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# India working to preserve tribal culture: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the country is actively working to preserve tribal culture with several programmes underway.

While interacting with the youth from Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh at his official residence during the 'Tribal Youth Exchange Program 2025', he highlighted that PM Modi declared November 15, the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda, as 'Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas'.

He further emphasised the significance of this year as it marks the 150th birth anniversary of Birsa Munda. The youth shared their perspectives with the chief minister, offering insights into the rich cultures of their respective states. The CM welcomed the participants to Lucknow and acknowledged their efforts despite the inclement weather conditions.

Introducing the youth to Uttar Pradesh, Yogi stated: "It is the most populous state in the country, home to 25 crore people. The state comprises 75 districts, 18 divisions, over 350 tehsils, more than 825 development blocks, 17 municipal corporations, over 200 municipal councils, and more than 400 nagar panchayats."

Describing UP as a special land blessed by nature and divinity, he shared that the Maha Kumbh will take place from January 13 to February 26 in Prayagraj, with over 40 crore devotees expected to attend the grand event.

He also emphasised the state's



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with the youth from Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh at his official residence in Lucknow on Sunday

spiritual heritage, mentioning Kashi Vishwanath Dham, the birthplace of Lord Ram and Lord Krishna, the Leela Bhoomi of Vrindavan, and Maa Vindhyavasini Dham. Uttar Pradesh, he added, has played a pivotal role in the country's journey from the Vedic period to independence and continues to be a cornerstone of Indian civilisation. CM Yogi said that Uttar Pradesh is rapidly emerging as a leading state in terms of development and has established itself as one of the country's top economies. "Security and law and order are the fundamental prerequisites for development and good governance. Extremism, terrorism, disturbances, and riots, he stated, hinder progress, employment generation, governance, and investment," he remarked.

The CM urged the youth to abide by the law, as it ensures their protection. He stressed that the Constitution instils a sense of respect for the law, reminding everyone of Dr BR Ambedkar's significant contribution as the architect of the Constitution. Emphasising the strong bonds between Uttar Pradesh and states like Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Jharkhand, the chief minister remarked that Chhattisgarh is the maternal home of Lord Ram, where he spent a significant part of his exile in Chitrakoot, located at the junction of UP and Madhya Pradesh. He also noted that Maa Janaki hails from Janakpur, situated between Bihar and Nepal. Jharkhand, he mentioned, is renowned for Baba Dham, while Odisha is the sacred

home of Lord Jagannath. The CM highlighted that pride in one's tradition, culture, and the deep reverence and respect for these values, along with loyalty to the nation, inspire progress and unity. The chief minister stated that while India is emerging as a major global power, it also faces challenges. He highlighted that within the next three years, India is set to become the third-largest economy in the world. This growth, he said, will lead to increased income for individuals, job creation, infrastructure development, and more investment, providing ample opportunities for the youth to connect and contribute. Emphasising the need to preserve India's rich culture, folklore and tradition, the chief minister said both the Central

and state governments are working towards establishing a new paradigm of development, grounded in these foundations, by building museums in the region. The CM also noted that, for the first time in independent India, a tribal woman holding the position of President is playing a pivotal role in elevating the pride of the nation to new heights. While there may be differences in the methods of worship, he stressed that Rashtrdharma (duty to the nation) must always be prioritised, and there can be no compromise on this. The CM also noted that the tribal community has been known as warriors who have united in strength for the nation and religion since ancient times, including during the era of Lord Ram.

The chief minister emphasised the importance of training within Uttar Pradesh, as it provides an opportunity to closely observe the state's development journey. The chief minister directed officials to take the youth on a tour of various places in Lucknow, including wide-clean roads, the metro, the airport, railway stations, and malls. He encouraged them to witness the development under PM Modi's leadership, stressing the importance of cleanliness and urging them not to let dirt accumulate anywhere. Principal Secretary (Home and Information) Sanjay Prasad, Nishtha Tiwari from Union Home Ministry, State Director of Nehrui Yuva Kendra Mahendra Singh Sisodia etc were present during the programme.

## NAKA MASS MURDER

### Police monitoring bank accounts of Arshad's father to track his whereabouts

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Having failed to make any progress in locating Mohd Badaruddin aka Badar, the alleged accomplice in the murder of five women at a lodge in Naka, police are closely monitoring his bank accounts in an effort to track his whereabouts. According to police sources, Badar, the co-accused in the mass murder at Sharanjit Hotel in Naka, Charbagh, has been evading arrest since the incident came to light on January 1.

The police believe that Badar's location was last traced to Kanpur, but it is unclear where he went after that. The police have gathered information on all bank accounts linked to Badar's name and have contacted the banks. They are now waiting for alerts, which will be triggered if Badar makes any withdrawals from an ATM. The police have also sought information from the Agra branch of his bank. It was discovered that his account contained Rs 1,200, but details about other accounts remain unknown. Authorities are hopeful that Badar may contact someone close to him for help, which could lead to his location. In addition, the police have obtained details of Badar's mobile call history and are reaching out to his contacts. Investigators are focusing on identifying those with whom Badar communicated the most, hoping it will lead to clues about his whereabouts. To intensify the search, the number of police teams working on the case has been increased. It has also been revealed that both Badar and

his son and prime accused, Arshad, had lied to each other about their intentions. Both had initially claimed that they would commit suicide. However, after reaching Charbagh station, Arshad surrendered to the police, while Badar disappeared. Authorities suspect that Arshad, believing his father had taken his own life, surrendered in a bid to avoid further suspicion. During questioning, Arshad reportedly blamed everything on his father. But once he learned that Badar had not died, Arshad began misleading the police. To recap, Arshad, a resident of Agra, along with his father Badar, killed his mother Asma (49), and sisters Alsha (19), Rahmeen (18), Aksha (16), and Alia (9), at a lodge in Naka, Charbagh. The two had arrived in Lucknow on December 30 and booked a hotel room for two days. On the night of December 31, they carried out the mass murder. Arshad recorded a video of the killings, which he later made viral. Following the incident, Arshad surrendered to the police. Meanwhile, a youth allegedly hanged himself to death at his home in Indranagar (Sector 19) under Ghazipur police station area on Sunday. As per reports, RML Hospital gave a written memo to the local police, stating that Amit Kumar Yadav (25) was brought dead to the facility around noon on Sunday. Sub-Inspector Jai Narayan Dohre reached the hospital and sent the body for a postmortem after completing formalities. Bereaved family members said Amit hanged himself from the ceiling.

## Wife of GST dept employee duped

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The wife of a GST department stenographer has been defrauded of lakhs of rupees in Gomti Nagar, police said here. The fraudsters initially lured her into investing in the stock market, promising substantial profits. Later, they tricked her out of a large sum of money by threatening her with involvement in an internet banking fraud complaint, police added. According to reports, the victim, Aarti Prajapati, a housewife from the Customs and Central Excise Colony in Vibhuti Khand, shared her ordeal with the police. She said that she joined a WhatsApp group in August after seeing an advertisement on social media. Aarti explained that the fraudsters in the group provided advice on potential trades for investment. To participate, members were instructed to open a brokerage account, and the group sent messages encouraging them to do so. The group's admin then engaged in discussions related to trading. "Eventually, I was given another link to join, through which I opened a brokerage account. I deposited Rs

5.73 lakh into a bank account provided to me, in four installments, for trading," she stated in a complaint. She further mentioned that after a few days, her account began showing an increased balance, and when she attempted a withdrawal for the first time, she successfully withdrew Rs 1.5 lakh on August 27, 2024. This success boosted her confidence, leading her to deposit an additional Rs 2.5 lakh for further trading. Soon after, a woman named Pallavi filed a complaint regarding internet banking fraud, and Aarti was threatened with being implicated in this case. Meanwhile, the fraudsters who had added her to the group started demanding more money for further trading. "I refused to send more money and tried to withdraw the funds, but I was unable to do so. The fraudsters then locked my trading account. I complained to the mobile number provided for account issues, but received no response. A few days later, I found that I couldn't log in anymore, and that's when I realised it was all a scam," she said. The police are currently investigating the matter.

