-25 per cent (11-14 million tonnes), primarily due to inadequate storage facilities, inefficient transportation and improper handling. Dr Dhoble emphasised that this approach offers a practical, scalable solution that can contribute to India's energy self-reliance. "Ethanol production from agricultural waste, such as potato peels, represents a step forward in reducing the environmental impact of fossil fuels while also fostering economic benefits by turning waste into valuable resources", he said. By focusing on sustainable bioethanol produc-

tion, IIT (BHU) is making critical strides in the quest for greener, more efficient energy sources, further solidifying its place at the forefront of research that will shape India's and the world's energy future. IIT (BHU) Director Prof Amit Patra congratulated Dr Dhoble and his team for this ground-breaking initiative and said this breakthrough research reflects IIT (BHU)'s commitment to advancing cutting-edge solutions in support of global sustainability goals, enhancing the institute's role as a leader in environmental research and innovation. The project not only aims to create a cleaner and more sustainable energy future but also tackles food waste management at a large scale, providing a holistic solution that benefits both the environment and the economy.

PMJKJA nat'l gen secy visits village

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Prayagraj (PNS): National general secretary of Pradhan Mantri Jan Kalyan Jagrukta Abhiyan (PMJKJA), Satyram Singh, visited Inayatpatti village under Utraon police station on Friday. He visited the Dalit colony, inspected it and talked to the BDO over phone. He said bona fide beneficiaries should be given benefits for housing by geo-tagging. He said that for the benefit of the public welfare scheme by the Bharatiya Janata Party, anyone can meet the state vice-president Sameer Ahmed and apprise him of their problem, which will be resolved immediately. Singh was accompanied by Abhishek and BJP workers.

House gutted in fire

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

All the household goods were gutted in a fire which broke out in a house in Gangrauli village under Gajner police station area of Kanpur Dehat on Thursday night. On seeing the flames, panic prevailed among the villagers who toiled hard to control the fire. But by then the entire household goods had been gutted in the fire. After death of his wife, Devsharan Yadav of Gangrauli lives with sons — Abhi and Abhishek and on Thursday night he cooked food on 'chulha' (brick stove) and after dinner they went to sleep in a room. Late at night the thatched roof of the room suddenly caught fire. When he raised an alarm villagers rushed to the spot and tried to extin-

guish the fire by pouring water from the submersible pump. The fire was brought under control after around half-an-hour but by then the entire household goods, including grain, clothes etc had been gutted. A spark from 'chulha' was suspected to be the cause of incident. Tehsildar Akbarpur said lekhal has been deputed to the spot and on the basis of his report, financial aid will be extended to the victim. **DEMONSTRATION:** The members of Uttar Pradesh Madhyamik Shikshak Sangh on Friday staged an indefinite dharna-demonstration at the DIOS office to press for the settlement of their seven-point charter of demands. District secretary Rahul Kumar Mishra said the agitation will continue till all demands are not settled.

Workshop organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Varanasi (PNS): The Department of Statistics, DST-CIMS, and Mahila Mahavidyalaya (MMV), Banaras Hindu University (BHU) have jointly organised the three-day 'International Workshop on Bayesian Frontiers: Unveiling the Future of Statistical Modelling and Inference' which was kicked off here on Friday. The event has drawn over 150 participants from across the globe, including students, research scholars, faculty members, and professionals, fostering a collaborative environment for learning. In the inaugural session, Prof Sanjeev Kumar, Head of the Department of Statistics, provided an insightful overview of the department's history and its evolution.

Bangla infiltration: BJP whitewash Didi 'blueprint' claim

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

As Bengal politics sparked over Bangladeshi infiltration the State BJP on Friday hit back at Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee after she accused the Centre and BSF for encouraging infiltrations. The State BJP said the infiltrators were Banerjee's vote bank. Launching a scathing attack on Banerjee for her "malicious campaign" junior Union Minister and Bengal BJP president Sukanto Majumdar said that all those who were entering Bengal illegally and settling down in the border districts constituted the vote bank of Chief Minister's Trinamool

Congress. "It is an open secret ... everyone knows who these infiltrators are ... they are the vote bank of Mamata Banerjee which is why they are given grand welcome by the Trinamool Congress government," Majumdar said wondering how she was unaware of the large scale infiltration that has been taking place on daily basis --- if the Chief Minister's claim that nothing that happened escaped her knowledge was true. Incidentally the Chief Minister is also in charge of the Home of the State. The BJP's counterattack came a day after Banerjee charged the Centre with preparing a 'blueprint' in connivance with the

Border Security Force to aid infiltration so as to "destabilize" Bengal. Alleging that the Bangladeshis infiltrators that settle in Bengal promptly acquire the voter and aadhar cards as also the membership of the TMC, Majumdar said these illegal immigrants "work in the elections to garner vote for Mamata Banerjee," Majumdar said that the Chief Minister was not interested in the future of the people and her State rather "she is interested about winning elections only ... she is not interested about the future of the country." Even as a section of the BJP condemned the Chief Minister for making "seditious" state-



ments by implicating the BSF and the Centre and accusing them of making a "blueprint" to engineer infiltration Majumdar said "today she is making reckless remarks to save her face but "during 2021 Assembly elections she had instigated people to attack Central forces... If it would have been Pakistan forces then she would have welcomed them." Majumdar's statements came amid the present volatile situation in Bangladesh and regular arrests made by the Indian security forces of people who had infiltrated into India and had been working as terror modules of Ansar ul Bangla

and JMB Bangladesh. The State BJP president's statements also came within hours of the Chief Minister making an aggressive statement accusing the Centre and the BSF of aiding infiltration. In apparent bid to shift the blame on the Centre's doors Banerjee on Thursday alleged that BSF was which responsible for guarding the borders, was allowing Bangladeshis to cross into India from Islampur, Sitai, and Chopra in North Bengal. "Border is guarded by BSF and not the TMC," Banerjee said adding how the BSF was aiding infiltration "to destabilize Bengal" as a part of a blueprint

prepared by the Centre and the BSF. "It is an inside job of the BSF, and it is a blueprint of the Central Government. If there was not any blueprint from the Central Government, then it would not be possible... I have repeatedly spoken to the Central Government that what they decide will be our path, but we will protest against them if they facilitate militants to disrupt the state... We will send a protest letter to the centre also for this," Banerjee said drawing instant criticism from Union Minister Giriraj Singh who said that Bengal during her rule had become a breeding ground of infiltrators."

India protests China's creation of two new counties in Hotan, asserts area part of Ladakh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India on Friday said it has lodged a "solemn protest" with China over creation of two new counties in Hotan prefecture, asserting that such moves will not lend legitimacy to Beijing's "illegal and forcible" occupation in the region. In a strong reaction, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said parts of these so-called counties fall in India's Union Territory of Ladakh and that the Chinese action will have no bearing on New Delhi's consistent position regarding its sovereignty. China's announcement on establishing the two counties came days after Special Representatives of the two nations resumed boundary talks that was stalled for almost five years. "We have seen the announcement pertaining to the establishment of two new counties in Hotan Prefecture of China. Parts of jurisdiction of these so-called counties fall in India's Union Territory of Ladakh," Jaiswal said. "We have never accepted the illegal Chinese occupation of



Indian territory in this area," he said. "Creation of new counties will neither have a bearing on India's long-standing and consistent position regarding our sovereignty over the area nor lend legitimacy to China's illegal and forcible occupation of the same," Jaiswal added. He further said: "We have lodged a solemn protest with the Chinese side through diplomatic channels." The latest irritant in ties came weeks after India and China ended an over four-and-a-half-year border standoff and announced steps to reduce mistrust. Following an understanding reached on October 21, the two sides completed the disengagement of troops at the two remaining friction points of Demchok and Depsang. Prime Minister Narendra Modi

and Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks on the margins of the BRICS Summit in Russia on October 23 and agreed to revive various bilateral dialogue mechanisms, signalling an intention to normalise the relations. In the nearly 50-minute meeting, Modi underscored the importance of properly handling differences and disputes and not allowing them to disturb peace and tranquillity in border areas. Nearly four weeks later, the Special Representatives on the border issue -- India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and China's foreign minister Wang Yi held talks in Beijing. It was the first dialogue under the framework of Special Representatives in nearly five years. In the talks, Doval and Wang focused on "positive" direction for cross-border cooperation including resuming the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, river data sharing and border trade. Morevoer, days after China announced its plan to build a mega dam on Brahmaputra river in Tibet, India on Friday said it will continue to moni-

tor and take necessary measures to protect its interests. In its first reaction to the proposed dam, New Delhi urged Beijing to ensure that the interests of downstream states of the Brahmaputra are not harmed by activities in upstream areas. "We will continue to monitor and take necessary measures to protect our interests," Jaiswal said. There have been apprehensions that the dam will have adverse impact on Arunachal Pradesh as well as Assam. "As a lower riparian state with established user rights to the waters of the river, we have consistently expressed, through expert-level as well as diplomatic channels, our views and concerns to the Chinese side over mega projects on rivers in their territory," Jaiswal said. "These have been reiterated, along with the need for transparency and consultation with downstream countries, following the latest report," he said. "The Chinese side has been urged to ensure that the interests of downstream states of the Brahmaputra are not harmed by activities in upstream areas," he added.

SC to devise effective mechanism to combat caste-based discrimination in educational institutions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Terming it as a sensitive issue, the Supreme Court on Friday said it will devise an effective mechanism to combat caste-based discrimination in educational institutions in the country. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan directed the University Grants Commission (UGC) to notify draft regulations to ensure no caste-based discrimination happened with students in the Central, State, private and deemed universities. The Bench directed the UGC to furnish data on the number of institutions which had established equal opportunity cells in compliance with the UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions Regulations) 2012, popularly called "UGC equity regulations". "We are equally conscious of this sensitive issue. We will do something. We will have to find out some effective mechanism and modalities to see that the 2012 regulations are translated into reality," the bench said.

The top court sought Centre's response on the issue and asked the UGC to furnish data within six weeks on the complaints over such discrimination among students in all universities and higher education institutions besides the consequent action. Senior advocate Indira Jaising, appearing for the mothers of students Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadv, who allegedly died by suicide after facing caste-based discrimination, said from 2004 till now over 50 students (mostly from SC/ST) had killed themselves in IITs and other institutions after facing such discrimination. While Vemula, a PhD scholar at Hyderabad Central University died on January 17, 2016, Tadv, a student at TN Topiwala National Medical College, died on May 22, 2019, after she was subjected to purported discrimination by three doctors in her college. The bench said a PIL was filed in 2019 but no substantial hearing had taken place on the issue so far. "From now on we will list this petition periodically so that some effective solution could be found in the

matter as since 2019 nothing much has happened," said Justice Surya Kant. The UGC counsel submitted a committee constituted by it gave recommendation and the commission drafted new regulations to stop caste-based discrimination. "The draft regulations need to be put on the website to invite objections and suggestions from the public in a month's time and thereafter it will be notified," he said. The bench questioned the UGC over the delay and said it had been sleeping all this while and not come up with new regulations. "How much time is needed to notify the new regulations? You do it in one month and place it on record," the bench said and posted the matter after six weeks. It sought the assistance of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta on the matter along with the response of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, an autonomous institution under the UGC which assesses and accredits higher education institutions. On September 20, 2019, the top court issued notice on the

PIL which also sought to enforce the fundamental rights, particularly the Right to Equality, Right to Prohibition of Discrimination against caste, and the Right to Life. The plea alleged "rampant prevalence" of caste-based discrimination in higher educational institutions throughout the country. The petitioners sought directions to the Centre and the UGC to strictly ensure the enforcement and compliance of the 2012 regulations. Seeking directions to the Centre and the UGC, the plea asked to ensure all the educational institutions, complied with the regulations in "letter and in spirit" apart from establishing equal opportunity cells on the lines of similarly existing anti-discrimination internal complaints mechanisms, and have representation from the SC/ST, NGOs or social sector to ensure objectivity and impartiality. Further, a direction was sought to all universities to take strong disciplinary action against victimisation of students or staff over caste-based discrimination and protecting students from any hostility in campuses.

Right to property a Constitutional right, says SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court has said that the right to property is a constitutional right and an individual cannot be deprived of his property without him being paid adequate compensation in accordance with the law. A bench of justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan said the right to property ceased to be a fundamental right due to the Constitution (Forty-Fourth Amendment) Act, 1978, however, it continues to be a human right in a welfare state and a constitutional right under Article 300-A of the Constitution. Article 300-A of the Constitution provides that no person shall be deprived of his property, save by authority of law. The apex court delivered its verdict on Thursday on an appeal challenging a November 2022 judgment of the Karnataka High Court in a matter pertaining to land acquisition for the Bengaluru-Mysuru Infrastructure



Corridor Project (BMICP). "As discussed hereinabove, though the right to property is no more a fundamental right, in view of the provisions of Article 300-A of the Constitution of India, it is a constitutional right," the bench said. "A person cannot be deprived of his property without him being paid adequate compensation in accordance with law for the same," it said in its verdict on the compensation related to the infrastructure corridor project.

The bench noted that in January 2003, a preliminary notification was issued by the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) for acquiring lands for the project and in November 2005, the possession of land of the appellants was taken over. The top court said the land owners, who were appellants before it, were required to knock at the doors of the courts on a number of occasions during the last 22 years and they have been deprived of their property

without any compensation for the same. The top court noted there was no delay which could be attributed to the appellants in not getting compensation, but it was on account of the "lethargic attitude" of the officers of the State/KIADB that the appellants were deprived of compensation. The bench said that only after notices were issued in contempt proceedings, the compensation was determined by the Special Land Acquisition Officer (SLAO) on April 22, 2019, taking guideline values prevailing in 2011 for determining the market value of the acquired land. The judgment said if the compensation to be awarded at the market value as of 2003 was permitted, it would amount to permitting a travesty of justice and making the constitutional provisions under Article 300-A a mockery. It was a fit case for the apex court to exercise its powers under Article 142 of the Constitution and direct the shifting of the date for determination of the market value of

the land of the appellants. "We, therefore, in exercise of power of this court under Article 142 of the Constitution of India, find it appropriate in the interest of justice that the SLAO be directed to determine the compensation to be awarded to the appellants herein on the basis of the market value prevailing as on April 22, 2019," the bench said. The top court directed that the SLAO shall pass a fresh award taking the market value prevailing as on April 22, 2019 within two months after hearing the parties. "The rights of parties to challenge the award in reference, if they are aggrieved by it, shall remain open," the bench said. It noted the appellants have been deprived of their legitimate dues for almost 22 years. "It can also not be controverted that money is what money buys. The value of money is based on the idea that money can be invested to earn a return, and that the purchasing power of money decreases over time due to inflation," said the judgment.

SC agrees to examine CBI's plea against acquittal of Ram Rahim

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Supreme Court on Friday agreed to examine the CBI's appeal against the acquittal of Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh and four others in the 2002 murder of Ranjit Singh, a former manager of the sect. The Punjab and Haryana High Court on May 28, 2024, acquitted Singh and others in the case, observing the probe was "tainted and sketchy". Sirsa-based sect leader Singh, who is serving a 20-year jail term for the charges of raping two of his disciples, is currently lodged in Sunaria Jail in Rohtak, Haryana. He was also awarded life-term imprisonment for the murder of journalist Ram Chandar Chhatrapati, which will commence after the completion of his current sentence. Singh in the past grabbed headlines for securing parole many times. On Friday, a bench compris-

ing Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar issued notices to the five acquitted persons including Singh. The bench took note of the submissions of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the CBI, that a bench headed by Justice Bela M Trivedi had issued notices to the acquitted persons on a separate plea filed by the deceased's father against the High Court verdict. "Our attention has been drawn to the office report dated September 9, 2024 regarding the order passed by the bench of Justice Bela Trivedi. Issue notice... Matter is to be listed before the bench presided over by Justice Bela Trivedi," said the top court. Ranjit Singh was fatally shot at by four unidentified assailants at Khanpur Kolian Village in Haryana's Kurukshetra on July 10, 2002. The murder was allegedly orchestrated by Singh, who suspected the deceased of

being behind the circulation of an anonymous letter accusing him of sexually exploiting his women followers. The CBI, which took over the probe in November 2023, said there was a clear motive behind the crime. A division bench of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, however, acquitted Singh observing the prosecution's failure to conclusively establish the motive and said the case was "shrouded in doubts". Those acquitted include Avtar Singh, Krishan Lal, Jasbir Singh, and Sabdil Singh whereas another accused Inder Sain, died during the pendency of the trial in 2020. A special CBI court in Panchkula, Haryana, convicted all the accused in October, 2021 and sentenced them to life-term imprisonment in the murder case. Singh was held guilty of hatching a criminal conspiracy with the co-accused persons.

SC upholds order saying Haryana Congress MLA Panwar's arrest illegal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has observed ED's "high-handedness" and "inhuman conduct" during an almost 15-hour long interrogation of former Haryana Congress MLA Surender Panwar and upheld an order saying his arrest was illegal. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih said it was an "inhuman conduct" on part of ED officers as the case was not related to some terror activity but of an alleged illegal sand mining. "This is not the way to treat people in such a case. You have virtually forced a person to make a statement," it said. Dismissing the Enforcement Directorate (ED)'s plea against the high court order, the bench held, "We are not inclined to interfere with the finding of the high court that the arrest of the



respondent was illegal." The High Court's findings, it said, were only for deciding whether Panwar's arrest was illegal. "These findings will not affect the merits of the pending complaint under Section 44 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002," said the bench in its order on December 2. The court said the ED's approach in

conducting the probe was a "shocking state of affairs" where a person was virtually forced to make a statement. ED's counsel Zoheb Hussain said the High Court had erred in its finding that Panwar was continuously quizzed for 14.40 hours, pointing to a dinner break during the interrogation. The lawyer said ED in a 2024 circular asked its officials

to maintain certain standards of interrogations and to ensure people were not interrogated during late night and in early hours of the day. Panwar, 55, was taken into custody in the wee hours of July 20, 2024, in Gurugram and produced before a special PMLA court in Ambala which sent him to the custody of the ED till July 29, 2024 in an illegal mining-linked money-laundering case. The agency raided the premises of the former Sonepat MLA in January, 2024, on charges of "large-scale illegal mining" in the Yamunanagar area of the state. The money-laundering case stems from several FIRs registered by the Haryana Police for probing alleged illegal mining of boulders, gravel and sand that took place in the past in Yamunanagar and nearby districts despite a ban imposed by the NGT.

MEA rejects Washington Post report linking New Delhi to plot against Muizzu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India on Friday rejected two recent reports published by the Washington Post -- one linking New Delhi to a failed plot to impeach Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu and another on Indian agents allegedly attempting to eliminate certain terror elements in Pakistan. Dismissing the reports, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the newspaper and the reporter in question appear to nurse a "compulsive hostility" towards India. In its report on the Maldives, the Washington Post, citing a document titled "Democratic Renewal Initiative", claimed that opposition politicians proposed bribing 40 members of Parliament, including those



from Muizzu's own party, to vote to impeach him. After months of secret talks, the plotters failed to gather enough votes to impeach the president, it said. "Both the newspaper and the reporter in question appear to nurse a compulsive hostility

towards India. You can see a pattern in their activities. I leave you to judge their credibility. As far as we are concerned, they have none," Jaiswal said. "As regards (the report on) Pakistan, I remind you of what Hillary Clinton said -- 'You cannot keep snakes in your

backyard and expect them only to bite your neighbours," he said. Clinton had made the comments in a blunt message to Pakistan in 2011, when she was serving as the US secretary of state. She had also said that Washington intended to "push the Pakistanis very hard" to remove militant safe havens and tackle groups like the Haqqani network that are responsible for cross-border strikes. In its report on India's "shadow" operations in Pakistan, the Washington Post, quoting unnamed Pakistani and western officials, claimed that the Indian intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), is carrying out a programme since 2021 to "kill at least a half a dozen people" inside Pakistan.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

America under attack

A series of seemingly unrelated attacks highlight a troubling pattern of violence that has become a daily occurrence in the US

It is not a good beginning of the new year for the United States. The United States witnessed a series of attacks that shook it to core: a truck-ramming incident in New Orleans, a shooting incident in New York and a shooting spree in Las Vegas. These events, happening in quick succession, underscore an alarming pattern of violence that warrants deep analysis into their causes and potential implications. In New Orleans, a truck driven by Shamsud Din Jabbar plowed into a crowd, killing 15 and injuring 30. The truck, bearing an ISIS flag, was found to contain weapons and potential improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Jabbar was killed in a shootout with law enforcement and the FBI is treating the incident as an act of terrorism. Several people were injured after a mass shooting incident at the Amazura nightclub in Queens, New York late on Wednesday. Meanwhile, one person was killed and seven were wounded when a Tesla Cybertruck exploded outside a hotel belonging to US President-elect



Donald Trump in Las Vegas. Motives remain unclear, but early investigations point to ideological influences. The attacks share a few commonalities. All incidents targeted densely populated, high-profile locations to maximise casualties and media coverage.

In New Orleans and potentially Las Vegas, ideological motives appear central, with Jabbar's ISIS affiliations highlighting international terrorism's persistent threat. The use of a vehicle, explosives, and firearms demonstrates the adaptability of attackers, making prevention increasingly complex. The motivations behind these attacks stem from several inter-

secting factors. Jabbar's case exemplifies how individuals, even the US citizens, can become radicalised through extremist propaganda, facilitated by online networks. The New York incident is case in point of hazards of allowing free gun culture and resistance to any law on gun control. Early reports from Las Vegas suggest mental health challenges combined with ideological leanings may have fueled the attack, a trend increasingly observed in lone-wolf attackers. The growing threat of extremism, combined with unchecked emotions and easy access to firearms, continues to claim innocent lives. The implications of these attacks call for enhanced surveillance, with increased monitoring of online platforms and extremist networks. The gun control is the need of the hour. Though the US is divided on the gun control, it is high times at least some initial steps were taken in this direction. The recent spate of attacks underscores a volatile and evolving threat perception in the US. While law enforcement's swift action has mitigated further tragedy, addressing the root causes of such violence requires a multifaceted approach. From tackling radicalisation to bolstering community resilience, the nation must remain vigilant and united against the forces that seek to sow fear and division.

PICTALK



A worker plucks chrysanthemum flowers at a farm, in Nadia

A legacy of leadership, humanity and service



SANTOSH MATHEW

Jimmy Carter, the 39th President of the United States, leaves behind an extraordinary legacy as a leader, peacemaker and humanitarian



Jimmy Carter, was one of the oldest living American presidents. Along with being the individual who has lived the longest after serving as president in American history, he is also distinguished for spending the most extended post-presidential period alive. Jimmy Carter, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002 for his efforts in promoting human rights and conflict resolution, passed away in 2023. He was the 39th President of the United States, and he outlived many of his contemporaries, including George H.W. Bush, who he defeated in the presidential race in 1980. Born James Earl Carter Jr. on October 1, 1924, he has made a significant mark on American history. From 1977 to 1981, Jimmy Carter served as the President of the United States. Before becoming president, Jimmy Carter served as the Governor of Georgia in 1971. Despite running for president again in 1982 (Democrat) and competing against Ronald Reagan, he faced defeat. After leaving the presidency, he, along with his wife Rosalynn Carter, established the Carter Centre in 1982 in pursuit of helping the disadvantaged. Rosalynn Carter became the first lady and the first woman to serve as a board member of the

Carter Centre. In 2002, Jimmy Carter was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts towards peace and his exemplary actions in promoting human welfare. Despite reaching the age of 90, he remained active in various fields. Carter continued his philanthropic work, including building houses for low-income families through Habitat for Humanity, reducing diseases and elevating the quality of life for the underprivileged. His advocacy for human rights, international conflict resolution, presidency, human rights, and socio-economic development reflects his dedication to humanitarian causes. Carter's dedication to peace and social justice, as well as his active involvement in public service, sets him apart among U.S. presidents. Carter played a key role in mediating international conflicts, notably contributing to the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. His post-presidential activities, including receiving the Nobel Peace Prize and actively participating in various humanitarian initiatives, showcase his commitment to making a positive impact on the world. However, his attempt to rescue



IN 2002, JIMMY CARTER WAS AWARDED THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE FOR HIS EFFORTS TOWARDS PEACE AND HIS EXEMPLARY ACTIONS IN PROMOTING HUMAN WELFARE. DESPITE REACHING THE AGE OF 90, HE REMAINED ACTIVE IN VARIOUS FIELDS

American hostages in Iran, known as Operation Eagle Claw, failed. In his personal life, Jimmy Carter married Rosalynn in 1946, and their marriage lasted more than seven decades. They have four children: Jack, James, Donnel, and Amy. Rosalynn "Rosalynn" Carter, actively participated in various activities, including writing, activism, and advocacy for different causes. She was born in 1927. Rosalynn was actively involved in various meetings and discussions as the First Lady. She faced controversies, engaged in foreign trips, and represented her husband in diplomatic roles. In 1978, the then-American President Jimmy Carter visited India. Morarji Desai was the Prime Minister at that time. He had a meeting with 500 media persons. Carter visited the village of Chumukedima. The purpose of his visit was to revitalize the village where his mother, Lillian Peace, had served in the Peace Corps. During his journey, Carter distributed a considerable amount of money and television to the villagers. The village was later renamed as Carterpuri. In 2015, Jimmy Carter was diagnosed with

cancer, and in 2019, he faced health challenges related to multiple falls. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Carter, at the age of 96, stayed at home due to the pandemic's circumstances. Despite facing challenges and controversies, Jimmy Carter remained an active and influential figure in national and international affairs throughout his life. His contributions to diplomacy, human rights, and conflict resolution earned him recognition and respect. Even though his time as the American President failed, he left the White House and continued his work as a global advocate for human rights. He established the Carter Presidential Foundation to protect human rights globally, helping those in need and experiencing hardship. The organization has grown globally, assisting those in distress in Africa, Latin America, and other societies. Carter's compassionate activities in these regions included health-care services and other humanitarian initiatives. Today, he remains one of the eminent figures among the great presidents of America. (The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ENSURE WORKERS' SAFETY

Madam—This refers to the editorial, 'Save Priya' (January 3). It is indeed the responsibility of the Indian government to ensure the safety and security of millions of Indian nationals who choose to avail the employment opportunities extended in other countries. When the government is not able to provide employment in India, it is but natural that helpless people venture going abroad seeking livelihood means. Had the government provided jobs they would not have thought of going abroad. Therefore, the government should negotiate with the countries employing Indians to ensure the safety and security of the employees. In case any of them are found guilty of any crime, they should be sent back to face legal proceedings in the home country. This is not new. In the case of Abu, the extradition is agreed with the condition of not awarding him capital punishment. Above all, it is time to rethink awarding capital punishment. Let us imagine a scene of punishing all those involved in various crimes, those who instigated and promoted them in Manipur in the recent months. An individual killing another individual is a crime to be punished by awarding death sentences, but mass killing and raping go unpunished and even if punished, enjoy remission and paroles. Review is imminent.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

ISIS STRIKES AGAIN

Madam—Apropos of the headlines 'Terror Strikes United States' (January 3), the ghastly terror strikes before Donald Trump swears in his second term as president are ominous for his upcoming tenure and may influence and harden his policy on terrorism throughout the world. The army veteran Shams Ud Din Jabbar, swayed by ISIS, can't be alone in executing the terrorist attacks killing 14 people and fatally injuring several citizens. In fact, he got the advanced arms training and technology from the US army itself. The police investigation may unearth the

Sports award winners announced



The list of sports award winners is finally made public now, and the names of those who received the government nod for the Dhyana Chand Khel Ratna Award include D Gukesh, Harmanpreet Singh, Manu Bhaker and Praveen Kumar. Also, there is a long list for the Arjuna Awards, Dronacharya Award and the others. Although every recipient is worthy of receiving the honours for doing exceptionally well in their respective sports field. But D Gukesh is worthy of receiving extra appreciation for clinching the

title at such an early age of 18. He excellently carved out his own space for the national sport honours by becoming the winner of the FIDE World Chess Championship, beating Ding Liren most recently last December 2024. His calmness, grit and sacrifices on personal grounds, as well as his patience for his sports category, made him the utmost deserving candidate for this very honour. He has taken chess to new heights for being a cynosure in the Indian sports history. Today chess has become a popular mind-game among the youth, especially Gen Z & Gen Alpha. All credit goes to the young aspirations & zeal of D Gukesh, R Vaishali and Praggnandhaa who have made this 6-century-based, Indian-origin game called Shatranj reach the epitome of sports craze among players of every generation. He is in true sense, India's Khel Ratna (Sports Gem).

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

SOLAR POWER FOR RESIDENTS

Madam—It is an excellent initiative by the UT Administration of Chandigarh to provide solar plants to the residents of the 'City Beautiful' under the RESCO (Renewable Energy Service Company) scheme at no cost, inviting the tapping of solar energy and savings for every household. The sun is available in plenty in northern India, which will make the scheme very successful. This scheme needs to be promulgated rapidly in other cities of the nation too, with the initiative of the Union government, to benefit the maximum number of people. It will help in saving natural energy, a privilege available in abundance to only a few select countries. The government should ensure that benefits are given only to those holding authorised infrastructure duly registered to discourage further unauthorised constructions and ensure correct utilisation of government funds.

R S Narula | Patiala

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Balancing dreams and parental aspirations: A dilemma for students



SANJAY CHANDRA

In a society deeply rooted in tradition and shaped by economic uncertainty, parents often tread cautiously when guiding their children's career paths

We tend to be over-cautious when we guide our children in their professional choices. I realised this only after I had cajoled my children into studying sciences till their class 12. My rationale was that they could always switch to any other course for graduation, but the reverse was not possible. They are now happily pursuing their non-science professions, often ribbing me about how much better they could have done in their Board examinations had I not insisted. Many parents from my social circle still struggle to resolve the conundrum.