## STF nets 2 members of gang involved in multi-crore fraud

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Two members of a gang allegedly involved in a cyber fraud worth crores of rupees have been arrested in Lucknow district, police said here on Sunday. The gang had obtained customer data from an e-commerce company through the dark web and Telegram, accessed customer accounts with the help of a Telegram bot, and made purchases using various online shopping platforms, the police added. The arrests were made on Saturday by a team of the Special Task Force (STF), Uttar Pradesh. Those arrested have been identified as Dhairya Verma alias Dharia (18), a resident of Bada Chandganj in Aliganj (Lucknow), and Maroof Asif Kasmani (22), from Surat, Gujarat. During the operation, the STF team recovered four boxes of protein powder from different companies, 10 kilograms of Borntiva powder (1 kg each), along with original bills related to the purchases. Other items seized included three mobile phones, two debit cards, one credit card, and Rs 4,715 in cash. The accused were arrested near the Indira Canal, close



to Anwara Kala, under the jurisdiction of the BBD police station area. An STF spokesperson stated that the team had received information about a gang involved in cyber fraud by hacking online websites and payment gateways. The gang obtained customer data through the Telegram app. "Various teams and units of the STF were instructed to take the necessary actions. Intelligence gathering began under the supervision of Deputy Superintendent of Police, STF UP, Deepak Kumar Singh," the spokesperson added. Through the investigation, it was discovered that the gang members were altering the names, addresses, and mobile numbers of the original

account holders on the Amazon platform. They then ordered goods using the original account information and had them shipped to their own addresses. The goods were later sold to local shopkeepers at discounted prices. A trap was set, and the accused were arrested. During questioning, Dhairya Verma revealed that he had met Konan Mansuri, Maroof, and Nitin through an online gaming app and a Telegram group. Initially, they traded hacked game codes for PUBG, but over time, their greed grew. They began obtaining customer data from the dark web and Telegram app to access e-commerce accounts. The gang used a technique where they called e-commerce company customers and obtained OTPs. After gaining access to the accounts, they changed the names, addresses, and mobile numbers, replacing them with fake information. They then ordered expensive products and had them delivered to fraudulent addresses. Once the goods were received, they sold them at lower prices in the local market. A case has been registered against the arrested individuals at BBD police station in Lucknow.

## Married man, lover hang themselves

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A 25-year-old married man and his purported lover hanged themselves in separate incidents in the Asandra police station area here, police said on Sunday. According to the SHO of Asandra police station, GP Singh, Manish and Nidhi (22), both of whom were from the same village, had been in love for about four years and their families were aware of the relationship. Nidhi wanted to marry Manish, who had been married to another woman for five years. Their affair had started after his marriage, the SHO said. According to villagers, Manish worked as a DJ, while Nidhi did sewing and knitting. They belonged to different castes. Manish was found hanging from a neem tree near Nidhi's house on Sunday. Villagers, who were out for a morning walk, saw his body and informed his family, the SHO said. When Nidhi's family did not see her outside on Sunday morning, her mother went to wake her, only to find Nidhi hanging from a ceiling fan in her room, he added. The SHO further said that police forces have been deployed in the village due to the tension following the incident.

## Woman, lover sentenced to life imprisonment for killing 8-yr-old daughter

A court in Uttar Pradesh's Ballia district has sentenced a woman and her lover to life imprisonment after finding them guilty in a two-and-a-half-year-old case of murdering her eight-year-old daughter and disappearing the body, an official said on Sunday. The court of District Judge Amit Pal Singh on Saturday held Bindu and her lover Lala Rajbhar guilty and sentenced them to life imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 15,000 on each of them, joint director in-charge of the prosecution department PN Swami told PTL. Giving details of the case, Swami said that Bindu of Pawpatti village of Ghazipur district was married to Nagendra of Chakra village of Mau district from whom she had two children named Shivangi (8) and Ayush (3). Bindu's brother Bablu Rajbhar in his complaint lodged at the

Rasra Police Station on June 2, 2022 had said that he had brought his sister and her two children from his house to Rasra on May 11, 2022. Bindu had said that she would go to her in-laws' house, but she did not go to her in-laws' house and went to Katewa in the Rasra Police Station area, the house of her lover Narendra alias Lala Rajbhar. After this, Bindu and her lover Lala hatched a criminal conspiracy and murdered Shivangi and made the body disappear. Based on the complaint lodged by Bablu Rajbhar, a case was registered against Bindu and Lala under various sections of the IPC for murder, conspiracy and destruction of evidence. After investigation, the police filed a chargesheet against Bindu and Lala in the court. The court completed the hearing and pronounced the sentence in the case on Saturday, said Swami.

## Boutique owner alleges rape attempt by business partner

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Boutique owner in the Jankipuram area here has accused her business partner, identified as Ankit Tiwari, of attempting to rape her, sending obscene messages, and threatening her family. The woman, who opened her boutique in 2018 to improve her financial condition, alleged that Tiwari abused their professional relationship to harass her, police said on Sunday. According to a complaint filed

by the woman, Tiwari initially approached her with a proposal to partner in the boutique. After consulting her husband, she agreed to the partnership. However, she alleged that Tiwari attempted to rape her inside the boutique one day. She managed to escape and raised an alarm, prompting him to flee. Fearful after the incident, the woman avoided going to the boutique. When her husband inquired, she broke down and narrated the ordeal. The boutique was subsequently closed, and the family kept a low profile. The woman alleged that Tiwari continued to harass her by sending obscene messages from multiple phone numbers after she blocked him. In December, he allegedly followed her, touched her inappropriately, and engaged in obscene acts in public. The situation escalated when Tiwari reportedly attempted to break into the woman's home at night and threatened to kill her husband and family members. On January 1, the woman lodged a complaint with the State Women's Commission

and later filed a report at the Jankipuram police station. The Jankipuram inspector confirmed that a case has been registered and an investigation is underway. The woman and her family remain under police protection as the probe continues. Meanwhile, a man allegedly raped a 14-year-old girl and then tried to strangle her in Shahjahanpur district on Sunday, police said. The accused, Gangadin (50) has been taken into custody, police said. Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Sanjay Kumar Sagar said that the girl, from a village in Sadar Bazar police station area, had gone to the field to attend nature's call in the morning. Gangadin called her when she was on her way home, took her to a secluded field and raped her, Sagar said. When the girl raised an alarm, Gangadin strangled her, due to which she fainted. The accused fled and later a person from the village saw the victim lying in the field and informed her family about the incident. She was then admitted to a hospital, Sagar said.

## LDA proposes changes to rules for possession of properties for buyers

Lucknow (PNS): The Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) has proposed changes to the rules regarding the possession of flats, houses, and other properties by buyers. Under the new proposal, buyers will be required to obtain a letter of allotment from the LDA's registry department. This letter will officially confirm that a specific property has been allotted to an individual. Sharing details of this proposal on Sunday, LDA Vice-Chairman Prathmesh Kumar emphasised that the change aims to enhance transparency and reduce the chances of forgery when it comes to property possession. This proposal will be one of the key items on the agenda for the upcoming LDA Board meeting, scheduled to take place later this month. In the past, unscrupulous individuals have manipulated the process by pressuring genuine buyers into surrendering their letters of allotment through bribery. There have also been reports of buyers, driven by greed, selling their letters to others after accepting money.

According to the Urban Housing Development Act, properties cannot be sold to other individuals within three years of allotment. However, this rule has often been violated. The VC expressed concern over these practices, stressing the need for immediate corrective action for the benefit of both authorities and genuine buyers. He stated that the new system would help curb these illegal activities. To ensure effective implementation, LDA's registry department will be upgraded. All properties sold in recent years, as well as those sold in the present, will be systematically recorded in software, making it easier to track and preventing fraudulent transactions. The letter of allotment will contain detailed information about the buyer and will be issued by the officer concerned of the registry department. This letter must be presented at the time of taking possession of the property. The officer responsible for handing over the property will thoroughly scrutinise the documents before granting possession.

## CITYBRIEFS

**TWO NEW FLIGHTS**  
People of Lucknow and adjoining regions will now have one domestic and one international flight to Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) (BKK) and Bhubaneswar (BBI), respectively. Both routes will be operated by Air India Express, thrice a week on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday with Boeing 737 Max aircraft having capacity of 186 passengers. A Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport (CCSIA) spokesperson said, "The two new flights will augment our emphasis on providing seamless connectivity to domestic as well as international passengers. With the introduction of these routes, CCSIA now enables people of the region to travel directly to Thailand and Bhubaneswar from Lucknow. Travellers can look forward to more options, reduced travel time, and the promise of a hassle-free journey."

**DISCUSSION**  
A discussion on the scientific and historical aspects of the Indian calendar was organised by RR Group of Institutions and Nav Varsh Chetna Samiti on the occasion of the centenary year of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. In this discussion, experts pre-

sented their views on the scientific and historical aspects of the Indian calendar. They explained how the scientific and historical aspects of the Indian calendar help people understand their cultural and traditional values. The chief guest was director of Rashtrdharma Prakashan Limited, Sarvesh Chandra Dwivedi. He said, "Discussing the scientific and historical aspects of the Indian calendar gives us an opportunity to delve deeper into our cultural and traditional values." Experts who participated in the discussion included Dr Archana Mishra, Rekha Tripathi, Dr Girish Gupta, Dr Sunil Agrawal, Mudita Singh, and Shobhit Narayan Agrawal. The chairman of the institution, Anil Kumar Agrawal, honoured the guests with a shawl and a memento.

**YOUTH FEST**  
Gaurav Ojha, a research scholar from the sociology department at Lucknow University, has brought pride to his institution by securing first place in Uttar Pradesh for his presentation on 'Vikas bhi Viraasat bhi' (Development and heritage), an official said here on Sunday. This achievement has earned him the opportunity to

represent the state at the upcoming 'Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue', part of the 28th National Youth Festival, which will be held on January 11 and 12 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. The event, organised by the Government of Uttar Pradesh, saw Lucknow University nominated to host the third phase of this prestigious programme. The dialogue was led by LU Vice-Chancellor Prof Alok Kumar Rai and took place in the AP Sen Hall, with a total of 1,546 participants from across Uttar Pradesh competing in an essay contest.

**MARATHON**  
Gyan Babu from Kunda town in Pratapgarh won the men's full marathon and Senait Kefelegn from Ethiopia won the women's full marathon at the 13th edition of the Freshworks Chennai Marathon powered by Chennai Runners, event on Sunday. The marathon saw over 25,000 participants across categories. The men's full marathon was a close affair with just 11 minutes being the difference in timing among the first five finishers. The women's full marathon also saw some spirited running battles with Senait securing top spot.



I, hitherto known as bindu gupta W/o Subhash Chandra Gupta R/o vill. and Post Sikandrabad Tehsil gola Distt. Lakhimpur kheri, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Sumitra.





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INSIDE

**WORLD 9**  
SNOW BRINGS WIDESPREAD  
DISRUPTION ACROSS UK,  
GERMANY, THREATENS CENTRAL US

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## RRTS brings Meerut closer to delhi



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

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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## Bidhuri shoots from the hip; Cong fumes, BJP distances

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

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



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



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

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

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## Delhi LG relaxes job norms for 1984 riot survivors

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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



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

## Coast Guard chopper crashes, three dead

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ AHMADABAD

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

## Strict anti-spam norms on anvil

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

TRA I will start, this month, a pilot to onboard paper-based and past permissions given by customers for receiving commercial communications onto its digital distributed ledger technology (DLT) platform, a process that in the long-run would include scrubbing and verifying their current validity and offering opt-outs to those keen on it, Chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti said, adding that tighter regulations on curbing spam as well as new consultation examining an authorisation framework for telemarketers can also be expected in coming weeks. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRA I) has also ruled out any rethink on its latest regulation that mandates service providers to

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

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Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

## GRAP III revoked following marginal improvement in AQI

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

### WEATHER

LUCKNOW	
MAX	13.5°C(-6.6)
MIN	9.5°C(+1.7)

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

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

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## Special category visas for international students

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



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

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

Continued on page 9

## Fukahori, the Nagasaki atomic bomb survivor dies at 93

PTI ■ TOKYO

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



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

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

## Bangladesh cancels training of judges in India

PTI ■ DHAKA



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

undergo a one-day training programme from February 10 at the National Judicial Academy and the State Judicial Academy in Madhya Pradesh. The trainee judges selected under the programme were district and sessions judge or its equivalent officers, additional district and sessions judge, joint district judge, senior assistant judge and assistant judge. The Indian government was supposed to bear all the expenses for the training programmes. India and Bangladesh have witnessed strained ties since the deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled to New Delhi on August 5 last year following a massive student-led protest that toppled her Awami League's 16-year regime. There have been a series of attacks on Hindu community members and their places of worship after the interim government headed by Muhammad Yunus came to power on August 8. New Delhi has already raised concern with Dhaka, especially after a Hindu monk was arrested in a seditious case and put in jail after he was denied bail last month.



# Kalyan Singh a distinguished son of Mother India: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Sunday, hailed former chief minister and governor Kalyan Singh as a distinguished son of Mother India, a dedicated patriot and a devout follower of Bhagwan Ram. Chief Minister Yogi paid floral tributes to Kalyan Singh's portrait on his birth anniversary at a programme held at Mall Avenue here on Sunday. "Born on this day in 1932 in a humble farmer's family in a small village in Aligarh, Kalyan Singhji grew up witnessing the nation's freedom struggle. These formative experiences instilled in him a deep sense of patriotism and a vision for India's future. As a young boy, he embraced these values through his association with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), shaping his unwavering dedication to the nation," Yogi said. "Kalyan Singhji's remarkable journey took him from farming and teaching to holding pivotal roles such as health minister of Uttar Pradesh in 1977, MLA, MP, twice chief minister of the state, and governor of two states. Throughout his illustrious career, his efficiency, dedication and administrative acumen earned him universal respect and admiration," the chief minister added. Chief Minister Yogi highlighted that in honor of Kalyan Singh's legacy, the state government has named the state-of-the-art Cancer Institute in Lucknow and the medical college in Bulandshahr after the revered leader.



UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath paying floral tribute to Kalyan Singh

The chief minister emphasised that, unlike many who compromise their principles for power, Kalyan Singh stood steadfast in his values and ethics. He recalled his contributions during the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and his visionary efforts in the 1990s to redefine Uttar Pradesh's politics and elevate administrative efficiency that continue to inspire the idea of a progressive and reformed Uttar Pradesh. Chief Minister Yogi remarked that while India gained Independence in 1947, the people of Uttar Pradesh felt the essence of freedom when Kalyan Singh assumed office as chief minister and led the state with a transformative vision. He added, "Despite facing relentless efforts to destabilise his leadership, Kalyan Singhji made the ultimate sacrifice by relinquishing power for the construction of Shri Ram tem-

ple. His unwavering resolve and foresight have become a reality. As the grand temple at Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya nears completion, his soul must be at peace, witnessing the fulfillment of his dream. The chief minister highlighted that Kalyan Singh brought to life the philosophy of integral humanism envisioned by Pt Deendayal Upadhyaya, which he imbibed during his formative years in the RSS. His initiatives, including farmer-centric schemes and a pioneering campaign to ensure copying-free examinations for UP's youth, remain exemplary and continue to inspire, Yogi added. Recalling Kalyan Singh's demise on August 21, 2021, the chief minister noted that while he is no longer present in physical form, his ideals and guidance remain a beacon for governance and administra-

tion. "Whenever we talk about integrity and governance in Uttar Pradesh, the name of Kalyan Singhji is remembered with respect and reverence by every state resident," the chief minister stated. He added, "The reforms and campaigns initiated under his leadership have significantly impacted the lives of ordinary citizens, paving the way for good governance and a stronger Uttar Pradesh." The chief minister urged everyone to collectively strive for the vision of a New Uttar Pradesh for which Kalyan Singh dedicated his life. He emphasised that nationalism and good governance are essential for Uttar Pradesh to play a pivotal role in shaping a New India. Chief Minister Yogi also reflected on Kalyan Singh's humble beginnings as a student in a

basic education school and later as a teacher. "Today, his legacy lives on as his grandson, as the basic education minister, charts a new course for education in the state. This is the result of the dedication and values passed down by our ancestors," he stated. The chief minister reaffirmed that with exemplary efforts, it is possible to realise Kalyan Singh's vision of a secure, prosperous Uttar Pradesh, bringing progress and well-being to its 25 crore citizens. On this occasion, Bharatiya Janata Party state president Chaudhary Bhupendra Singh, Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, Union Minister BL Verma, Cabinet Minister Swatantra Dev Singh, MP Sakshi Maharaj, Minister of State for Basic Education (Independent Charge) Sandeep Singh were present.