A senior colleague faced such a dilemma for his daughter two decades back. My daughters were by now happily pursuing their dreams. I freely dispensed my wisdom to let the young lady pursue whatever she wanted. He was contemplative for some time before agreeing. He remembered his school friend, the son of a famous medical doctor.

The friend was pushed into a medical college sometime in the late sixties. He quit after a couple of years, joined a

course in liberal arts, and was a contented leading artist. I was born a few years after independence. I believe our parents were excited about freedom but were equally apprehensive about the future for the next generation. They opted for the more secure government jobs for us through engineering or medical studies. Children from families who had already seen enough government jobs through second-generation elders started moving to other options in the nineties. The liberalisation of the Indian economy opened professional choices hitherto unknown to children and parents alike. But it was still not the same across the entire spectrum. A junior colleague sought my advice regarding his son's admission to an engineering course. The child had not performed well in the competi-

tive examinations. The fee charged by the available lower-rung colleges was exorbitant, necessitating the father to take a loan. It was tragic as he came to me after five years, a year after the young man had completed his graduation and had been unable to secure a job, requesting if I could arrange a job even at a measly monthly salary. I witnessed several similar cases and wondered about the strange phenomenon even half a century after independence when several better-paying career options were available. An improved economy has resulted in a continuous upward movement of people financially from the below-poverty line to the lower class to the lower-middle-class to the middle-middle-class, and so on. However, an increasing population also ensures a part of the population remains in the lower financial strata. These parents are insecure about the future leading them towards the perceived safer educational courses for children to pursue. We read about senior leaders exhorting young people to become job providers instead of job

seekers. Not many talk about the ways to achieve this or the alternate career options. Engineering and medical colleges keep mushrooming without the government and the leaders pausing to reflect upon the implications of unplanned growth. This will continue for a few more generations till the population stabilizes. I narrate experiences from my life when interacting with the young in college. I tell them to pursue their dreams. A few of them invariably ask me whether to follow the courses that their parents have chosen for them or if they should follow their dreams. It is a difficult question to answer. I draw upon my life when I respond, "Follow your parents today, they only want the best for you. But do not let your dreams die. Life gives enough opportunities for you to pursue your dreams - if not today, certainly sometime in the future."

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)

Vinod Johri | Delhi



FIRST COLUMN

OVERCOMING JEALOUSY AND POSSESSIVENESS

In a world driven by competition and material aspirations, they become the silent tormentors



RAVI VALLURI

The world has become exceedingly ruthless and is not populated by monks and sages. Renunciation today is seen as an act contemptibly performed by someone lacking in courage. Competition fuels the aspiration to launch territories and enlarge the area of dominance. Companies, countries and communities have all become wary of the material success of their 'competitors' and in the process compromise with their goals and objectives. Consequently, they resort to shortcuts to emerge triumphant and victorious. The attribute of jealousy arises in an individual when the mind is possessive of certain belongings.

They fail to appreciate it is primarily inadequacy and deficiency in the personality that triggers this kind of capricious and mercurial behaviour. Interestingly, envy in many also arises out of shortages. There can be a lack of aptitude, talent, resources, connections, opportunities or because of unfavourable outcomes. This engenders negative feelings towards perceived competitors, which culminates in jealousy and other negative feelings. Individuals subsumed by jealousy build walls of false security walls around their personalities.

Such minds feel cheery about their possessions. They attach importance to this property, clinging on to it. This could be a physical property, position, power and pelf, pleasure or sex. As per the Mahabharata, Karna was extremely jealous of Arjuna, which eventually proved to be his nemesis. Similarly, Dev Dutt remained extremely envious of his enlightened



cousin, Buddha, which only led to his downfall. The jealous and possessive mind is acquisitive by nature, taking both animate and inanimate objects for granted and getting attached to things, like an addiction to alcohol or marijuana.

Additionally, such a mind is perpetually petrified at the prospect of losing acquisitions. Fear in such minds harbours negative tendencies such as hatred, greed and ruthlessness. For instance, an artiste aspiring to be a lead artiste in a drama plays foul with a more talented actress becoming fearful and gripped with hatred and greed. Her ruthless mind kept conjuring tricks, trying to outsmart the second lead and in the bargain lost the plot. Jealous and envious minds have become laboratories of antagonism that spew hatred. How do we overcome attributes such as jealousy, envy, and possessiveness? At one end of the spectrum are organisations and authorities which need to take up this responsibility. This includes proper parenting, where children are brought up on ideals of inherent goodness, an effective educational system that imparts values as part of their pedagogy, governments that take up the responsibility of providing equal opportunities to the citizens and try to carve out an egalitarian system and a society that addresses the core issues of humaneness amongst its citizenry. Vasudeva Kutumbakam (or what is termed one world family) is the net result. The spiritual touch is an important colour in the rainbow of goodness. One can practice any faith, but we need to be tolerant of other peoples' points of view. Spirituality succeeds where religions draw the fault lines and wave red flags. Globalisation has made the world flat, but has resulted in an exponential increase in crass commercialisation and human minds have fallen prey to antipathetic traits such as jealousy, envy, attachments, entanglements, greed and possessiveness. The vicious tendencies of jealousy and possessiveness can be tackled by following the two-fold approach highlighted so that the chasm between individuals diminishes. "Manifest plainness Embrace simplicity Reduce selfishness Have few desires." — Lao Tzu

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

How waterways shape global dominance



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

Beyond the rhetoric of ideologies and resources, history reveals a stark reality: whoever commands the strategic arteries of global trade rules, the world



Have you ever wondered why the world's most significant conflicts haven't often been about land or wealth, but about water—specifically, the narrow, strategic passages that govern the flow of global commerce? What if the true history of power isn't written in the conquest of continents, but in the manipulation of these invisible arteries that sustain entire civilisations? We've been conditioned to believe wars are fought over ideologies, religions, or resources, but in reality, the greatest power struggles have always boiled down to one thing: who controls the waterways. In the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE), Athens fought for dominance over the Aegean Sea, while the Punic Wars (264–146 BCE) saw Rome and Carthage clash over Mediterranean trade routes. The Viking Invasions (8th–11th Century) leveraged rivers and coastal routes to expand across Europe. The Hundred Years' War (1337–1453) revolved around control of the English Channel, vital for military and trade access.

The Spanish Armada (1588) attempted to invade England via the Channel, only to fail, marking the rise of English naval power. The Anglo-Dutch Wars (1652–1674) pitted England against the Dutch for supremacy over global trade routes. The Opium Wars (1839–1860) saw Britain assert control over Chinese trade routes, while the Crimean War (1853–1856) focused on access to the Black Sea and key straits. History teaches us one undeniable truth: whoever controls the waters, controls the world. So, are today's tensions over waterways merely the latest chapter in an ongoing imperialist saga, where the West fights to preserve its dominance, regardless of the cost? Consider the Suez Canal, that artificial marvel that stitched together the Mediterranean and the Red Sea.

To the naked eye, it may appear as nothing more than a lifeline for global trade, but dig deeper and you'll find it at the heart of Western exploitation. When the British seized control in 1882, under the convenient pretext of 'protecting their investments,' they didn't just shorten maritime routes; they solidified their chokehold on the world's shipping routes, ensuring that they would remain the dominant force in global com-



THE PANAMA CANAL EXISTS BECAUSE THE UNITED STATES ORCHESTRATED THE DISINTEGRATION OF COLOMBIAN SOVEREIGNTY IN 1903. THIS WASN'T A MOMENT OF ENGINEERING BRILLIANCE, BUT A CALCULATED EXERCISE IN IMPERIALISM

merce. When Egypt's Nasser attempted to break this grip in 1956, his actions sparked the Suez Crisis, where Britain, France, and Israel launched a military intervention to maintain their control. As US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles famously quipped, "The United States will not tolerate the use of force to interfere with the free flow of commerce." And yet, isn't it glaringly obvious that this was never about commerce at all—it was about the West's attempt to secure its monopoly, at any cost? In the same vein, the Panama Canal stands as a bold symbol of imperial manipulation. The US didn't merely 'build' the canal—it stole it.

The Panama Canal exists because the United States orchestrated the disintegration of Colombian sovereignty in 1903. This wasn't a moment of engineering brilliance, but a calculated exercise in imperialism. With the canal, the US secured its unchallenged control over the Atlantic and Pacific, guaranteeing military and economic supremacy for the century to come. Even when Panamanian discontent festered, and the CIA's once-trusted ally Manuel Noriega threatened the established order, the United States responded with military force under the guise of 'fighting drug cartels.'

To the naive, it was a noble cause. To the cynical, it was a ruthless move to preserve a stranglehold over one of the world's most critical arteries. The canal may have technically been handed back to Panama in 1999, but let's not fool ourselves—it remains an essential tool of Western control, albeit one with a new face.

Let's not forget the Strait of Hormuz, a sliver of water that handles a quarter of the world's oil. The British recognised its significance early on, securing their dominance over it through protectorate agreements in the 19th century. By the time of the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s,

Hormuz had become the beating heart of the global oil trade, and any attempt to disrupt its flow was met with swift intervention.

Both sides sought to shut it down, understanding that control over Hormuz meant control over global energy. Yet, even today, with Iran flexing its military muscles, Western powers continue to police this waterway as though it were their birthright, ensuring that the oil flows uninterrupted, no matter the cost of human lives. Now, as the world shifts into a new era, the Northern Sea Route (NSR) is emerging as the latest theatre of power.

Stretching along Russia's Arctic coastline, this passageway promises to bypass traditional chokepoints like the Suez and Panama Canal, opening up a new frontier for global shipping. With the ice caps melting, climate change has inadvertently opened a new battlefield for dominance. The West, for all its talk of climate change solutions, is deeply uneasy about the NSR. For centuries, the Western maritime powers have been used to dictating global trade, yet now they face the challenge of a new route that circumvents their long-held control. And then there are the Turkish Straits—where the promise of control has always been laced with deception.

In World War I, the Entente powers offered Russia control over the straits in exchange for military support, only to revoke that promise after the Bolshevik Revolution. Since the Montreux Convention of 1936, Turkey has held sway over the straits, but with conditions that serve the interests of the West. These waters remain a hotbed of tension, especially now, as the Russia-NATO conflict forces us to re-evaluate the importance of these narrow waterways.

Yet, in all of these conflicts, one fact is clear: Western powers have never relinquished their thirst for control. Look at the Malacca Strait, the life-

line for Asia's maritime trade, and the silent battlefield of geopolitical manoeuvring. In the 16th century, the Portuguese recognised its importance as the gateway between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific, and later, the Dutch would follow. During World War II, Japan's occupation of Malaya underscored the strait's value, as it was the critical supply line for its imperial ambitions.

Today, China's dominance of the strait has triggered an uneasy response from the United States, which seeks to counter China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region. The Malacca Strait is as vital as it is contested, and its importance will only increase as the world edges closer to a new era of Cold War. Donald Trump's re-emergence as a political force serves as a blunt reminder that these conflicts are far from distant.

His comments on Greenland—a land abundant in resources and strategic significance—and on seizing Panama if needed, are not just idle musings. The United States' thirst for the Arctic has always been driven by the same imperial instincts that have defined its foreign policy for over a century. His fixation on the Panama Canal reveals the same ambitions, albeit with more brash rhetoric.

While many dismiss his comments as the reckless utterances of a man out of touch with the world's realities, those who know history understand that this is how empires operate: through calculated moves disguised as political theatrics.

The bottom line is this: the manipulation of waterways remains an open secret, and the struggle for control is as intense as ever—whether by the West or any power with imperialistic and hegemonic ambitions.

(The writer is a journalist and a policy analyst. Views expressed are personal)

Dalal Street ends 2024 on a bearish note: Rs 9.65 trillion investor wealth eroded

A focus on earnings growth and moderation in valuations will be critical for sustaining long-term market performance in 2025

The absence of new year cheer was evident as Dalal Street continued crashing in the last week of December leading to 2025, in the process eroding investors' wealth to the tune of Rs 9.65 trillion as Sensex tanked by 2,915 points. The bear run at a time when the market was already grappling with thin year-end volumes was made worse by a weakening rupee as it slid towards the 86-per-dollar mark. This further dampened the appeal of Indian equities for foreign institutional investors (FIIs) leading to robust FII outflows. The prevalence of this phenomenon was worldwide with Japan's Nikkei 225, China's Shanghai Composite, Australia's ASX 200, Germany's DAX, France's

CAC 40 and NASDAQ Composite showing similar bearish sentiments. The current stock market meltdown is influenced by several factors.

Not only in India, but global markets are witnessing this trend particularly due to profit-taking, and tax-loss harvesting focussing on year-end tax strategies, giving a miss to the traditional 'Santa Claus rally'. Institutional and retail investors alike booked profits and rebalanced their portfolios, particularly in large-cap stocks which posted strong growth in 2024, leading to selling pressure across the board and a broad-based correction. As economic interlinkages of India with the world have deepened, so has the integra-



HIMA BINDU KOTA

tion with global stock markets. The uncertain global economic conditions, particularly in countries like the United States, coupled with fears of a global recession fuelled by weak manufacturing data from China, have dampened investor sentiment both worldwide and in India. A decline in the demand for Indian exports, mainly in the IT and manufacturing sectors

further led to the market's downward spiral. Geopolitical tensions including regional wars, ambiguous crude oil prices and subsequent disruptions in supply chains have impacted the markets and sector-specific tragedies like the Jeju Air crash in South Korea contributed to the overall bearish sentiment. Weaker than expected third quarterly results, particularly in the banking and consumer goods sector, dampened the confidence displayed by the markets due to the resilient first two quarters showed by the Indian economy. This reduced the conviction further as the banking and consumer goods sectors were considered growth engines since the beginning of the year.



Stock market valuations in India and around the globe were elevated in 2024. In India, the higher valuations were fuelled by strong domestic economic growth and robust corporate earnings, leading to sustained investor confidence.

Several companies ranging across industries were trading at premium P/E ratios, like Infosys (28-30x); HUL (55x); Bajaj Finance (40x); and

Zomato (10-12x) to name a few. However, since the question of sustaining the overvalued stocks in the backdrop of weak quarterly earnings is difficult, it led to the year-end market corrections that we are experiencing at the end of December 2024.

Although the aggressive monetary policy by the Reserve Bank of India was able to combat inflation during the year, high interest rates negatively affected the borrowing costs of businesses and retail investors.

This led to increased interest in investments in fixed-income securities instead of finding equity markets attractive. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) who were attracted to the Indian growth story and wanted to be its

integral part also turned into net sellers in December 2024. A risk-averse stance and a strong USD value made emerging nations like India less attractive during the year-end, leading to capital outflows, which in turn led to a weakening rupee again. Overall, the bearish stock market sentiment in December 2024 was a combination of year-end profit-taking strategies, global economic outlook, high stock valuation concerns, weak sectoral performance and outlook and several international events. However, all is not bleak. These fluctuations are a part of the larger economic cycle and the markets will see an upward cycle with a long-term focus on the fundamentals and relevant steps at

the policy level. The resilient Indian economy and its economic growth will be the key driver for renewed opportunities for growth and investment in 2025.