# Ayodhya to host Pratishtha Dwadashi festival from January 11 to 13

PNS ■ AYODHYA

Ayodhya will host the Pratishtha Dwadashi festival from January 11 to 13, celebrating the first anniversary of Ram Lalla's installation in the grand temple. On the opening day, January 11, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will perform the sacred 'abhishek' of Ram Lalla in the sanctum sanctorum at 11 am. Following this, he will inaugurate a cultural programme at Angad Tila and address devotees. Devotional songs by renowned artists such as Sonu Nigam, Shankar Mahadevan and Malini Awasthi will also be released on the occasion. Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust general secretary Champat Rai said, "On January 11, corresponding to Paush Shukla Paksha, Dwadashi, Vikram Samvat 2001, we mark

one year since the establishment of the newly-built temple at Ayodhya Dham, the sacred birthplace of Maryada Purushottam Lord Shri Ram, the patron of Indian culture and Sanatan Dharma." He added, "Events will include vibrant kirtans at key locations across Ayodhya, such as Lata Chowk, Janmabhoomi Path, Shringar Haat, Ram Ki Paidi, Sugriva Fort and Chhoti Devkali. Young artistes will enchant audiences with musical performances throughout the city." As part of the festivities, he said, a three-day Shri Ram Raag-Seva programme would be held in a pavilion near the temple's sanctum sanctorum. "This initiative, led by Ayodhya artiste Yatindra Mishra with support from Sangeet Natak Academy, will present devotional offerings to Lord Shri Ram through music, dance

and instrumental performances," he added. The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra has extended invitations to saints and devotees from across the country. Champat Rai urged residents and pilgrims to participate in the celebrations, making at least a one-day visit during the three-day festival to honor the occasion and experience the spiritual atmosphere of Ayodhya. The festival will open on January 11 with Raga Seva, performed by renowned singer Usha Mangeshkar, sister of the legendary Lata Mangeshkar, and accompanied by Mayuresh Pai, who will present devotional bhajans. This will be followed by a soulful duet (jugalbandi) of the sitar by Sahitya Nahar and the violin by Santosh Nahar. The day will conclude with a captivating Bharatanatyam dance perfor-

mance by Dr Ananda Shankar Jayant. The second day (January 12) will begin with Raga Seva by celebrated folk singer Shailesh Srivastava, featuring traditional Badhawa and Sohar melodies. Following this, classical vocalist Kalapini Komkali will perform Shri Ram bhajans and Nirgun gayan. The day's programme will end with a mesmerising flute recital by internationally acclaimed maestro Rakesh Chaurasia. The festival's final day on January 13 will start with a classical vocal performance by the acclaimed Aarti Ankalikar, followed by an elegant Kathak performance by renowned dancer Shobhana Narayan. The grand finale will feature classical singing and Shri Ram bhajans by the celebrated South Indian duo Shri Krishna Mohan and Shri Ram Mohan Thirissur brothers.

# Yogi to launch youth empowerment drive on UP Diwas

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a landmark initiative to economically empower the youth of Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is set to launch the Mukhyamantri Yuva Udyam Vikas Abhiyan on January 24, celebrated as UP Diwas. This ambitious programme, touted as the country's largest youth employment drive, aims to create one lakh jobs annually, benefitting 10 lakh youths over the next decade. A standout feature of the initiative is the provision of interest-free and guaranteed loans to support aspiring entrepreneurs in starting their ventures, marking a significant step towards fostering self-reliance and economic growth in the state. Chief Minister Yogi has often emphasised in his speeches that the youth of Uttar Pradesh will become job creators rather than job seekers. In line with this vision, he is launching the country's largest Mukhyamantri Yuva Udyam Vikas Abhiyan on UP Diwas, aiming to provide loans to 25,000 beneficiaries. As part of the campaign, youth will receive interest-free loans to establish their own enterprises. Details about the scheme can be accessed on <https://msme.up.gov.in>, where 400 project reports and around 600 business ideas have been

provided in various formats to assist in starting industries. The department only accepts online applications for availing benefits under this scheme. Principal Secretary (MSME) Alok Kumar stated that as per Chief Minister Yogi's vision, this initiative will serve as a significant milestone in the state's development and will contribute substantially to Uttar Pradesh's goal of achieving a one trillion-dollar economy. Under the campaign, youth aged 21 to 40 years, who have completed at least Class 8 and possess skill training, can apply for interest-free, guarantee-free loans on <https://msme.up.gov.in>. The submitted applications will be forwarded to banks for approval and loan disbursement through an online process. The beneficiary will get the interest subsidy, margin money, subsidy, guarantee fee etc. online while giving the loan online by the banks. Updates on application progress will be communicated via SMS at each stage. The portal developed by the MSME Department offers around 400 project reports and 600 business ideas free of cost. It also provides videos and expert guidance on the establishment and management of various projects. All these resources can be accessed with just a click on the portal.

# Maulana Razvi urges Hindus to allow Muslims to enter Maha Kumbh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Maulana Shahabuddin Razvi Bareilly, a controversial cleric and president of All India Muslim Jamaat, has claimed that 55 bighas of Waqf land are being used for the Maha Kumbh at Prayagraj. He claimed that the event is being held on land owned by the Waqf Board. The Maha Mumbh Mela is commencing from January 13. Maulana Razvi Bareilly said that Muslims of Prayagraj had shown a large heart by allowing the Maha Kumbh Mela on Waqf land, and Hindus should reciprocate by allowing Muslims to enter the event. He slammed the call by All India Akhara Parishad to bar non-Hindus from the Kumbh. Bareilly said, "Akhara Parishad, Naga yanaisya, swamis and babas have banned the entry of Muslims from Kumbh Mela. On the other hand, a Muslim man named Sartaz from Prayagraj has said that the land where preparations are being made for the Kumbh Mela belongs to the Waqf, and it is owned by local Muslims. But see the large-heartedness of Muslims, they have not raised any objections over the 55 bigha of Waqf land being used for the Kumbh." He added that while Muslims have shown a large heart,

Hindu groups are showing narrowness by not allowing Muslims in the Kumbh Mela. However, Hindu leaders have rejected the claims made by the cleric. Hindu Mahasabha president Swami Chakrapani Maharaj said that Maulana Shahabuddin Razvi must be sponsored by Pakistan and "people with a terrorist mindset". He said that the cleric was making a malicious attempt to disturb the Maha Kumbh, and his statements should be investigated. "I believe that immediate action should be taken against people who spoil the atmosphere in this way. FIR should be registered against them and they should be arrested. If such people are out, they will keep talking such nonsense and spoil the atmosphere of the country," Chakrapani Maharaj said. Maulana Razvi has also written a letter to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, urging him to stop the proposed conversions of Muslims to Hinduism during the Maha Kumbh which gets underway in Prayagraj on January 13. Maulana Razvi, in his letter, stated that he has come to know of plans for mass conversion during the Maha Kumbh Mela. He argued that this falls foul of the state's Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2024.

# Head constable booked for changing bribe notes in court

Bareilly (PTI): A head constable has been booked for changing bribe notes in court claiming the original ones were nibbled by rats at the police station where they were stored, officials said on Sunday. The case has been registered against Udayveer Singh, the head constable of Nawabganj police station in Bareilly district, they said. According to Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Mukesh Chandra Mishra, on February 12, 2021, the Anti-Corruption Organisation (ACO) of Uttar Pradesh Police arrested a lekhpal (revenue official) posted in the Nawabganj tehsil while receiving a bribe of Rs 10,000. The ACO team seized 20 bribe notes of Rs 500 denomination each from the accused, besides seizing Rs 80,361, a mobile phone, an Aadhaar card, and a PAN card from his possession. The seized items, including the bribe money, were handed over to Singh. While the cash and other items were later released on court's order, the bribe notes were deposited at the Nawabganj police station. However, during the trial, the head constable didn't produce the bribe notes in the court and instead submitted 20 different Rs 500 currency notes, blaming rats for nibbling on the original ones. Mishra said when Superintendent of Police (City) Manush Parikh investigated the matter, he found that Singh deliberately committed a criminal act to benefit the accused. Based on a report submitted against Singh, an FIR was registered against the head constable on Saturday, police said.

# Transport department gears up to serve pilgrims

PNS ■ MAHAKUNBH NAGAR

In preparation for the grand spiritual event of Maha Kumbh 2025, set to begin on January 13 in Prayagraj, the Yogi Adityanath government is leaving no stone unturned to ensure a seamless and memorable experience for pilgrims. As part of these efforts, employees of the Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC) are undergoing specialised training to improve their behaviour and interaction with pilgrims. The initiative aims to foster a welcoming and respectful atmosphere, ensuring that devotees feel valued throughout their journey. In addition, the Uttar Pradesh Transport Department has mandated police verification for all drivers and conductors involved in Maha Kumbh services. This step ensures that only individuals with clean backgrounds are assigned to serve the pilgrims, minimising any potential security risks.