This economic growth will be supported by increased investments in infrastructure, boosting the manufacturing environment to improve the industrial output, a burgeoning middle class and a revival of the rural economy may increase the demand for automobiles, FMCG and consumer durables in 2025. In addition, India's rapidly growing digital economy will continue to support new-age companies and sectors.

(The writer is Associate Professor at Amity University, Noida. The views expressed are personal)

Health surveillance raised in India over HMPV concerns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Amid the rising concerns over an outbreak of Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) in China, India has stepped up efforts to monitor the situation and is actively coordinating with international health agencies to assess potential risks. Sources in the Union Health Ministry said that the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has been entrusted with the task to closely monitor respiratory and seasonal influenza cases within India, ensuring that the situation is continuously evaluated. "We will continue to monitor the situation closely, validate information and update accordingly," according to a news agency, citing official sources. Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV), belonging to the *Parvoviridae*, is an enveloped single-stranded negative-sense RNA virus, according to the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC). China CDC says that the incubation period after infection is about three to five days, and the immune protection induced by HMPV is too weak to curb repeated infection. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Human

Metapneumovirus (HMPV) can cause upper and lower respiratory disease in people of all ages. According to reports, in young children and the elderly, HMPV can be severe. Those with weakened immune systems, the virus can cause serious illness. Symptoms commonly associated with HMPV include cough, fever, nasal congestion, and shortness of breath. It most likely spreads from an infected person to others through secretions from coughing and sneezing, and close personal contact such as touching or shaking hands. Patients can help prevent the spread by washing hands often with soap; avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands, and close contact with people who are sick, as per the doctors. Several reports have suggested that due to the surge in respiratory illness, particularly HMPV, hospitals and crematoriums in China are struggling to deal with the situation. The situation has raised concerns among the healthcare facilities, especially children's hospitals, which are reportedly under stress due to a sharp rise in pneumonia and "white lung" cases, a term often referred to describe severe pneumonia symptoms, as per the reports.

Kasganj violence: 28 sentenced for life

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
LUCKNOW

A special National Investigation Agency (NIA) court on Friday sentenced all 28 convicted individuals to life imprisonment in the 2018 Kasganj communal clash case, which led to the murder of Chandan Gupta during a Tiranga Yatra. The court also imposed an additional seven years of rigorous imprisonment on Salim, one of the convicts, while acquitting two others, Nasiruddin and Asim Qureshi. District government counsel Manoj Kumar Tripathi said, "All the accused have been awarded life sentences. Two people were acquitted, and we

will appeal their acquittal. Salim has also been given an additional seven years of rigorous imprisonment." The special court found the 28 accused guilty under several sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), including 302 (murder) and 307 (attempt to murder), as well as charges under the Prevention of Insult to National Honour Act, 1971. Those convicted include Salim, Wasim, Nasim, Jahid alias 'Jagga', Asiq Qureshi alias 'Hitler', and others. Among the 28, Munazir Rafi, already jailed for the Kasganj lawyer Mohini Tomar murder case, remains behind bars, while the remaining convicts, previously out on bail, surrendered over two days—26 on Thursday and Salim on Friday.

Chandan Gupta, an activist affiliated with the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), was killed during the January 26, 2018, Tiranga Yatra in Kasganj, Uttar Pradesh. The rally, organized by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and ABVP, featured participants on motorcycles carrying the tricolour and saffron flags. The rally's entry into the Baddunagar locality, despite administrative restrictions, led to communal clashes. Amid the ensuing violence, Gupta was shot dead, further escalating tensions. The unrest saw multiple shops, vehicles, and properties set ablaze. The case was initially tried in a district court in Etah before being transferred to the NIA court in Lucknow in 2022.



EPFO to launch new software system

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Thursday said that the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) will launch its new software system EPFO 3.0 by June this year to be followed by distribution of ATM cards to its subscribers. "The new system will be equivalent to the banking systems in the country and the

website will be more user-friendly. About Rs. 1570 Crore pension was disbursed to more than 68 Lakh pensioners pertaining to all 122 pension disbursing Regional offices of EPFO for December 2024," said Mandaviya in a statement here. He said that the first pilot of the Centralized Pension Payment System (CPPS) was successfully completed last October in Karnal, Jammu and Srinagar Regional Offices with the pension disbursement of

about Rs 11 Crore to more than 49,000 EPS Pensioners. The second pilot was taken up last November in 24 Regional Offices in which around Rs. 213 crores pension was disbursed to more than 9.3 lakh pensioners. The full scale implementation of the CPPS across all Regional Offices of EPFO empowers pensioners to access their pension seamlessly from any bank, any branch, anywhere in the country.

India and Maldives agree on local currency use for trade

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

India and the Maldives have finalised a framework to promote the use of local currencies for cross border trade with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar asserting that New Delhi has always stood by the island nation. He made these remarks here on Friday at a meeting with his Maldivian counterpart Abdulla Khaleel. He arrived here on Thursday on a three-day visit to explore ways to bolster bilateral ties in several key areas including maritime security, trade and

investment. "I see that the framework to promote the use of local currencies for cross border transaction has been signed," Jaishankar said. "We have increased our engagement in various sectors and I do want to say that India has always stood by the Maldives. You are a very concrete expression of our neighbourhood first policy," he added. The Maldives is one of India's key maritime neighbours in the Indian Ocean Region and the overall bilateral ties including in areas of defence and security witnessed an

upward trajectory under the previous government in Male. The ties between India and the Maldives came under severe strain after Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, took charge of the top office in November 2023. Within hours of his oath, he had demanded the withdrawal of Indian military personnel from his country. Subsequently, the Indian military personnel were replaced by civilians. However, there was a thaw in the relations as Muizzu vowed to boost the bilateral ties with India during his visit to Delhi in October.

CBI need not seek state consent: SC

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It held no such consent was necessary as the offences in question were under a central legislation and involved Central Government employees. The consent regime under Section 6 of the DSPE Act was not designed to obstruct investigations into central offences only because they transpired within a state's territorial limits, said the top court. The bench said the 'General Consent' granted by a State under the DSPE Act was sufficient for the CBI investigations involving central offences and state-specific formalities, such as a fresh consent, was not required. "We are of the firm view that the impugned judgment where under subject FIRs and further proceedings in pursuance thereof, were quashed cannot be sustained," it said and allowed CBI's appeal.



Tikait meets Kejriwal ahead of Delhi polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections, farmer leader Rakesh Tikait met former Delhi Chief Minister and AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Friday evening over the issue of welfare of advocates and farmers. Senior AAP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh was also present at the meeting,

who shared that a meaningful meeting was held between the AAP convener and the national spokesperson of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU). Sharing the photo of the meeting on X, Singh stated, "National Convener of Aam Aadmi Party Arvind Kejriwal and struggling farmer leader Rakesh Tikait had a meaningful meeting where issues of farmers and lawyers were discussed."

Following the meeting, Tikait said, "There were some issues related to welfare of advocates, which he said will be resolved in the first Cabinet after the Delhi elections. He said that Advocacy Protection Act will be passed in Cabinet meeting after the formation of new government." A special committee of the Bar Council of Delhi headed by Advocate KC Mittal finalized the Delhi Advocates

(Protection) Bill, 2023 for providing safety and security to lawyers from incidents of assaults, killings, intimidation and threats. The bill defines acts of violence, offenders, and punishment and provides for compensation as well as police protection to advocates in cases of threats. The bill also protects advocates from 'illegal arrest' and 'malicious prosecution'.

Faiz Ahmed Kidwai becomes DGCA chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Senior IAS officer Faiz Ahmed Kidwai has been appointed the chief of Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) as part of a senior-level bureaucratic reshuffle effected by the Centre on Friday. The 1996-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of Madhya Pradesh cadre is currently Additional Secretary in the

Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. He has been appointed as Director General in the DGCA "in the rank and pay of Additional Secretary to the Government of India by keeping the Recruitment Rules of the post in abeyance", an order issued by the Personnel Ministry said. Ashutosh Agnihotri, Additional Secretary in the Home Ministry, has been named Chairman & Managing Director of Food Corporation of India (FCI), it said.

Union Carbide waste disposal...

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Meanwhile, heavy police deployment has been made in Pithampur to maintain law and order. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Thursday addressed doubters and said the issue should not be politicised. He asserted the waste comprised 60 per cent mud and 40 per cent naphthol used to make pesticide methyl isocyanate (MIC) and was "not at all harmful".

GRAP III invoked

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"Accordingly, in an effort to prevent further deterioration of the air quality and in pursuance of the Supreme Court's directives, the sub-committee on GRAP hereby decide to invoke ALL actions under Stage-III ('Severe' Air Quality of Delhi) of the extant schedule of GRAP, with immediate effect in right earnest by all the agencies concerned in Delhi-NCR, in addition to the Stage-I and II actions already in force. Actions under stages-I II & III of the revised GRAP shall be implemented, monitored and reviewed by all the agencies concerned in the entire NCR to ensure that the AQI levels do not slip further," the CAQM said in its order. "All implementing agencies shall

keep strict vigil and intensely measures of the revised GRAP schedule. Citizens are requested to strictly adhere to the citizen charter under GRAP Stage-III," it added. GRAP Stage 3, which was lifted last Friday, entails a ban on non-essential construction work. The stage 3 restrictions also include a ban on non-essential construction work. Classes up to grade V are required to shift to hybrid mode and parents and students have the option to choose online education wherever available. Stage 3 also bans non-essential diesel-operated medium goods vehicles with BS-IV or older standards in Delhi. At Delhi's India Gandhi International Airport, over 500 flights were delayed as

visibility came down to zero. At 8 am, the Palam airport in Delhi reported a 0 m visibility, while the Safdarjung Airport in New Delhi reported a 50-metre visibility. Both the airports are not used for commercial flight operations. Due to heavy fog conditions, Delhi airport issued an advisory stating that non-CAT III compliant flights would be affected. Taking to social media X, the Delhi Airport wrote in a post "While landing and take off continue at Delhi airport, flights that are not CAT III compliant may get affected." The airport management asked passengers to check with their respective airlines for updated flight information, expressing regret for any inconvenience.

"Passengers are requested to contact the airline concerned for updated flight information," the post further read. The inconvenience caused to passengers is regretted. Any inconvenience caused is deeply regretted," the post further read. Flights of many airlines, including SpiceJet, Indigo and Air India, were affected even as the Delhi airport reported an average delay of six minutes for arrival flights and 47 minutes for departure flights, as per FlightRadar24. At Kolkata airport, 17 departing flights were delayed, one was cancelled, and 36 arriving flights were also delayed. At least 24 trains, including several long-distance services, are running late due to the foggy conditions, the Railways said.

Sensex, Nifty tank, ahead of earnings season

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"Despite the short recovery in the past two sessions, markets lost the momentum as there is still a lot of pessimism due to slowing growth, higher domestic valuations, foreign fund outflows, and uncertainty over US trade policies post Trump's resumption as the country's president. Hence, markets may see bouts of correction, and investors will continue to maintain caution while keeping an eye on global developments," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. The BSE midcap gauge fell 0.33 per cent, and smallcap index dipped 0.02 per cent. Among sectoral indices, BSE

Focused IT declined 1.42 per cent, IT (1.31 per cent), teck (1.13 per cent), bankex (1.07 per cent), capital goods (1.06 per cent) and financial services (0.87 per cent). BSE energy, telecommunication, consumer durables, utilities, metal and oil & gas were the gainers. In Asian markets, Seoul and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Shanghai ended lower. Japanese markets were closed for the New Year holiday. Markets in Europe were trading lower. US stocks were in the negative territory on Thursday. "In the near term, we expect markets to witness stock/sector specific action on the back of pre-quarterly business updates

released by companies, ahead of their Q3 results," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Thursday after remaining net sellers in the recent past. They bought equities worth Rs 1,506.75 crore, according to exchange data. The rupee dropped 4 paise to close at a record low of 85.79 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.43 per cent to USD 75.60 a barrel. In the previous session, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,436.30 points or 1.83 per cent -- its best single-day gain in

more than a month -- to settle at 79,943.71. The Nifty surged 445.75 points or 1.88 per cent to 24,188.65. "Reflecting on 2024, the year emphasised the importance of discipline over speculation. Despite pockets of volatility, markets did not see dramatic deviations. As broad-based rallies give way to more selective opportunities, the focus will shift to individual stock picks. "Moving forward, staying disciplined about valuations and adhering to well-defined strategies will be crucial in navigating the ever-changing market landscape," Krishna Appala, Senior Research Analyst, Capitalmind Research, said.

Modi kicks off Delhi election campaign, Kejriwal reacts

From page 1

He accused the AAP of being involved in scams across sectors including education and health. In a sharp response to Modi's accusation that Aam Aadmi Party is an 'aapda' (crisis) for Delhi, Kejriwal said the BJP-led Centre has not done any development work in Delhi or else, Prime Minister Narendra Modi would not have had to spend 39 minutes of his 43-minute speech cursing the people of the capital and the government they elected with the largest mandate. "PM Modi gave a speech of 43 minutes today. For about 39 minutes he abused people of Delhi and the elected

government. Had Modi government performed in ten years, he would not have needed to abuse people of Delhi," Kejriwal said. He pointed, "It took BJP as much time to lay foundation stones for three colleges as it took AAP to build 22,000 classrooms, three new universities, six university campuses, and 11 new vocational colleges." "PM Modi for abusing people of Delhi and the majority government elected by them. AAP chief claimed that PM Modi would not need to abuse him, had his government performed in ten years of power at the Centre since 2014," he added. In a veiled attack on AAP which

"used Anna Hazare as its face" to come to power, PM Modi accused the party of having become "a disaster" for the people of Delhi, and urged voters to take steps to "liberate" themselves from the incumbent "Aapda", or disastrous, government. "If highways are being built in the capital and the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has been able to make houses for the poor, it is because 'aapda' does not have much role in these sectors, he added. He said 2025 would bring many new possibilities for India, asserting that the country had become a symbol of political and economic stability in the world. India will rise to become a

big manufacturing hub in the new year in which new records in the agriculture sector and women-led development will be registered as well, he said. The prime minister asserted India's global standing and image would also be strengthened in 2025. Earlier, taking to his X handle, PM Modi earlier said this was an important day for Delhi's development. "Today is an important day for Delhi's development. At a programme in Ashok Vihar, will be inaugurating and laying the foundation stones for a wide range of development works which will boost 'Ease of Living' for the people of Delhi," he

said. PM Modi handed over the keys to eligible beneficiaries of EWS flats at Swabhiman Apartments in the Ashok Vihar area. The rally in Ashok Vihar is strategically planned to target the AAP's stronghold among slum dwellers in areas like Wazirpur, Model Town, and Shalimar Bagh. These neighbourhoods, part of the Chandni Chowk parliamentary constituency, have previously seen AAP dominate despite being a BJP bastion in the past. According to estimates, roughly 20 lakh people live in Delhi's slums. Though they were traditionally Congress supporters, especially during the tenure of ex-CM Sheila Dikshit,

the AAP won them over during the 2013 and 2015 assembly elections. After Ashok Vihar, PM Modi's second rally will be held on January 5 at Rohini's Japanese Park. The event will include the foundation stone laying of a metro project connecting Rithala to rural areas, addressing a longstanding demand of rural voters. The rally will focus on consolidating support in rural regions where AAP has performed strongly in past elections. The Prime Minister is expected to inaugurate Section 4 of the Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) Corridor on Sunday which connects Sahibabad to New Ashok Nagar. Currently,

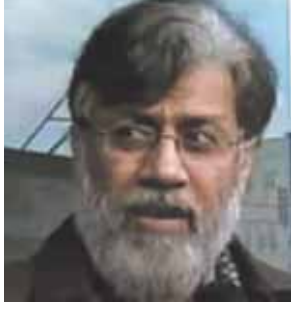
the 42km functional portion of the RRTS is entirely located in Uttar Pradesh. Sources in the party said the rally, planned for 29 December, was postponed after former PM Manmohan Singh died on 26 December. According to the BJP's internal surveys, Delhi's ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) currently has a 'slight' edge. However, the BJP believes the trend will start to reverse once Modi kickstarts the campaign for Delhi. Apart from that, the Delhi BJP unit has been organising 'pravas (night stay)' involving BJP leaders and workers staying in slums and interacting with people to understand their problems.

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Rana's attorney seeks review of US court's decision to extradite him to India

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

An attorney for Mumbai-attack convict Tahawwur Rana has urged the US Supreme Court to review the lower court's decision to extradite him to India, citing the principle of double jeopardy which prevents a person from being tried or punished twice for the same offence.



India is seeking the extradition of Rana, a Canadian national of Pakistani origin, as he is wanted in the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks case.

Having lost the legal battle in lower courts and several federal courts, including the US Court of Appeals for the North Circuit in San Francisco, Rana had filed a "petition for a writ of certiorari" before the US Supreme Court on November 13.

On December 16, US Solicitor General Elizabeth B Prelogar urged the Supreme to reject the petition. Rana's counsel Joshua L Dratel, in his response on December 23 challenged the US Government's recommendation and pleaded with the Supreme Court that his writ be accepted. In a long battle, this is Rana's last legal chance not to be extradited to India.

"The (Supreme) Court should grant the writ. On the merits, it should hold that the term 'offence' in the double jeopardy provision of the United States-India extradition treaty (and many other similar treaties) refers to the conduct underlying the charges in the two countries, rather than the elements of the crimes the respective countries have charged," Dratel argued.

The court has scheduled a conference for both parties on this issue on January 17.

Rana, currently lodged in a jail in Los Angeles, faces charges for his role in the Mumbai attacks and is known to be associated with Pakistani-American terrorist David Coleman Headley, one of the main conspirators of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks.

In his petitions for a writ of certiorari to review the judgment of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, Rana argued that he was tried and acquitted in federal court in the Northern District of Illinois (Chicago) on charges relating to the 2008 terrorist attack on Mumbai.

"India now seeks to extradite him for trial on charges based on the identical conduct at issue in the Chicago case," it said. Prelogar disagreed. "The government does not concede that all of the conduct on which India seeks extradition was covered by the government's prosecution in this case," the US Solicitor General had said. "For example, India's forgery charges are based in part on conduct that was not charged in the United States; petitioner's use of false information in an application to formally open a branch office of the Immigration Law Center submitted to the Reserve Bank of India," she said.

South Korea's impeached president defies warrant after hours-long standoff

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korean investigators left the official residence of impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol after a near-six-hour standoff on Friday during which he defied their attempt to detain him.

It's the latest confrontation in a political crisis that has paralyzed South Korean politics and seen two heads of state impeached in under a month. The country's anti-corruption agency said it withdrew its investigators after the presidential security service blocked them from entering Yoon's residence for hours, due to concerns about their safety.

The agency said its outnumbered investigators had several scuffles with presidential security forces and expressed "serious regret about the attitude of the suspect, who did not comply with the legal process." Outside the residence, a large group of pro-Yoon protesters braved freezing temperatures for hours, waving South Korean and American flags while chanting slogans vowing to protect him.

The National Police Agency said it planned to investigate the chief and deputy chiefs of the presidential security service on suspicion of obstructing official duty and summoned them for questioning on Saturday.

Yoon, a former prosecutor, has resisted investigators' attempts to question him for weeks. The last time he is known to have left the residence was on Dec. 12, when he went to the nearby presidential office to make a televised statement to the nation, making a defiant statement that he will fight efforts to oust him.

Investigators from the country's anti-corruption agency are weighing charges of rebellion after Yoon, apparently frustrated that his policies were blocked by an opposition-dominated parliament, declared martial law on Dec. 3 and dispatched troops to surround the National Assembly.

Parliament overturned the declaration within hours in an unanimous vote and impeached Yoon on Dec. 14, accusing him of rebellion, while South Korean anti-corruption authorities and public prosecutors opened separate investigations into the events.

A Seoul court issued a warrant to detain Yoon and a separate warrant to search his residence on Tuesday, but enforcing them is complicated as long as he remains in his official residence.

Yoon's lawyers, who filed a challenge to the warrant on Thursday, say it cannot be enforced at his residence due to a law that protects locations potentially linked to military secrets from search without the consent of the person in charge. The office said it will discuss further actions but did not immediately say whether it would make another attempt to detain Yoon. The warrant for his detention is valid for one week.

Yoon's lawyers have also argued that the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials, which is leading a joint investigation with police and military investigators, lacks the authority to investigate rebellion charges. They said that police officers don't have the legal authority to assist in detaining Yoon, and

could face arrest by either the "presidential security service or any citizens." They didn't elaborate further on the claim.

If investigators manage to detain Yoon, they will likely ask a court for permission to make a formal arrest. Otherwise, he will be released after 48 hours. During a background briefing to reporters, an official from the anti-corruption agency said its investigators were able to approach within 200 meters (yards) of Yoon's residence but were stopped by a barricade comprising around 10 vehicles and approximately 200 members of the presidential security forces and troops. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity per department rules, said three of its prosecutors were eventually allowed to approach the building but they weren't able to confirm whether Yoon was inside.

While the presidential security act mandates protection for Yoon, it does not authorize the presidential security service to block court-ordered detentions, which would amount to an infringement on judicial authority, said Park Seong-

bae, an attorney specializing in criminal law. While the president mostly has immunity from prosecution while in office, the protection does not extend to allegations of rebellion or treason.

"There's a high possibility that the act of blocking the execution of a detention warrant would constitute an obstruction of official duty," he said. The law requiring consent of the person in charge for searches in locations with potential military secrets could continue to hinder Yoon's detention. Courts often require law enforcement officials to obtain search warrants with detention warrants in case they need to search the site to locate the suspect, which is also what the anti-corruption agency did in their pursuit of Yoon.

It's unlikely that the approval could come from the country's acting leader, Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok, as it would be difficult to see him as the person in charge of Yoon's residence, Park said. Park Chan-dae, floor leader of the liberal opposition Democratic Party, called the

anti-corruption agency's withdrawal regrettable and urged the agency to make another attempt to detain Yoon on Friday.

Kwon Young-se, who heads the emergency leadership committee of Yoon's conservative People Power Party, called the agency's effort to detain Yoon "highly unfair and exceedingly improper," saying that there is no risk of Yoon attempting to flee or to destroy evidence.

Thousands of police officers gathered at Yoon's residence on Friday, forming a perimeter around a growing group of pro-Yoon protesters who braved freezing temperatures for hours, waving South Korean and American flags while chanting slogans vowing to protect him. There were no immediate reports of major clashes outside the residence. Yoon's defence minister, police chief and several top military commanders have already been arrested over their roles in the period of martial law.

Yoon's presidential powers have been suspended since the National Assembly voted to impeach him on Dec. 14.



Police officers arrive at the gate of the presidential residence as supporters of impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol stage a rally to oppose a court having issued a warrant to detain Yoon, in Seoul, South Korea, on Friday. AP/PTI

China downplays flu outbreak reports; says country safe for travel

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Friday played down reports of a massive outbreak of flu in the country overwhelming hospitals, saying that cases of the respiratory diseases which occur during the winter were less severe this year compared to last year.

The Foreign Ministry here said it is safe for foreigners to travel to China. "Respiratory infections tend to peak during the winter season in the northern hemisphere," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told the media here in response to a question on the spread of influenza A and other respiratory diseases in China. Videos circulating on social media show overcrowded hospitals.

"The diseases appear to be less severe and spread with a smaller scale compared to the previous year," she said.

"I can assure you the Chinese government cares about the health of Chinese citizens and foreigners in China. It is safe to travel in China," she said. She also referred to guidelines issued by the National Disease Control and Prevention Administration of China regarding the prevention and control of respiratory diseases in the winter. For the past few days, reports of a massive flu outbreak in China have been circulating abroad, particularly in India and Indonesia.

Health officials, however, maintain the outbreak is an annual occurrence during the winter. China is currently experiencing severe cold weather for the past few months.

AI cannot replace human decision-making on battlefield, Chinese military warns its forces

PTI ■ BEIJING

Investing heavily in modernisation, the Chinese military has cautioned its armed forces against banking heavily on artificial intelligence saying that AI should be a tool to guide but not a replacement for human decision-making in the battlefield because it lacks self-awareness capability. "As AI evolves, it must remain a tool guided by human judgment, ensuring accountability, creativity, and strategic adaptability remain at the forefront of military decision-making" an article published in People's Liberation Army Daily, the official media of the Chinese military said on New Year's Eve.

"AI must work in tandem with human decision-makers to optimise command effectiveness, enhancing rather than replacing human agency," it said. AI can be used to augment human capabilities - through data analysis, simulations or planning - but cannot replace the

human factor. Human autonomy and creativity are indispensable on the battlefield, it said adding that while human commanders can respond to situations dynamically, and exploit enemy weaknesses AI operates within predefined algorithmic boundaries and its responses often lack originality, it said.

The Daily said PLA preferred a model where "humans plan and AI executes" in which the technology is used to carry out the strategies and tactics developed by commanders and keeps an element of human oversight.

The military prefers a structure where machines analyse data, provide insights and suggest potential actions. However, "final decisions rest with human commanders, safeguarding against errors stemming from AI's black-box nature", the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported said.

The article said another weakness

of the technology is its inability to reflect on its own actions or take responsibility for its decisions, unlike human commanders who can refine their plans in response to the circumstances. Even advanced systems, such as autonomous missile defence, typically rely on human operators for final decisions to ensure accountability.

Last month a comprehensive report by the Pentagon on the Chinese military said the PLA is modernising its capabilities and improving its proficiencies across all warfare domains to become a joint force capable of the full range of land, air, and maritime as well as nuclear, space, counter space, electronic warfare, and cyberspace operations.

But despite its progress, the force still has significant deficiencies including in commander proficiency, long-distance logistics, and urban warfare. The PLA Army (PLAA) continues to modernise equipment and focus on combined arms and

joint training to meet the goal of becoming a world-class military by 2049.

The PLAA has continued to demonstrate long-range joint fire capability, the US Department of Defence report titled "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China" said. The PLA Navy (PLAN), numerically has the largest navy in the world, with a battle force of over 370 ships and submarines, including more than 140 major surface combatants. The PLAN is largely composed of modern multi-mission ships and submarines, it said.

PLA Air Force (PLAAF) is modernising and indigenising its aircraft and unmanned aerial systems rapidly, matching US standards. In 2023, the PLA transferred significant portions of PLAN shore-based, fixed-wing combat aviation units, facilities, air defence, and radar units to the PLAAF, the Pentagon report said.

Ukraine's president hopes Trump's strength and unpredictability can help end war with Russia

AP ■ KYIV

US President-elect Donald Trump is "strong and unpredictable," and those qualities can be a decisive factor in his policy approach to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, according to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. However, Zelenskyy said it won't be possible to end the almost three years of war in one day, as Trump claimed during his election campaign he could do. "The hot" stage of the war can end quite quickly, if Trump is strong in his position," Zelenskyy said in a Ukrainian television interview late Thursday, referring to fighting on the battlefield.

"I believe (Trump) is strong and unpredictable. I would very much like President Trump's unpredictability to be directed primarily toward the Russian Federation," Zelenskyy said. Trump, who takes office on Jan.

20, hasn't publicly fleshed out his policy on Ukraine but his previous comments have put a question mark over whether the United States will continue to be Ukraine's biggest - and most important - military backer.

Zelenskyy is eager to guarantee that Washington's support keeps coming, and he met with Trump in New York even before last November's US presidential election. With the war about to enter its fourth year next month, and with Trump coming to power, the question of how and when Europe's biggest conflict since World War II might end has come to the fore.

Russia controls about one-fifth of Ukraine and last year capitalised on weaknesses in Ukraine's defences to slowly advance in eastern areas despite high losses of troops and equipment. The war's trajectory is not in Ukraine's favour. The alliance's 32 member coun-



tries say Ukraine will join one day, but not until the war ends. "The deployment of European troops (to keep the peace in Ukraine) should not rule out Ukraine's future in NATO," Zelenskyy said in the television interview. Zelenskyy described the incursion by Ukrainian forces into Russia's Kursk border region as a "very strong trump card" in any future peace negotiations. In a bid to counter glum news from the front line, Ukraine seized part of Kursk last August in what was the first occupation of Russian territory since World War II. But the incursion didn't significantly change the dynamic of the war, and military analysts say Ukraine has lost some 40% of the land it initially captured. Nevertheless, Zelenskyy said the achievement impressed countries in Asia, South America and Africa and tarnished Russia's military reputation.

Ahead of Trump's inauguration, debate on H1B visas intensifies

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Three weeks ahead of Trump's inauguration here on January 20, the debate on foreign guest workers visas for highly skilled professionals, the H-1B, has intensified which has literally created divisions in both the Democratic and the Republican parties.

Indians are the main beneficiaries of the H-1B visas, which bring in the best of the talent and brains from across the world. Highly skilled professionals from India walk away with the overwhelming number of H-1B visas - which is Congressional mandated 65,000 every year and another 20,000 for those who received higher education from the US.

President-elect Donald Trump, who will be sworn in as the 47th President of the United States on January 20 in front of the US Capitol, has come out in support of the H-1B, so has two of his close



confidants, Tesla owner Elon Musk and entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, both of whom have been tasked to head the newly created Department of Government Efficiency.

"I've always liked the visas, I have always been in favour of the visas. That's why we have them," Trump told the New York Post over the

weekend. "I've always felt we have to have the most competent people in our country. We need competent people, we need smart people coming into our country, we need a lot of people coming in. We're going to have jobs like we've never had before," Trump told reporters at a New Year's Eve party hosted by him

at Mar-a-Lago. Both Musk and Ramaswamy have argued that H-1B visas are essential to attract the best of the talent, as the US falls short in many of the specialised fields. They have been joined by Indian American Democratic lawmakers including Ro Khanna, Raja Krishnamoorthi and Shri Thanedar who have come out in support of H-1B visas, after a sudden backlash against it as soon as Trump appointed Sriram Krishnan as his Senior Policy Advisor for Artificial Intelligence. Such a backlash initially came from the supporters of Trump who argued that this is eating away at the jobs of Americans. Both Musk and Ramaswamy immediately weighed in and supported the H-1B visas. On Thursday, influential Democratic Senator Bernie Sanders asserted that the two close confidants of Trump are wrong. "Elon Musk and a number of other

billionaire tech company owners have argued that this federal programme is vital to our economy because of the scarcity of highly skilled American engineers and other tech workers. I disagree.