Despite these stringent measures, if any staff member behaves inappropriately with a devotee, a mechanism has been established to register complaints with the department. With this, the Yogi government aims to ensure that every pilgrim visiting the grand Maha Kumbh leaves with a positive impression of hospitality. To achieve this, training programmes are being conducted to enhance the skills and behaviour of police personnel and roadways staff. Since a large number of pilgrims are expected to travel to Prayagraj by state roadways buses, the Transport Department is focusing on behavioural training for its staff to ensure they interact politely and respectfully with devotees. Additionally, all drivers and conductors have undergone police verification to ensure that no individual with a questionable background is part of the team serving the pilgrims. UPSRTC Regional Manager

of Prayagraj Division, MK Trivedi, stated that police verification has been completed for all drivers and conductors operating buses during the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj. This includes not only the buses originating from Prayagraj but also those arriving from other districts. "Our goal is that every pilgrim leaves with a positive impression of the Transport Department and its staff. To achieve this, continuous behaviour training is being provided to all staff members," Trivedi stated. The staff is being encouraged to interact respectfully with pilgrims and offer them the best possible service. If any pilgrim encounters an issue or experiences inappropriate behaviour from a staff member, they can file a complaint via a toll-free number or directly with the department. Prompt action will be taken to address such grievances, ensuring a smooth and respectful experience for all devotees.

UP POLICE IMPLEMENT DIGITAL KUMBH VISION Uttar Pradesh Police have taken a significant step towards realising the Yogi Adityanath government's vision of a digital Maha Kumbh by implementing a fully digital attendance system for its personnel. Shifting from traditional paper-based records, the attendance of police personnel deployed for the grand event in Prayagraj is now being recorded digitally, saving time and facilitating maintenance of records. All police personnel assigned duty for the Maha Kumbh-2025 are being trained for their roles at the event. Their attendance during the ongoing training sessions is recorded biometrically, saving significant time and simplifying record management. Around 50,000 police personnel will be deployed to ensure the safety of an estimated 40 crore devotees participating in the Maha Kumbh-2025. SSP Kumbh Mela, Rajesh Dwivedi emphasised the importance

of ongoing training, which covers soft skills, disaster management and geographical awareness of the event site. He noted that biometric attendance not only saves time but also enhances record accuracy. "Earlier, it was difficult to maintain a traditional register for attendance, but digital attendance has freed us from these hassles," he remarked. The first and second phases of training, involving over 10,000 police personnel, have already been completed, while the third phase is currently underway. Personnel from nearly all districts of Uttar Pradesh have arrived for duty in the Maha Kumbh. Their complete details have been securely stored in the biometric system, ensuring proper monitoring and management of the workforce during the event. MEDICAL OBSERVATION ROOMS SET UP The Uttar Pradesh government is leaving no stone unturned to ensure safety and health of pilgrims visiting the

upcoming Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj. As part of this effort, the Prayagraj Railway Division has taken essential steps to safeguard the health of pilgrims attending the mega event. Medical observation rooms have been established at railway stations to provide round-the-clock specialised medical facilities. These rooms are equipped to offer immediate and effective healthcare services in case of any emergency. For more serious situations, ambulances will be available to transport patients to nearby railway or city hospitals for further treatment. According to Shashi Kant, Chief PRO of the Prayagraj Railway Division, observation rooms have been established at Prayagraj Junction, Prayag, Subedar Ganj, Naini and Cheeki stations. These observation rooms will be staffed with doctors and medical personnel available 24x7, working in 8-hour shifts. Each observation room will have 15 staff

nurses, 12 pharmacists, 12 hospital attendants and 15 housekeeping assistants. Doctors from the railway hospitals will also provide services as per their duty schedules. To provide quick and high-quality treatment to the pilgrims and devotees attending the Maha Kumbh, the medical observation rooms will be equipped with all the necessary medical tools and medicines. These rooms will have ECG machines, defibrillators, oxygen concentrators, and glucose meters to handle primary medical needs. Amid the cold weather, large crowds, and extensive walking, the rooms will be equipped to provide immediate care for heart patients, sinus issues, and diabetes-related complications. In case of more serious health issues, ambulance services will be available to transfer patients to the nearest railway or city hospitals. The railway administration has coordinated with all major hospitals in the city to ensure smooth medical support.

# Woman raped, family alleges police 'persuade' them to marry her to accused citing pregnancy

Bhadohi (PTI): A married man allegedly raped a 19-year-old woman when she was alone at her home and also filmed the assault, the officer said. The SP said when the woman threatened to lodge a complaint, the accused used the video to blackmail her, threatening to post it online. Out of fear, the woman remained silent and Ali continued to rape her due to which she became pregnant, the officer added. Upon noticing physical changes, her parents confronted her after which she disclosed the incident, the SP said. The woman and her

parents went to lodge a complaint against the accused on September 20, 2024. However, the police persuaded them to agree to a marriage between the woman and Ali, citing her pregnancy, the complaint read. The woman alleged that the marriage was conducted without proper investigation and against her will, Katayayan said. Later in October, the woman got to know that Ali was already married. He lived with his wife at some other place, according to the police. On November 26, the

woman gave birth to a stillborn child at a private hospital, the SP said. The officer said that the woman, who was a victim of mental and physical abuse for several months, submitted a written complaint on January 3, seeking action against Ali. Based on her complaint, a case was registered under section 376 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code. The woman's statement has been recorded and a medical examination was conducted, the police said.

Woman raped, family alleges police 'persuade' them to marry her to accused citing pregnancy

# Kishori Lal slams Kumar Vishwas

Amethi (PTI): Congress MP from Amethi, Kishori Lal Sharma, on Sunday targeted poet Kumar Vishwas for his recent comments on Bollywood couple Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor Khan, saying he has no right to interfere in anyone's personal life. At a recent event in Moradabad, Vishwas, without naming Saif or Kareena, questioned the choice of naming their son Taimur after an "invader". Vishwas had also stoked a controversy in December last year when he took a veiled dig at Shatrughan Sinha and his actor daughter Sonakshi Sinha by

indirectly referring to her interfaith marriage. During a tour of his constituency, Sharma told reporters that Vishwas is a poet of great stature but he should not interfere in anyone's personal life. "Such statements reduce Vishwas' stature... He should not use such language. I do not support his remarks. He had made similar controversial statements in Rajasthan as well. Only he knows what takes over him," the Congress MP said. "Vishwas makes such remarks only when he has some intention. So there must have been some intention for him to make

such a statement (against the Khans)," he added. During his visit, Sharma met the local Congress workers and people of his constituency who came to the party office, assuring them of quickly resolving the issues facing Amethi. He also distributed blankets to some needy people to protect them from the cold. "Service has been a tradition of the Congress, which is continuing in Amethi and Rae Bareilly with the inspiration of the Gandhi family. Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi have always helped the needy, a tradition which continues even today," Sharma said.

Woman raped, family alleges police 'persuade' them to marry her to accused citing pregnancy



# Fog continues to disrupt life in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Foggy conditions on Sunday continued to hit the life in this holy city. However, sunshine during the day provided some relief from biting cold to the local residents. Due to the foggy conditions tourists arrived in less numbers at the internationally famous Ganga ghats, especially Assi, Dashashwamedh, Lalita and Namoo Ghat, in the morning. However, a good number of visitors reached there during the day. The dense fog also affected the flight services badly due to very low visibility at Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport, Babatpur. The speed of trains and buses also slowed down due to the fog. According to information, flight numbers SG-945, AI-406 and 6E-2334 from Delhi; IX-2796 and 6E-897 from Bengaluru, 6E-6719 and IX-2838 from Hyderabad, 6E-7035 from Bhubaneswar and SG-329 from Mumbai and many others landed behind their scheduled time. Besides, several long-distance trains arrived at Varanasi Junction (Cantt) and Banaras railway stations several hours behind schedule. Even trains like Vande Bharat arrived late as 22436 from New Delhi departed 8.30 hours late and the one from Varanasi was rescheduled at 10 pm instead of 3 pm. As most train services from northern states have been



Foggy conditions engulf Ganga ghats in Varanasi on Sunday morning.

badly affected due to foggy conditions, the most popular train from New Delhi, 12560 Shiv Ganga Express arrived at Banaras station 3.35 hours late. Similarly, 12582 New Delhi-Banaras Superfast Express arrived here six hours late while 15128 Kashi Vishwanath Express was cancelled. Besides, 12562 Swatantra Senani Express came here nearly 8.30 hours late, while over a dozen other trains by one to five hours behind their scheduled

time. On the other hand, according to a release of North Eastern Railway (Varanasi Division), in view of operational difficulties due to fog, many trains will remain cancelled from January 6 to 10. They are 55056/ 55055 Gorakhpur-Chhapra-Gorakhpur; 55036/ 55035 Gorakhpur Cantt-Siwan-Gorakhpur Cantt; 55037 / 55038 Siwan-Thawe-Siwan; 55098/ 55097 Gorakhpur Cantt-Narkatiyaganj-Gorakhpur Cantt and 55048 / 55047 Gorakhpur Cantt-

Narkatiyaganj-Gorakhpur Cantt unreserved special trains.