"The main function of the H-1B visa programme and other guest worker initiatives is not to hire 'the best and the brightest', but rather to replace good-paying American jobs with low-wage indentured servants from abroad. The cheaper the labour they hire, the more money the billionaires make," Sanders said on Thursday. His own party colleague Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi disagreed on Monday. "The number one competitive advantage America has is our workforce. The H-1B programme attracts the best and brightest talent from around the world and strengthens that advantage as we also invest in American workers," he told CNN as he supported Musk and

Ramaswamy in the debate. "The reason I'm in America along with so many critical people who built SpaceX, Tesla, and hundreds of other companies that made America strong is because of H1B. Take a big step back and FxxK YOURSELF in the face. I will go to war on this issue the likes of which you cannot possibly comprehend," Musk had said in a post on X as a portion of the MAGA crowd started attacking Krishnan on his appointment which soon expanded to the debate on H-1B visas.

"The reason top tech companies often hire foreign-born and first-generation engineers over 'native' Americans isn't because of an innate American IQ deficit (a lazy and wrong explanation). A key part of it comes down to the C-word: culture. Tough questions demand tough answers and if we're really serious about fixing the problem, we have to confront the TRUTH," argued Ramaswamy.

Indian American Congressman Khanna told Newsweek that America is a magnet for the world's brightest talent. "To compete with China, we want to attract the best engineers and technologists. But the H-1B programme has been abused. That's why I have been co-leading the bipartisan H-1B and L-1 Visa Reform Act to make sure American workers are never replaced and that H-1B workers aren't paid below market wages that hurts the compensation of American employees," he said. "All Americans make America great, including immigrants. We must increase H1B tenfold and eliminate country quotas. Make it easy to check immigration status, give EAD to all green card applicants, and quadruple the USCIS staffing budget to expedite legal immigration. This is how you make America the greatest ever," Indian American Congressman Thanedar said.

EV firms agree to end subsidy after existing subsidy regime ends: Goyal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday said the electric vehicle (EV) companies present in the meeting have unanimously agreed that they would no longer need subsidies once the existing subsidy regime ends. Stakeholders from the EV sector held deliberations with the minister here on issues pertaining to development of battery charging and swapping infrastructure. The minister also said that companies are free to choose their own business models. Whether they prefer to collaborate and share resources for battery swapping or sell vehicles with their own batteries, the decision is entirely up to them, he said. "Everybody was unanimous in the room that once the existing subsidy regime comes to an end, none of them requires the subsidy to grow further... Each sector has one or the other model which makes it self-sustaining and does not call for further subsidies," Goyal told reporters when asked about the views of companies on subsidies. In a bid to woo global EV makers into the country, in March last year the government rolled out an electric vehicle policy, under which duty concessions were offered to companies setting up manufacturing units in the country with a minimum



investment of USD 500 million. The government has plans to install 10,763 public charging stations across the country under the FAME-II scheme. Under FAME-India Scheme phase-II, incentives are provided to buyers of electric vehicles in the form of an upfront reduction in the purchase price of electric vehicles. There is another scheme - PM E-DRIVE - to support electric mobility through support for 14,028 e-buses, 2,05,392 electric three-wheelers (L5), 1,10,596 e-rickshaws and e-carts and 24,79,120 electric two-wheelers. In addition, e-trucks, e-ambulances, EV public charging stations and

upgrading of testing agencies are also supported under the scheme. The government has also rolled out the production linked incentive (PLI) schemes for auto sector and manufacturing of Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC). Electric vehicles are covered under PLI scheme for automobile and auto components, which was approved in 2021 with a budgetary outlay of Rs 25,938 crore for a period of five years. Goyal said that awareness is increasing among people about cost benefits of using EVs. "The electric mobility today is absolutely ready and set to fly. They do not need newer incentives or

subsidies, the existing subsidies are available for some more time and will help them give that appropriate kick start to the EV ecosystem... There are options and ideas available by which electric mobility can be successfully marketed," he said. When asked about their discussions on battery charging infrastructure, he said Petroleum and Explosive Safety Organization (PESO) has released draft guidelines for installation of multiple EV charging/battery swapping facilities at petrol pumps. The idea is to make it easier for setting up charging infrastructure at petrol pumps or gas stations. The ministry has suggested to make those guidelines self-monitored and self-certified so that whoever is setting up the charging station will self-regulate those. "Similarly, we want to encourage resident welfare associations, commercial establishments, office complexes to have electric charging equipment. Charging, swapping or auto companies are ready to do the investments," Goyal said. The ministry also suggested the industry body of the sector to run a campaign to increase awareness about benefits of EVs. Besides, he said, they can consider developing a common app or tool through which people will know the nearest charging stations and other information required for growth of the sector.

EPFO rolls out centralised pension system in all regional offices

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Retirement fund body REPFO has completed the Centralized Pension Payments System (CPPS) rollout in all its regional offices across the country that will benefit over 68 lakh pensioners, the labour ministry said on Friday. The CPPS is a paradigm shift from the existing pension disbursement system that is decentralised, with each zonal/regional office of EPFO maintaining separate agreements with only 3-4 banks, the ministry explained in a statement. Under CPPS, a beneficiary will be able to withdraw pension from any bank and there will be no need for to visit the bank for verification at the time of commencement of pension, and the amount will be immediately credited upon release, it stated. The CPPS system January 2025 onwards will also ensure disbursement of pension throughout India without any need for transfer of pension payment orders (PPO) from one office to another even when the pensioner moves from one location to another or changes his bank or branch, it said. This will be a great relief to pensioners who move to their hometown after retirement. The first pilot of CPPS was



completed in October last year in Karnal, Jammu, and Srinagar regional offices with the pension disbursement of about Rs 11 crore to more than 49,000 EPS pensioners, a ministry statement said. The second pilot was taken up in November in 24 regional offices where about Rs 213 crore pension was disbursed to more than 9.3 lakh pensioners, it stated. According to the statement, in a landmark move towards enhancing pension services, the EPFO completed full-scale rollout of the new CPPS under Employees' Pension Scheme 1995 in December. About Rs 1,570 crore pension was disbursed to more than 68 lakh pensioners pertaining to all 122 pension-disbursing regional offices of the EPFO for December 2024. Announcing the successful rollout, Union minister

Mansukh Mandaviya said, "The full-scale implementation of the CPPS across all regional offices of EPFO is a historic milestone. This transformative initiative empowers pensioners to access their pension seamlessly from any bank, any branch, anywhere in the country." The minister said the CPPS eliminates the need for physical verification visits and simplifies the pension disbursement process. "The CPPS is a testament to our commitment to modernise EPFO services and ensuring convenience, transparency, and efficiency for our pensioners." "With this rollout, we are setting a new benchmark in pension service delivery, aligning with the vision of a tech-enabled and member-centric EPFO," he said.

Premium devices demand to push India smartphone market to over USD 50 Billion in 2025: Counterpoint Technology Market Research

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rising demand for premium devices, led by Apple and Samsung, is expected to increase India's smartphone market size to over USD 50 billion (about Rs 4,28,900 crore) this year, market research firm Counterpoint Technology Market Research said on Friday. The Indian smartphone market size was estimated at USD 37.9 billion (about Rs 3.25 lakh crore) in 2021, according to the research firm. "India's smartphone market is on track to achieve its highest-ever value in 2025, crossing USD 50 billion. Brands like Apple and Samsung are leading this shift by offering competitive options in the premium and ultra-premium segments," the report said. Apple India has registered a total income of Rs 67,121.6 crore, while Samsung reported revenue of Rs



71,157.6 crore from the mobile phone vertical in the financial year 2024. According to the report, the retail average selling price of India's smartphone market is expected to cross the USD 300 mark (about Rs 25,700) for the first time in 2025. "Apple is expected to see strong demand for its Pro models, driven by local manufacturing and recent price reductions across its

iPhone lineup. Meanwhile, Samsung's value-focused strategy is gaining traction, particularly with its flagship S series," the report said. Chinese brands like Vivo, Oppo, and OnePlus are attracting consumers by offering advanced camera systems etc. In the affordable premium category, ranging between Rs 30,000-45,000 apiece. "Meanwhile, OnePlus is

making a comeback by addressing Indian retailers' concerns related to display and motherboard, which had negatively impacted its performance earlier this year. Besides, the company's planned investment of Rs 6,000 crore (about USD 720 million) in local market expansion is expected to accelerate its recovery and growth," the report said. The premium segment (starting above Rs 30,000) is projected to exceed 20 per cent market share by 2025, the reports said. "The shift towards premiumisation is also being driven by consumers increasingly opting for offline stores, where they can experience premium smartphones first-hand before making a purchase. The growing interest in AI-powered features has further motivated consumers to seek hands-on demonstrations to better understand these innovations and make more informed decisions," it said.

Rural poverty declines sharply in FY24 at 4.86 per cent: SBI research

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rural poverty has declined significantly to 4.86 per cent in the fiscal ending March 2024 from 25.7 per cent in 2011-12 mainly driven by government support programmes, said a SBI research released on Friday. Urban poverty too is estimated at 4.09 per cent, down from 13.7 per cent in 2011-12. "The sharp decline in rural poverty ratio is on account of higher consumption growth in lowest 0-5 per cent decile with significant government support and such support is important as we also find that change in food prices has a significant impact on not just food expenditures, but overall expenditure in general," said the SBI research on consumption expenditure survey. The latest Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, released by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, showed that consumption



inequality in rural as well as urban areas declined during the August 2023-July 2024 period as compared to a year ago. The SBI research said that the Consumption Expenditure Survey reveals a remarkable decline in rural poverty estimated at 4.86 per cent in 2023-24 (7.2 per cent in FY23 and 25.7 per cent in FY12) and urban poverty estimated at 4.09 per cent (4.6 per cent in FY23 and 13.7 per cent in 2011-12). It is possible that these numbers could undergo minor revisions once the 2021 census is completed and the new rural-urban population share is published, the research report said.

"We believe urban poverty could decline even further. At an aggregate level, we believe poverty rates in India could now be in the range of 4-4.5 per cent with almost minimal existence of extreme poverty," it said. Enhanced physical infrastructure is scripting a new story in rural mobility, it said and added that one of the reasons for the increasingly shrinking horizontal income gap between rural and urban and the vertical income gap within rural income classes," SBI said. "The difference between rural and urban monthly per capita consumption expenditure/Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE) to rural MPCE is now at 69.7 per cent, a rapid decline from 88.2 per cent in 2009-10... Mostly due to the initiatives the government has taken in terms of DBT transfers, building rural infrastructures, augmenting farmer's income, (and) improving the rural livelihood significantly," it said.

India's exports to cross USD 800 Billion this fiscal: Goyal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday said despite global economic uncertainties, India's exports of goods and services are expected to cross USD 800 billion this fiscal, which will be a record. Last fiscal year, the exports stood at USD 778 billion. He said though there will be stresses in the global system, but India's exports basket is large. "My estimate is that we will cross USD 800 billion in exports, another record given the world situation," he told reporters here. He added share in services exports is also growing at a rapid pace. On exports to developing and least developed countries (LDCs), he said those nations have been stressed because of the forex crisis they are facing after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Forex reserves drop by USD 4.11 Billion to USD 640.27 Billion

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's forex reserves dropped by USD 4.11 billion to USD 640.279 billion during the week ended December 27, the Reserve Bank said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the overall kitty had dropped by USD 8.478 billion to USD 644.391 billion. The reserves have been declining for the last few weeks, and the drop has been attributed to revaluation along with forex market interventions by RBI to help reduce volatility in the rupee. The forex reserves had increased to an all-time high of USD 704.885 billion in end-September. For the week ended December 27, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 4.641 billion to USD 551.921 billion, the data released on Friday showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves increased by USD 541 million to USD 66,268 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down by USD 12 million to USD 17.873 billion, the apex bank said.

Zepto sets up new entity to shift to marketplace model



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Quick commerce company Zepto has set up a new entity Zepto Marketplace to reorg its operations from a B2B model to a marketplace model, according to people in the know. Zepto Marketplace was registered in October 2024, and the company's operations will soon switch to the new model once the operational and regulatory nitty-gritty are sorted out, sources said. A mail query sent to the company did not elicit any response. The shift, according to sources, will enable Zepto to have a greater hold on quality control and service. Zepto is also set to soon launch "Thor"-a SaaS inventory management platform to further streamline operations, they added. The development comes as Zepto prepares for a public listing within this year. Zepto's peers like Blinkit and Swiggy Instamart already follow a marketplace model. Under the current structure, Zepto licenses its brand name and operations to three companies: Geddit Convenience, Drogheria Sellers and Commodum Groceries. These three

companies purchase their stock from Kiranakart Technologies Pvt Ltd and sell it to end consumers via the Zepto platform. In essence, Kiranakart Technologies is a B2B company that sources and buys products directly from brands and sells them to Geddit Convenience, Drogheria Sellers and Commodum Groceries, Zepto's three licensee companies. These companies then sell to the end consumer. For every sale that the three companies make using Zepto's platform, they pay a licensing fee to the latter. Thus, under the present B2B model, Zepto is the technology platform, serving as an intermediary between operators, sellers and delivery partners. Sellers list themselves on the platform while dark stores are franchise-managed and delivery partners are third-party rendering a gig. Zepto reported a 120 per cent increase in operating revenue to Rs 4,454 crore in FY24. The company also proposes to launch a separate app for Zepto Cafe, which is engaged in quick delivery of snacks and other food items. Zepto's valuation stands at USD 5 billion. In November 2024, it raised USD 350 million in a funding round that included investments from Indian HNIs, family offices, and leading financial institutions. With business growing rapidly, Zepto is looking to expand to over 50 cities by next quarter from about two dozen cities right now.

ICAI seeks tax benefits to promote climate change mitigation strategies



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chartered accountants' Capex body ICAI has sought tax benefits for promoting climate change mitigation strategies and a separate section for income from shares and securities in the income tax returns form. Besides, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has sought a special tax regime for partnership firms and limited liability partnerships (LLPs) as well as simplification of income tax return forms. The institute on Friday said it has advocated for prudent tax reforms aimed at fostering economic growth and encouraging environmental sustainability in the pre-Budget Memorandum 2025. "Provision of tax benefits for promoting climate change mitigation strategies, which will not only contribute to India's climate change goals

but also drive economic growth by promoting sustainable business practices is a suggestion in this direction," it said in a release. Among other suggestions, ICAI has proposed a new head to show income from shares and securities that will have provisions relating to taxability of income by way of dividend, interest or capital gains. Rationalising conditions for treating a return of income as defective in the e-filing regime and provision of opportunity of being heard before treating a defective return as invalid is another suggestion by the institute. ICAI has also pitched for simplifying the capital gains provisions under sections 54 to 54F of the Act, extending 10 per cent tolerance band to cases where value is determined by the valuation officer under Section 50C(2), rationalising rate of tax under Section 115BBE in

respect of cash credits and unexplained investments. Further, the institute has proposed obtaining report of a chartered accountant in the prescribed form certifying the sum chargeable to tax instead of going through the process of getting the certificate of lower deduction of tax from the assessing officer, where a non-resident transfers immovable property to a resident. As per the release, another recommendation is to exempt the transferee responsible for paying to a non-resident transferor from the requirement of obtaining TAN. Meanwhile, ICAI has submitted its final recommendations regarding simplifying the I-T Act, including introduction of special tax regime for partnership firms/LLPs, simplification of the registration and taxation regime of charitable trusts as well as provisions for determining residential status of individuals. Other suggestions include simplification of income tax return forms, alignment of TDS/TCS rates with the objective of serving as an audit trail, periodic review of disposal of cases by assessing officer, mandatory time limit for disposal of appeals, and effective grievance redressal mechanism. Another recommendation is the extension of time limit for filing belated return to March 31 of the assessment year.



Gold prices almost flat at ₹79,700 per 10 grams, Silver slips ₹230

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices traded almost flat at Rs 79,700 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal closed at Rs 79,720 per 10 grams on Thursday. Silver slipped Rs 230 to Rs 90,400 per kg on Friday. The white metal settled at Rs 90,630 per kg in the previous trading session. However, the price of gold with 99.5 per cent purity rose Rs 130 to Rs 79,300 per 10 grams on Friday. Meanwhile, in futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for February delivery increased Rs 6 to trade at Rs 77,723 per 10 grams. Gold traded with minor gains in the domestic market, while Comex gold maintained a sideways trend around USD 2,655 per ounce," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at

LKP Securities, said. The market remains steady with limited movements as participants await further global cues to determine the next direction, Trivedi said. Silver climbed Rs 517 or 0.58 per cent to Rs 89,690 per kg in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX). Globally, Comex gold futures rose USD 2.10 per ounce or 0.08 per cent to USD 2,671.10 per ounce. "Gold extended gains on Friday buoyed by safe-haven demand after news reports came that US President Joe Biden discussed contingency plans to strike Iran's nuclear facilities if it made progress towards developing a nuclear bomb before Trump's inauguration on January 20," said Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities. Comex silver futures quoted 1.05 per cent higher in the Asian market hours at USD 30.22 per ounce.



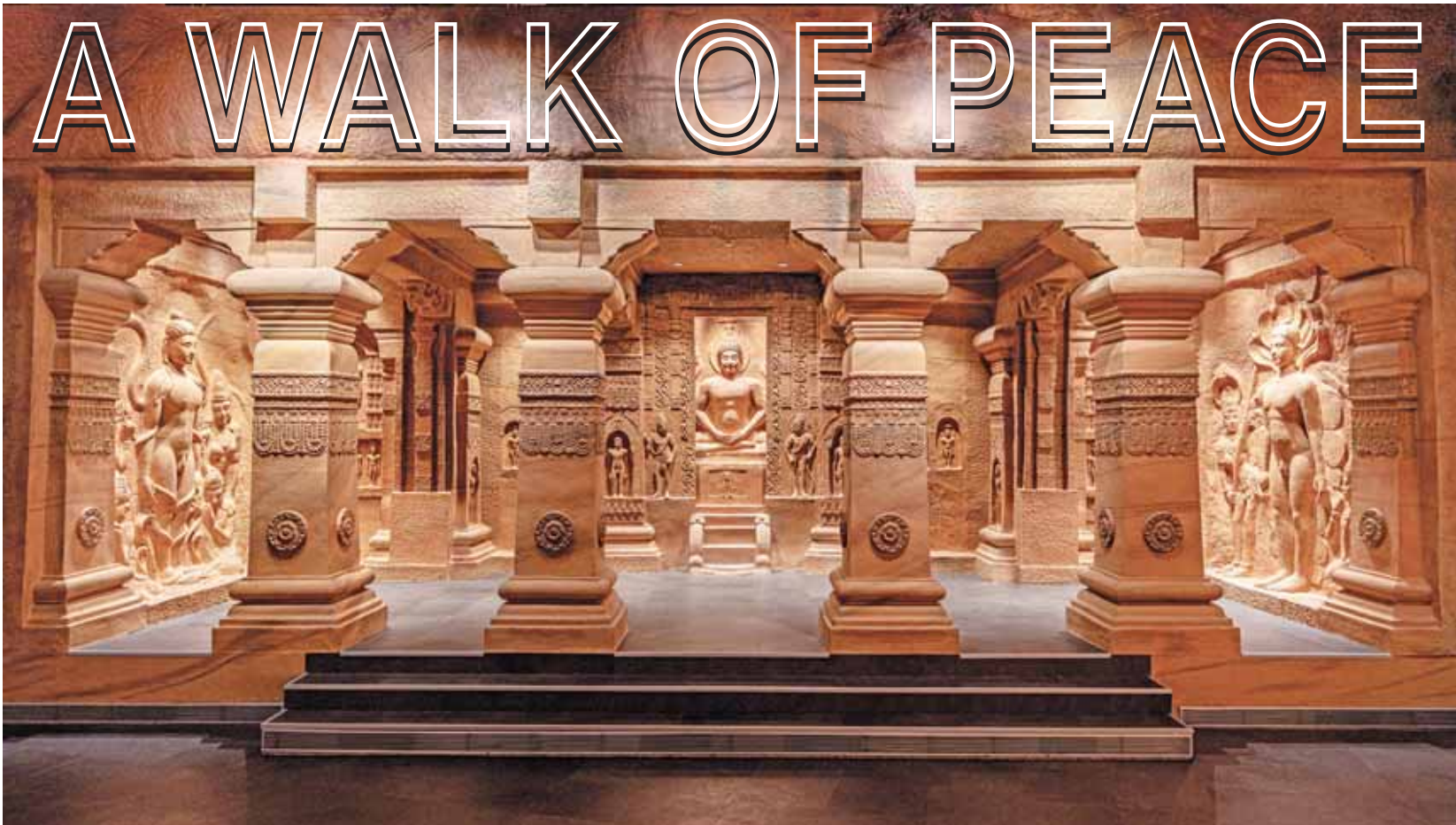
At every turn, the museum tells a story – one not just of artifacts, but of ideas that have lasted through time. This thought constantly comes to my mind as I walk through the calm halls of the *Abhay Prabhavana Museum* in Pune. As I move through the calm, serene halls, it's as if the museum itself transports me into the heart of India's spiritual history, inviting me to reflect on values that have stood the test of time. Located near the peaceful Indrayani River, the museum is not just a collection of objects, but a deep journey into Indian values, brought to life through Jain philosophy.

The *Abhay Prabhavana Museum*, hailed as one of the largest "Museums of Ideas," offers a unique experience. With its perfect blend of ancient wisdom and modern technology, it brings the teachings of Jainism to life. The museum stands as a tribute to the timeless values of compassion, non-violence and tolerance, which form the core of Jainism. Spearheaded by *Mr. Abhay Firodia* and the *Amar Prerana Trust*, the museum captures the essence of these principles, making them accessible to everyone.

As I journey from Pune to the museum, the road winds through hills and the city fades away. It feels like entering another world, one where nature, history and spirituality come together. The moment I set eyes on the museum, I am drawn to its striking modern architecture, set against the backdrop of tranquil nature. It's a visual representation of the museum's core: a living tribute to India's spiritual and cultural roots.

Covering 3.5 lakh square feet, the museum is divided into 30 galleries, each offering a deep dive into different aspects of Jain philosophy and culture. The exhibits go beyond showcasing objects; they tell immersive stories using modern technology. Audio-visually, interactive kiosks and even virtual reality are used to engage visitors in a multi-sensory experience, making it feel like I am experiencing the teachings of Jainism firsthand.

One of the most wonder-inspiring features is the towering 60-foot statue of Rishabhdev, the first Tirthankar. Standing in a meditative pose, the statue symbolises the foundation of Indian civilisation. Murals at its base explore the contributions Rishabhdev made to Indian society, such as introducing agriculture, trade and professional skills. The statue is not just an artistic marvel but also a visual journey that connects the ancient wisdom of Jainism to the modern world. As I explore the galleries, the museum's message becomes clearer: Jainism's core principles – Ahimsa (non-violence), Aparigraha (non-possessiveness) and Anekantvad (acceptance of multiple perspectives) hold immense relevance today. These values have the potential to



A WALK OF PEACE

EXPLORE THE RICH HERITAGE AND SPIRITUAL LEGACY OF JAINISM AT THE ABHAY PRABHAVANA MUSEUM IN PUNE, WRITES SAKSHI PRIYA

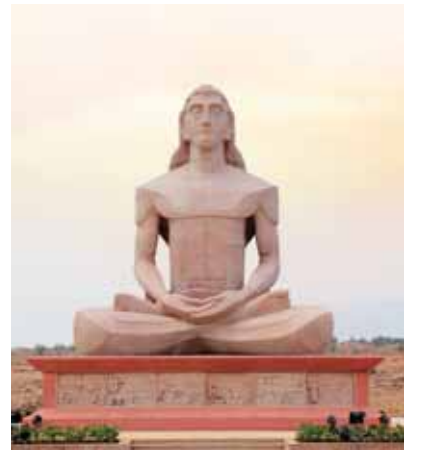


address contemporary issues like environmental sustainability and social harmony. Walking through the exhibits, I find myself reflecting on how these teachings can guide us in our daily lives, encouraging me to adopt a mindset rooted in compassion, non-violence and understanding. A visit to the *Abhay Prabhavana Museum* is incomplete without experiencing its

serene outdoor spaces. The museum offers a tranquil nature walk along the Indrayani River, spanning 8 hectares of beautifully landscaped grounds. As I walk, I'm surrounded by monumental modern sculptures and replicas of Jain monuments that blend seamlessly with nature. This open-air heritage walk is a perfect example of how the museum connects Jain philosophy with the natural

world, offering visitors a unique opportunity to witness India's spiritual geography. The 320-metre heritage walk showcases miniatures of Jain monuments from across India, offering a cultural journey through Jainism's rich legacy. The Plaza of Equanimity, with a 57-foot tall Sarvatobhadra statue, brings a modern interpretation to the traditional

Chaturmukh Temple. The calm and spiritual atmosphere of this space encourages introspection and peace. In the tranquil Garden of the Revered, miniature trees dedicated to the 24 Tirthankars create a serene and contemplative environment. This peaceful setting adds another layer to the museum's ability to connect visitors with the timeless values of Jainism.



The *Abhay Prabhavana Museum* is a place for everyone, not just those with an interest in Jain philosophy. It's a destination for anyone looking to understand the spiritual and cultural roots of India. The museum offers a rare chance to connect with the wisdom that has shaped Indian society for centuries, reminding us of the values of compassion, non-violence, and tolerance. The museum is a tribute to their dedication to preserving Jain teachings. After over ten years of research and collaboration, the museum has become a unique cultural landmark, continuing to inspire visitors with its powerful message.

Walking through the museum takes time and to fully understand its meaning, you need to immerse yourself in every path. The more time you spend here, the more you realise how much thought and care have gone into every detail. The lessons I've learned are more than just intellectual; they are deeply personal. As I leave, I feel a sense of peace that stays long after I've walked through the museum's doors. The *Abhay Prabhavana Museum* is not just a place to visit, it's a journey into India's spiritual heart, a living reflection of the values that unite us all.



THE ART OF REVERENCE

By SAKSHI PRIYA

‘सुरदास जी के भक्ति में जो रंग है, वही रंग जीवन में बस जाता है।’
(Just like the devotion in Surdas Ji's poetry, it fills our lives with love and meaning)



manner. With each swirl, each beat of the ghungroo, they seemed to move beyond just physical steps, offering a glimpse into the soul of Surdas's poetry, which itself was steeped in devotion and longing. And then came *Rani Khanam*, whose Kathak solo performance was nothing short of enchanting. The bhajan she performed, “सुंदर बदन सुख सदन श्याम को,” translated into a visual display of grace, passion and beauty. One could almost see the words of Surdas materialise as her feet danced in rhythm, each step echoing the love and longing of a devotee gazing at Krishna. What struck the audience the most was the emotional charge she brought to her performance. It was as though she wasn't simply dancing, she was telling a story that resonated deeply with everyone present.

Equally captivating was *Rama Vaidyanathan's* Bharatanatyam performance. There's something inherently powerful about the way Bharatanatyam

communicates emotion. In her portrayal of the Nayika's yearning for Lord Vishnu, *Vaidyanathan's* expressions were a masterclass in silent storytelling. Her eyes, her hands, every angle of her body spoke volumes, capturing the delicate interplay of longing and love in a way that words could scarcely do justice. True dance is never just about physical movement, it's about the silent dialogue between the dancer and the audience, a dialogue that connects deeply and unspoken.

But what truly made the evening unforgettable was the duet between *Rani Khanam* and *Rama Vaidyanathan*. As they danced together, interpreting a playful poem by Sant Surdas, it was as if the very essence of Krishna's mischievous nature danced through them. Watching these two talented artists, each representing a different classical tradition, merge their energies was a moment of pure magic. The chemistry between them was visible and the playful interaction between Krishna and his devotees came to life through their expressions, perfectly capturing Surdas's wit and deep devotion. The performance left the audience reminded once again of the power of classical arts to evoke deep emotions and connect people to something greater than themselves. The Sant Shiromani Surdas Mahotsav was a celebration of a poet's legacy, of India's soul and its arts, an experience that connected everyone in attendance to something much larger than themselves.

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

Canvas of Emotions

By TEAM VIVA

Art has a way of speaking to the parts of us that words often cannot reach.

Visions Unveiled, an exhibition at the Open Palm Court, India Habitat Centre, is a vivid reminder of this power. From the moment you step inside, the space transforms into a sanctuary of colours, textures, and emotions, inviting visitors to pause and truly feel. Organised by *Happy Strokes* and curated by *Dr Mandakini Devi*, the exhibition presents 30 pieces that are as diverse in medium as they are in message. The works, ranging from the vivid energy of *Flame of Himalaya* to the intricate lines of *Focus Series*, are not just to be seen, they are to be experienced. Each artwork is an intimate exploration of identity, resilience, and emotional growth, speaking volumes about the deeply personal journeys of the artists. Highlights include the delicate *Blooming Innocence*, which captures the essence of youthful wonder and *Joy in Her Arms*, a tender portrayal of maternal love. The bold strokes of *Grace in Motion* convey the elegance of movement, while the subtle details in *The Portrait of an Elderly Man* evoke a quiet dignity. Pieces like *Gulabo*, with its vibrant palette and *Beauty Within Series*, rendered in acrylic, further showcase the versatility of artistic expression. Each work invites viewers into a different narrative, offering a fresh perspective with every glance.