Meanwhile, a senior Samajwadi Party (SP) leader has spoken to the municipal commissioner (MC) over the lack of bonfire arrangement in view of severe cold. Former city president of SP Vishnu Sharma through a phone call told MC Akshay Verma that wood is not being provided to light bonfires at main intersections and other places of the city in severe cold. He said due to the lack of arrangement of bonfires, poor people are facing difficulties. In response, the MC assured the SP leader that wood would be made available in sufficient quantity at main crossings as well as in shelter homes. Besides, amidst dense fog, the activists of Namami Gange spread awareness about cleanliness in the ancient premises of Manikarnika Tirtha. Polythene, clothes and scattered garbage were collected from the bottom of the Ganga river. In coordination with regional (Kashi) coordinator and Municipal Corporation's Swachhata Brand Ambassador Rajesh Shukla pilgrims and devotees were made aware with placards carrying cleanliness slogans. The garbage scattered on the soil of Manikarnika Chakra Pushkarni Kund was collected and handed over to the Municipal Corporation. Chinmay Sharma, Tullu Manjhi, Tinku and sanitation workers of Municipal Corporation were also present.

# Maha Kumbh: Second mock exercise conducted in Kashi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In view of Maha Kumbh-2025, the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) under the guidance of District Magistrate S Rajalingam and Additional District Magistrate (ADM), Finance/Revenue (F/R) Vandita Srivastava, organised a mock exercise for the second time at Kashi Vishwanath Temple (KVT) and Lalita Ghat here on Saturday. The mock exercise was organised as per the guidelines issued by the Uttar Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority (UP SDMA) in view of Maha Kumbh. The main objective of the mock exercise is to ensure proper facilities to the devotees in the district during Maha Kumbh and to ensure that every department deployed in the security system has complete information about each other's physical and human resources so that relief work can be done in an organised manner in the event of an emergency. In view of Maha Kumbh, a large number of devotees are expected to come to Varanasi and their safety is very important. The mock exercise was organised on disaster of stampede, fire and drowning respectively. During the 'Bhagdar' (stampede) exercise, a stampede situation arose when a large number of devotees who had come to KVT quickly went to the other side of the queue in the temple to have darshan. The temple administration immediately informed the control room about it after which the police department as well as the Health and fire departments and district temple administration reached the spot. The police immediately took control of the said area and evacuated the entire place. The 'injured' were immediately taken to the pre-identified SSPG Divisional Hospital Kabirchaura by an ambulance. In view of the stampede situation, the temple administration immediately blocked all its



Mock exercise being conducted in Varanasi for second time on Saturday.

entry gates. During the 'Agnikaand' (fire incident) exercise, in view of the safety of devotees coming to Varanasi during the Maha Kumbh, the fire department practiced rescue in case of fire. In the scenario the temple administration informed the control room about a sudden fire in the temple after which the fire brigade immediately reached the premises with its motorcycle-mounted equipment and the fire was brought under control with the fire extinguisher. There was no damage/loss of life and property in the said scenario. A scene was shown of how the fire is controlled with the help of motor bikes and small four wheelers available with the fire brigade.

Similarly, during the 'Dubna' (drowning) exercise, the incident of drowning of devotees who had come to take bath at Lalita Ghat was shown, in which, ensuring immediate action, the personnel of 11th Battalion National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Varanasi, State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and Water Police skillfully rescued the 'drowning' persons in the river using wet rescue and dry rescue techniques. Along with this, necessary medical assistance was also provided to the affected persons. The NDRF explained in detail to the people present how to save drowning persons, if a person has drunk water, how to remove water from stomach, method of first aid etc. During the mock exercise, a medical post was established and the ambulance of the Health department was present with all the resources. The mock exercise was conducted under the supervision of Additional Chief Executive Officer, UP SDMA, Lucknow, Ramkevali. ACP (Traffic) Anjani Kumar Rai, Semsar Bahadur from Temple Security, Arun Mishra, Inspector Ramyag Shukla from NDRF along with team, SDRF team, Water Police team, Revenue, Fire, Disaster Mitra and Sakhi, Civil Defence etc, representatives of departments actively participated in the mock exercise.

# Director of IAS-BHU appointed BUAT V-C

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Director of Institute of Agricultural Sciences-Banaras Hindu University (IAS-BHU) Prof SVS Raju has been appointed Vice-Chancellor (V-C) of Banda University of Agriculture and Technology (BUAT), Banda. Prof Raju is professor in the Department of Entomology and Agricultural Zoology of the Institute of Agricultural Sciences and has been working in BHU since 1991. He has been actively contributing in various academic and administrative positions and teaching and research. He has been working as a professor since 2008. Prof Raju has obtained Bachelor's and Master's degrees in agriculture from Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh respectively. He obtained PhD degree from



BHU in the year 1990. Under the guidance of Prof Raju, about two dozen researchers have received PhD degrees so far. He is also handling the responsibility of Vice-President of University Sports Board (USB) in BHU. At the same time, he is the chief patron of International Hostel Campus and Dr SRK Hostel. He is also responsible for coordinating the admission of international students. He was appointed Director of the Institute of Agricultural Sciences in August 2023.

# 3 auto-lifters arrested

Kanpur (PNS): The Unnao police arrested three auto-lifters and recovered 10 stolen bikes from their possession on Saturday night. Sadar Kotwali police, SOG and Surveillance team jointly carried out the operation. During a vehicle checking drive at Nirala Nagar trisection the police spotted the three suspects riding two motorcycles and were identified as Pankaj of Singrausi, Unnao; Arman Goswami of Netaji Nagar, Chakeri, Kanpur, and Ayush Verma of Kudebhar, Sultanpur. They confessed that both the bikes were stolen from Kanpur and Unnao.

**CHAMPIONSHIP:** Aryan of Dhampur and Unnati of Prayagraj emerged champions in the UP State Close Squash Championship concluded at the TSH court here. Adarsh Prajapati (8) of Varanasi was adjudged the best player. Eight players were selected from the state to participate in the forthcoming national championship to be held in Uttarakhand.

# Focus on mapping malnourished kids: DM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

An inter-departmental coordination meeting of 100-day intensive tuberculosis (TB) patient search campaign (from December 7, 2024, to March 24, 2025) was organised in the Collectorate auditorium here on Saturday under the chairmanship of District Magistrate S Rajalingam. The DM directed medical officers in charge of urban and rural areas to map vulnerable population, nominate a nodal officer and prepare a micro plan by next week. He said special emphasis should also be given on mapping of malnourished children besides those living in slum and densely populated areas along with other vulnerable populations. He directed the basic shiksha adhikari (BSA) and the district panchayati raj officer to make 'Nikshay Mitras' at their own level and link them with the patients. "In every block, a self-help group (SHG) will be



District Magistrate S Rajalingam reviewing progress of TB search campaign in Varanasi

selected for Poshan Potli, which will be from the village located near the block headquarters. Poshan Potlis should be taken from the SHGs as far as possible and the components of the Poshan Potlis should be determined according to the age of the patients, so that the patients can get maximum benefit", he

said. In this direction, gram pradhans and panchayat secretaries from the gram panchayats and teachers from the schools are to be made 'Nikshay Mitras'. Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal said that action should be started by making a microplan for the

gram panchayats in TB for the year 2025. Necessary testing resources for TB-free gram panchayats should be collected from CSR fund. The DIOS was asked to spread awareness through the NCC and inter college students and provide mental support to the patients. Screening camps should be organised every month in the District Jail and Central Jail. Review of the programme related to TB should be ensured every month, the CDO directed. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said the government has given instructions to find TB patients, examine them and provide them proper treatment by running a 100-day intensive TB campaign, in which sequence action is being taken to make the campaign successful in the district. During this, District Tuberculosis Officer (DTO) Dr Piyush Rai, Chief Medical Superintendent (CMS) of SSPG Hospital Dr SP Singh, in charges of community health centres (CHCs)/primary health centres (PHCs), other medical officers, District Programme Officer (ICDS), DPO, BSA, DIOS, including representatives of District Jail, and Central Jail and officers of other departments, were present.