What makes this exhibition stand out is its human touch. It doesn't aim to overwhelm with grandeur but instead creates an inviting atmosphere for quiet reflection. The curation reflects a keen understanding of art's ability to connect with its audience on an emotional level. Pieces like *Dehleez* and *The Blue Ivy* capture life's fleeting, fragile moments with raw honesty, making them especially striking. Interactive sessions, including art talks and workshops, add another layer to the experience. These events break down the often-intimidating barriers of the art world, encouraging visitors to engage directly with the themes on display. It's a refreshing approach, one that turns spectators into participants and deepens their connection to the art. This exhibition isn't about showcasing perfection but about embracing the imperfect beauty of human experience. It's a poignant reminder that art is more than just decoration, it's a bridge to understanding and introspection. Every



brushstroke, every line and every shadow carries the weight of stories untold and emotions unspoken. *Visions Unveiled* doesn't just leave an impression, it leaves you thinking about how art mirrors life in all its complexity. It's a show that resonates long after you've left the gallery, reminding us why creativity matters in an increasingly chaotic world. Through its thoughtfully curated works and sincere execution, it becomes a celebration of art as a reflection of humanity's most meaningful truths.

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

India all out for 185 on day one of fifth Test against Australia

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Rohit Sharma "opted to rest" in the team's interest but the same old script unfolded on a new day for Indian batters as they surrendered meekly for a paltry 185 in the face of some hostile seam bowling from Australia on the opening day of the fifth and final Test here.

Virat Kohli (17 off 69 balls), whose form and technical weaknesses are also under the scanner, was for the seventh time dismissed in the corridor of uncertainty in the tour, a problem that seems incurable at the moment.

At stumps, Australia were 9 for 1 with stand-in skipper Jasprit Bumrah sending the woefully out-of-form Usman Khawaja (2) back in the hut.

Teenage sensation Sam Konstas was unbeaten at 7 after hitting Bumrah for a first-ball four. The 19-year-old also had an animated exchange with the Indian star.

Bumrah opted to bat under overcast conditions and the ultra-defensive

approach by Indian batters only compounded their problems with Scott Boland's (20-8-31-4) immaculate length and tremendous discipline leaving them in a disarray.

Mitchell Starc (18-5-49-3) and Pat Cummins (15.2-4-37-2) were equally relentless giving the Indians no room for release shots.

Rishabh Pant top-scored for the visitors with a 98-ball 40, going against his grain to battle it out, taking painful blows to his body in the process.

If Rohit's decision to "rest" was a forward thinking move, the persistence with Kohli is proving to be detrimental and the celebrated batter might just have one more Test innings left to save his place in the traditional format.

"I wouldn't say it's a par score but still a competitive score," said Pant, admitting that the pitch is not easy to bat on.

If one takes away the second innings hundred at Perth out of his last 20 Test innings, Kohli has managed an average of 17.57.



He could have been out off Boland's first delivery but tried to battle hard. However, it has always been that one moment in which his hands and the willow magnetically follow a delivery in the corridor of uncertainty.

Pant curbs natural instincts for a session

Having copped criticism from all quarters for his bizarre shot selection in Melbourne, Pant, for a change, copped body blows, trying to curb his natural game.

The big-hitter in him came out only on a couple of occasions with one of them fetching him a straight six off Beau Webster.

Pant put his head down and endured nasty blows on his bicep, helmet and twice in the sensitive abdominal area. He and the dogged Ravindra Jadeja (26 off 95 balls) defended dourly as they added 48 off 151 deliveries for the fifth wicket.

Only 50 runs were scored in the second session and trying not to be adventurous proved counter-productive with most batters

retreating in a shell letting Boland and company dictate the terms of play. Finally, Pant's patience ran out and one pull shot too many became his undoing.

India realised they haven't scored enough runs and lost a lot of wickets. The defensive tactic in the second session when the ball got old ended up costing them dearly.

There wasn't much swing on offer despite cloudy conditions but a decent grass cover ensured that Boland's back-of-length deliveries proved enough.

As far as Pant was concerned, the "honest conversations" with head coach Gautam Gambhir seemed to have worked with the southpaw respecting the game situation for most part.

If Pant was disciplined, Shubman Gill's judgement on the last delivery before lunch did cause trouble for India.

Gill (20 off 64 balls) did all the hard work for close to couple of hours before stepping out to Nathan Lyon on the last ball of the session only to be caught at first slip.



Facing Jasprit Bumrah will be challenging on this track: Beau Webster

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Debutant all-rounder Beau Webster feels facing ace India pacer Jasprit Bumrah will be an enormous challenge on the SCG pitch which is helping seamers, and the Australian did not place his finger on an ideal first innings score.

India were all out for 185 and then Australia lost Usman Khawaja off the last ball of the day to Bumrah to end at 9 for one.

"Think there's definitely a method to go about batting on this wicket. But Jasprit is a world class bowler and no doubt he's going to challenge our whole batting group. He's phenomenal with his lengths and lines, it is going to be tough on a wicket that will offer a fair bit for him," Webster said in the post day one press conference.

He said getting India out for a total less than 200 on a seamer friendly track was a commendable effort.

"It was a pretty seamer-friendly track and most of the day the ball stayed pretty new with the grass coverage. It is not an abrasive square either. So, the plan was to bowl a little bit fuller and entice those front foot defences and front foot drives.

"Thought Scotty (Boland) was excellent, he's been unbelievable since he came back into the team and saw why he's a world class bowler. Thought all the bowlers were really good today to bowl

them out for 200."

Webster said the degree of seam movement for a few deliveries was way more pronounced and hence they beat the bat regularly.

"There were a couple of unplayable balls, when it seems that much it can be hard to get a wicket at times. We saw a nice-ish partnership (Jadeja-Pant), where we struggled to get a breakthrough through the sheer seam movement. We beat the bat a lot but couldn't find the edge."

The 31-year-old was all praise for Boland and said the pacer can find a way to get wickets on any surface and when there is help on offer, he is on par with the best in business.

"If there's anything in the wicket he finds it and if there's nothing in the wicket he still manages to find a way through," the lanky Tasmanian said.

"He's been fantastic this whole series when he's got his chance, he's relentless. I think it's his line and length and his natural angle that makes it really hard for right-handers, but when we see him go round the wicket to left-handers it's impressive stuff."

Webster caught the great Virat Kohli at third slip and he found Boland's bowling enjoyable.

"It's great to watch from the third slip today, the amount of movement he gets and how accurate he is and how challenging he is for both left and right handers.

We have probably seen Rohit Sharma for last time in Test cricket: Gavaskar, Shastri

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Former India cricketers Sunil Gavaskar and Ravi Shastri feel that the Boxing Day Test might have been Rohit Sharma's final appearance in Test cricket, following his bold call to rest himself for the series finale that began here on Friday.

The 37-year-old chose to sit out with the series on the line, having scored only 31 runs in five innings across three Tests.

"I think it probably means that (if) India don't qualify for the WTC final, the Melbourne Test will be Rohit Sharma's last game," Gavaskar said during the lunch break on day one.

"The WTC cycle will start with the England series, and the selectors would likely want someone available for the 2027 final. Whether India gets there or not is another matter, but that's what the selection committee is likely to do.

"We have probably seen Rohit



Sharma for the last time in Test cricket," he added.

Shastri echoed the sentiment, predicting that Rohit would "pull the plug" on his Test career after the series.

"At the toss, Jasprit [Bumrah] mentioned it before I could ask," Shastri said during commentary.

"He said the captain opted to sit out and said the team would be stronger if Shubman

Gill plays.

"It can happen when you're out of sorts, you're mentally not there, you don't have the runs under your belt. It still is a brave call for a captain to own up and say, 'I'm prepared to take the bench in this game,'" he added.

Rohit has struggled in Test cricket recently, breaching the 20-run mark only twice in his last eight matches.

With India trailing 1-2 in the series, they must win the final Test to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, which they've held for a decade, and remain in contention for a spot in the World Test Championship (WTC) final against South Africa.

If India fail to qualify, their next Test series will be a tour of England starting mid-June.

"If there was a home season coming up he might've thought of carrying on, but I think he might just pull the plug at the end of this Test," Shastri said.

"He's not getting younger ... it's not that India don't have youngsters. There are very, very good players in the wings and it's time to build.

"Tough decisions, but there is a time for everything," Shastri added.

At the toss, stand-in skipper Jasprit Bumrah said "our captain has shown leadership by opting to rest in this game."



I wasn't in frame of mind to take charge because of nature of wicket: Pant

PTI ■ SYDNEY

India wicketkeeper batter Rishabh Pant said he batted with restraint on the opening day of the fifth Test against Australia because character of the SCG pitch and the game situation did not allow him to be his customary aggressive self.

Pant, who copped severe criticism from all corners for his callous approach to batting during the previous Test at Melbourne, made a 98-ball 40 in India's 185 all out here on Friday.

"I think in this innings, I was not in a frame of mind where I wanted to take charge of the game because the wicket was doing too much and the kind of situation we were in," Pant said in the post-day press meet.

"I would say there might be a 50-50 chance which I could have taken early on in this innings but sometimes you have to play more secure cricket especially the way, wicket was behaving.

"We knew that if we lost one more wicket here, we might lose 2-3 in quick succession. So that was the idea behind the way I was playing," he added.

Pant's falling pull in Melbourne had prompted legendary Sunil Gavaskar to call the shot "stupid" and in the second innings, he slugged a half-tracker from Travis Head to find the only fielder in the deep when the Test match could have been saved.

"Yes, there is a time to attack, but when you have to feel that from inside. I can't just premeditate that I'm going to play this way. Whatever the game asked me to do on a given day, that's what I tried to do and that is the mindset."

For Pant, the equation is simple - everyone has learnt their own way to skin a cat but also need to learn the other way.

"It is a natural habit to back whatever the way you have played the game. But eventually you got to keep on evolving and, that is, I feel there is not one way to play cricket.

"But whatever comes more naturally is always better but you got to find that balance between playing aggressive cricket and having that balance when you play all those shots. That's what I'm trying to do," he explained his rationale.

"Just trying to make the most out of whatever the way I'm playing and just keep it simple, and not to overthink because you know when you're not having the best of the tours you might overthink."

He agreed that blows that he received, one on the left bicep and few in the abdominal area, were painful but that was the need of the hour.

"I mean definitely it's painful but you know sometimes you have to do the hard work for the team and that's okay. Not thinking about where I got hit but just playing the ball to the best of my abilities."

Biggest achievement of life but plenty more to come: Harmanpreet on Khel Ratna award

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Elated to become a Khel Ratna awardee after his career-defining Olympic performance, Indian men's hockey team captain Harmanpreet Singh said the honour is a recognition of his "fascinating" journey in which he still has plenty more to achieve.

Double Olympic-medallist shooter Manu Bhaker, chess world champion D Gukesh, Harmanpreet and Paralympic high jump gold-winner Praveen Kumar were finalised for the 2024 Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna award by the sports ministry on Thursday.

"(It's the) biggest recognition of my life. It's a big achievement for me. I am really very happy. I think it's the best part of my life that I am getting such a huge award



and recognition," the 28-year-old Harmanpreet, who was India's top goal-scorer in the Paris Games with 10 strikes, told PTI in an interview.

The ace drag-flicker has won most of the prominent awards and accolades in his career, including back-to-back Olympic bronze medals, a junior World Cup gold in 2016, a

Commonwealth Games silver, an Asian Games gold and bronze besides two silver medals in the Champions Trophy.

Harmanpreet has also claimed the FIH Player of the Year award three times, including the year gone by. But he is far from satiated.

"Throughout my journey I have learnt a lot, I have seen a lot of ups and downs

including wins and losses. But I think you only learn from those experiences. From day one, my mindset has been how to improve myself," said the star player who was born into a family of farmers in Amritsar's Timmowal village and whose international career began in 2014.

A team-man to the core, Harmanpreet credited his fellow players for making it possible for him to shine individually.

"Whatever we are achieving we are achieving as a team. The journey has been very fascinating, I am getting individual recognitions and awards but only because of my teammates.

"I have enjoyed my journey a lot till date. I have put on a lot of hard work and I am happy with what I have achieved till date," he said.

I was very surprised when I heard the term 'opting out': Ponting says of Rohit's absence

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian batting great Ricky Ponting on Friday said he was "surprised" by the Indian camp's wording around Rohit Sharma's absence from the fifth and final Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy but admitted that the move was on expected lines.

The match started here on Friday with the visitors eyeing a win to level the series and retain the trophy. However, Jasprit Bumrah, who walked out for the toss, said Rohit has "opted to rest" from the Sydney Test.

"I think the reaction has been that they all sort of expected that it might happen," Ponting told The ICC Review.

"The chat's been for the last couple of days that everyone expected that Rohit would not play this game, that Shubman Gill would come back in and that (Jasprit) Bumrah would probably take over the captaincy again and that's the way it's turned out." Given the circumstances, Ponting was totally in agreement with the woefully out-of-form Rohit skipping the decider at SCG and the former Australia captain was surprised by the wording of the news that came from the India camp.

"I was very surprised when I heard the term 'opting out' coming into such an important game," Ponting said.

"We know he's been a great stalwart for Indian cricket

over a long period of time. So the way that they've actually worded it, you can only take it on face value.

"We've got to believe what we're hearing coming out of the Indian camp, but being such a big game, knowing that they have to win this one to retain the trophy, it was an interesting time for one of their more experienced players to opt out."

The 37-year-old white-ball great looked like a pale shadow of himself in the ongoing series Down Under, struggling to execute even his bread and butter shots including the trademark front foot pull.

During the customary pre-match warm-up session, Rohit was seen playing football with Virat Kohli,



Rishabh Pant and Sarfaraz Khan, who along with Abhimanyu Easwaran will end the series without getting

an international game. Ponting did not say it in as many words but he very well understands that it could be

the end of road for Rohit in the game's traditional format. "You'd think it's probably a long way back for Rohit Sharma now in this format of the game," Ponting said.

"India don't play a Test match, I believe, until the middle or late June, which is a long way away when you're sort of coming to the back end of your career.

"I think he's been a terrific player for India so with those sort of guys, you wish them all the best and hope to see them back out there again, but as I said, I think it will be a long - and probably difficult road - back for him." Catch off Kohli's bat was clean.

Ponting had no doubt that the attempt made by Steve Smith at second slip off

Kohli's blade was a clean take. Kohli edged a length delivery from Scott Boland to second slip, where Smith was positioned. Smith dived low to his right, seemingly catching the ball near the ground before flicking it upward toward gully, where Marnus Labuschagne completed the catch.

However, the decision was referred to the TV umpire, who ultimately ruled Kohli not out.

"I was in the back of the (commentary) box as it happened and from what I saw, and what I believe to be the interpretation of the rules, that seemed to be out to me," Ponting said.

"The ball may have touched the ground. It may not have

touched the ground, but the fact that his right index finger was still underneath the ball, I thought it was a clear catch."

The incident took place in the eighth over, off the first ball Kohli faced and Ponting admitted the limited angles available did not help.

"It might be one of those ones that depends which dressing room he's (Kohli) sitting in as well.

"Every Indian fan and Indian player will say that's not out as it clearly touched the ground, but you could tell by the reaction of the Australians when it happened and even when they saw the replay on the big screen that they were all pretty confident that it was out.

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