# Knp Metro successfully installs tunnel ventilation system

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Metro has successfully installed the Tunnel Ventilation System (TVS) across five underground stations from Chunniganj to Kanpur Central under Corridor-1 (IIT to Naubasta). This system is critical for ensuring passenger safety during metro operations approximately 16 metres below ground. The TVS network spans the concourse and platform levels of each station, extending into the underground tunnels. Its key components include tunnel ventilation fans, trackway exhaust fans, air handling units and various types of dampers. These components have been strategically installed in the technical rooms, which occupy over 30 per cent of the underground station area. Together, they form a comprehensive system vital for managing emergencies like fires, ensuring the safety and comfort of passengers. In the event of a fire, the tunnel ventilation fans (TVS system) play a pivotal role in controlling smoke movement, enabling the safe evacuation of passengers. Additionally, track-



way exhaust fans extract hot air produced by metro train air conditioners operating in underground tunnels, preventing heat generated during braking from mixing with the platform's atmosphere. This ensures a comfortable and stable temperature for passengers on platforms and at stations. Other essential components of the tunnel ventilation system include dampers, sound attenuators and air handling units, each serving a specific purpose. Dampers regulate airflow through tunnels, shafts and other structures and they also balance air pressure between adjacent tunnels as trains pass. Nozzle dampers, in particular, can redirect airflow during emergencies. Sound attenuators

minimise the noise produced by tunnel ventilation fans, enhancing passenger comfort. Air Handling Units (AHUs) collect and circulate fresh air sourced from trackway exhaust fans in summer and directly from the environment in winter—ensuring a consistent supply of fresh air to underground stations. The tunnel ventilation system at Kanpur Central is equipped with three trackway exhaust fans, four tunnel ventilation fans, and two air handling units. Additionally, various types of dampers, including fan protection dampers, track release dampers, draft release dampers, nozzle dampers and sound attenuators, have been installed to ensure optimal functionality. Similar arrange-

ments have been made in other four underground stations also. Managing Director of Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Limited (UPMRC), Sushil Kumar, said, "The Kanpur Metro team has successfully installed the tunnel ventilation system, a critical component for ensuring safe underground metro travel. This system has been implemented across five underground stations from Motijheel to Kanpur Central, including Chunniganj, Naveen Market, Bada Chauraha, Nayaganj and Kanpur Central. "The TVS system functions as the 'lungs' of the underground stations, playing a vital role in passenger evacuation during emergencies like fires. It also helps maintain a normal temperature inside the tunnel in case of a train stoppage. The Kanpur Metro team undertook well-coordinated and long-term efforts, progressing system installation alongside civil construction. With the dedication and commitment of the team, we are optimistic that the dream of extending passenger services from IIT to Kanpur Central will soon become a reality."

# Youth meets tragic end

Kanpur (PNS): A bike-borne youth was killed after being hit by a speeding truck in Sachendi police station area on Sunday morning. He came the truck after being hit by it which ran over him due to which he died on the spot. The truck driver escaped leaving the vehicle on the spot. There was a massive jam on Bhaunti highway up to around 10 km on both sides of the road. Police toiled hard to get the body removed and the truck with the help of a crane and restored the traffic movement after around two hours. SO Dinesh Singh Bisht said the mishap took place around 11.30 am on Sunday. In the incident Balram (22) of Ranjipur under Derapur police station, Kanpur Dehat, was killed. When Balram was returning home from Kanpur, the truck hit him from behind in Pratappur village. This led to killing of the youth on the spot. After the police force rushed to spot, the body was sent for an autopsy. Thereafter, with the help of the crane, police impounded the truck while its driver managed to escape from the spot. On the basis of complaint of the kin, action will be initiated against the guilty truck driver. However, raids are on to search of the absconding truck driver, he said. Meanwhile a youth was fatally knocked down by an unidentified speeding vehicle on the highway in Nabipur village under Akbarpur Kotwali police area of Kanpur Dehat on Saturday night. Abhishek (26) of Nabipur was crossing the Kanpur-Jhansi highway around 9 pm when due to thick fog he was hit by an unidentified speeding vehicle and was seriously injured. Outpost incharge, Jainpur, Bhagmal rushed to the spot who, after calling his kin, sent the injured youth to the district hospital where the doctor on emergency duty declared him dead.

# Ideals of Mahamana still inspire society: Mishra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The grand closing and prize distribution of Mahamana Mahotsav-2024 organised under the aegis of Sevagya Sansthanam was held at the Swatantra Bhawan of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Saturday. This festival was organised to commemorate the 163rd birth anniversary of Mahamana Madan Mohan Malaviya, in which more than 3,500 students from more than 50 schools of Varanasi participated. Various academic, cultural and literary competitions were organised in this festival held since the birth anniversary of Mahamana on December 25 last. The closing session began with lighting of lamps and recital of Mangalacharan, after which the BHU Kulgeet was sung. Acharya Mithilashanandinisharan Ji Maharaj of Siddhpeeth Hanuman Niwas Ayodhya, national general secretary of Malaviya Mission Vijay Nath Mishra, member of Uttar Pradesh Education Selection Commission Dr Harendra Rai, and city chief of Sevagya Sansthanam Shivam Pandey were present as the guests. Dr Harendra Rai, presenting the complete report, shared the information about the theme, outline and objectives of the



Concluding function of Mahamana Mahotsav being held at BHU in Varanasi

programme. He said this festival is not only a platform for competition, but also a medium to inspire the all-round development of students and creativity within them. Acharya Mithilashanandinisharan motivated the students and said that Sevagya Sansthan is working as a nursery for character building. He underlined the importance of self-examination and dedication in life. He emphasised the need to transform education for youth from career-oriented to character-oriented. He called for adopting high ideals in life through the verse of Mahabharata 'Na Tvaham Kamaye Rajyam Na Swargam Napunarbhavam'. He

said such events not only develop leadership skills in students, but also awaken social and cultural consciousness in them. Vijay Nath Mishra threw light on the life and thoughts of Mahamana. He said that the ideals of Mahamana still inspire the society. Sharing the objectives of the mission, he said that this effort of Sevagya Sansthan is an excellent medium to connect the new generation with Indian culture, values and ideals of education. The winners of various competitions were honoured in the closing ceremony. Certificates, mementos and scholarships were awarded to the winning students.

# Annual convention of API held

Varanasi (PNS): The annual convention (scientific symposium) of Association of Physicians of India (API), Varanasi Chapter, was held at a hotel in Cantonment area here on Sunday, in which doctors from different parts of the country presented their research papers. The symposium was jointly inaugurated by former Director of Institute of



Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU) and former Rector of BHU Prof

VP Singh, senior professor of IMS-BHU Dr Shyam Sundar and Dr SJ Singh. On the occasion, API Legend Award was given to Dr SB Singh and Dr Ashok Bhatt and API Life Time Achievement Award was given to Prof IS Gambhir and Dr SJ Singh. The programme was conducted by the API Varanasi chapter secretary Dr Akhilesh Singh. The guests were welcomed by the chairman Dr Ashwani Tandon and the vote of thanks was proposed by Dr Manoj Kumar Srivastava. Dr Hemant Gupta, Dr Monica Gupta, Dr Alok Singh, Dr Deepak Gautam, Dr KK Gupta, Dr AK Singh, Dr OP Tiwari, Dr Sanjay Rai, Prof LP Meena, Dr Manoj Yadav, Dr DK Sinha, Dr Nilesh, Dr Ranjan Bhatnagar etc were present.

# Two killed in road accident

Kanpur (PNS): Two youths died when their uncontrolled scooter collided with a road divider on Sarsaul overbridge under Maharajpur police station area on Saturday evening. The incident took place when they were going to Bindki (Fatehpur) from Mahrajpur.

Shiv Kumar (19) of Baijakheda, Maharajpur, along with Ajay (18) of the village was going to Tenduli village to deliver 'khichdi'. However, he lost control over his scooter on the overbridge near Sarsaul on Kanpur-Fatehpur lane and it hit the road divider leaving them seri-

ously injured. At the Sarsaul CHC, Shiv Kumar was declared dead by the doctor while Ajay was referred to LLR (Hallet) Hospital, Kanpur, but he also succumbed to his injury on the way. Sarsaul outpost incharge said both the youths were killed in the road mishap.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Vision for rural India

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

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



2025 highlighted significant achievements in rural development, painting an optimistic picture of progress. While these strides are commendable, a closer examination reveals underlying challenges that must be addressed to ensure holistic and sustainable rural transformation. PM Modi emphasised healthcare advancements, noting the establishment of over 1.5 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs and the growing reach of telemedicine in rural areas. These initiatives reflect substantial progress; however, challenges such as a shortage of trained healthcare professionals, limited infrastructure, and inconsistent internet access in remote villages continue to hinder equitable healthcare delivery.

Agriculture has been a central focus of rural development efforts, with financial assistance under PM-KISAN and a significant increase in agricultural loans helping farmers enhance productivity. Yet, structural problems persist in the agrarian sector, including reliance on unpredictable monsoon, insufficient crop diversification and market volatility. The protests against contentious agricultural reforms also highlight the need for more inclusive policy-making and effective stakeholder engagement. The Prime Minister highlighted the sharp reduction in rural poverty, which has reportedly fallen below 5 per cent from 26 per cent in 2012. While this represents significant progress, the persistence of rural inequality and exclusion of marginalised communities from development initiatives cannot be ignored. Poverty metrics alone do not capture the broader challenges of deprivation, including limited access to quality education, healthcare and social mobility. Infrastructure gaps, such as unreliable road connectivity, inadequate digital networks, and inconsistent electricity supply, limit the potential of rural economies. Furthermore, rural India's heavy dependence on agriculture underscores the urgent need for economic diversification and the creation of jobs in manufacturing and services. Prime Minister's vision is indeed laudable but a lot needs to be done for upliftment of rural masses.

### PICTALK



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

# Harmony: A prerequisite for national unity



ATUL SEHGAL

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

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

It is time to review and relook at the elements that go into building and strengthening communal harmony. With the world in the terrible throes of wars at several locations, it is perhaps time to strengthen communal harmony and amity globally, particularly in our society and not to allow it to be undermined. History has been written largely by the conquerors of countries and the governing elite. We often do not have true accounts of history do not read true history or otherwise are inclined to interpret facts wrongly, driven by our deep-seated prejudices.

If we look closely at the picture and analyse it dispassionately, we shall find that it is generally the politicians and rulers who incite communal violence for their own selfish needs or vile vested interests. Often, these acts of incitement are obscured through disinformation campaigns. There are cultural and ideological differences between communities. What to talk of mainstream religions like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity or Buddhism, there are major and minor variants of these religions and sub-ideological sects whose number touch-



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



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

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

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### ISRO EMBARKS DOCKING MISSION

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

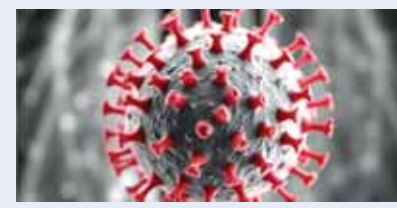
A manned foray to the moon and the operation of the country's first space station is not possible without it. It could also open up opportunities for India's space research agency to collaborate with global missions that require docking facilities. The success of missions like Chandrayaan 3 and Aditya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

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

### RELIEF FOR BHOPAL RESIDENTS

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

### HMPV virus outbreaks spark panic



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

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

Dattaprasad Shirodkar | Mumbai

### MELANISTIC LEOPARD SPOTTED AGAIN

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

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

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## Embracing your unique journey to success

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

How often have you beaten yourself up saying you don't measure up to others in terms of skillsets and success? How often have you undervalued your accomplishments with a desultory wave of hand accompanied by a "Oh, this is something everyone does" or "I haven't done anything great"? Chances are that we have done it a greater number of times than what is good for our self-esteem and confidence. A student of mine recently approached me for a review of her college admission essay wherein she had not highlighted many of her strengths that could catch the attention of the admission officer. "Oh, ma'am, these are things everyone in our school does. This isn't anything extraordinary," she said. I sat her down and explained: "We aren't worried about what others are doing. Our focus should be on what we have done so far and how it has been of consequence to us and others." The biggest reason for our disenchantment with our lives in this pacy world is we often undermine our capabilities by trying to match them with



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

a speaker on the stage, the mere fact that she is doing something that many people dread to do and evokes a standing ovation is a matter of great pride. Every little step that takes us forward is significant, not when we think if we are unique by contrast with another, but by how far we have come from where we began. True growth is not a race gauged by how others are performing but by the milestones, we cross on our journeys. Our fixation with comparison often blinds us to our progress. The yardstick of success is never universal—what feels ordinary to one could be an extraordinary triumph for another. Yet, we diminish our efforts simply because they don't mirror someone else's. We forget that personal achievements, however modest they seem, are stepping stones to greater accomplishments. The courage someone musters to speak in public for the first time, or the quiet resilience it takes to rise from personal setbacks—these are victories. They may not be headline-worthy, but they carry profound significance in shaping

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



ASHA IYER KUMAR





## FIRST COLUMN

## GOD IS THE SOLE CONTROLLER

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



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

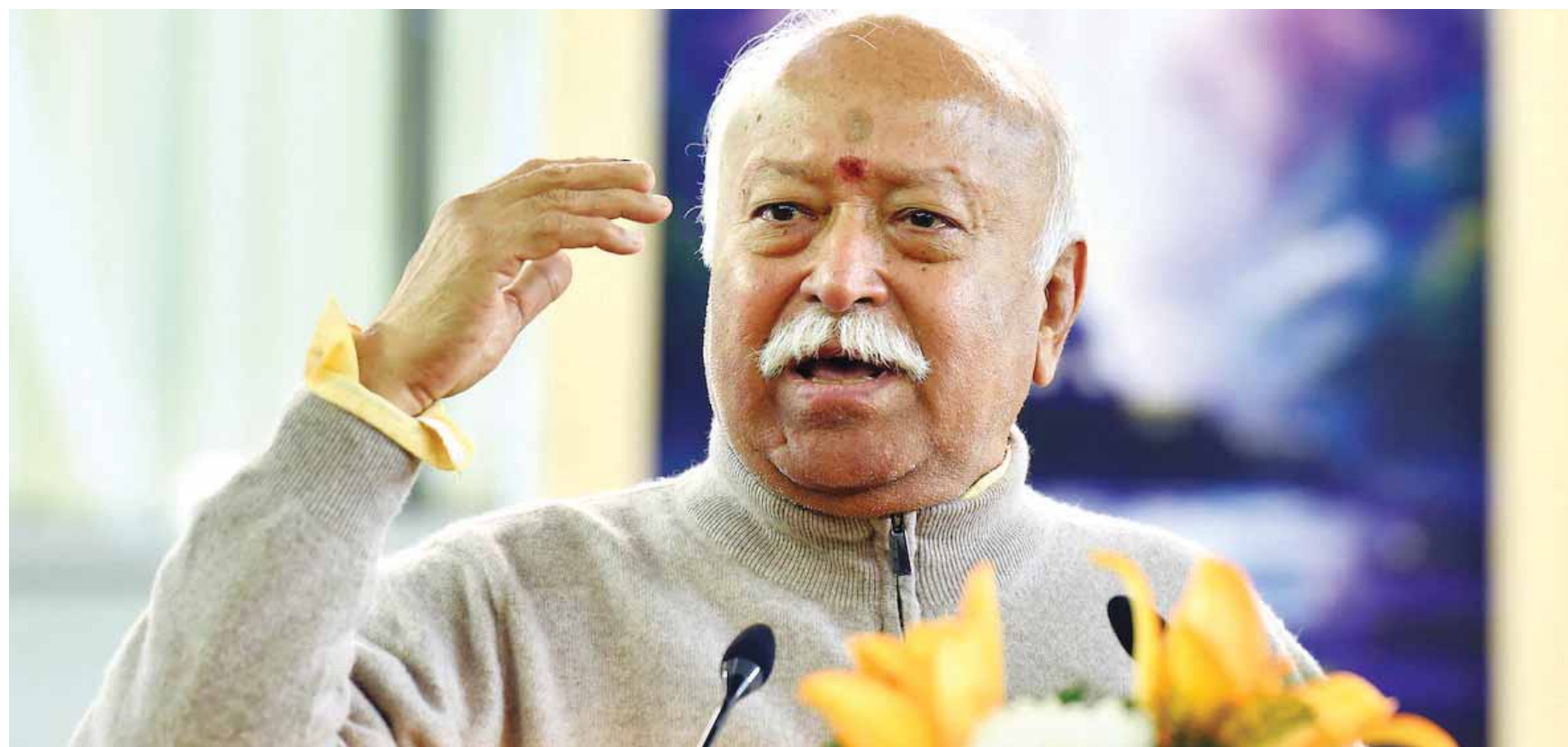
(The writer is a spiritual guide and teacher; views are personal)

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



SUKHDEV SINGH

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



Delivering a Sahjeevan Vyakhyannamala series lecture on the topic, India—the Vishavguru, the RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat expressed his concern over the recent upsurge of 'Mandir-Masjid' disputes and pointed out: "After Ram Mandir, some think they can become leaders of Hindus by raking up similar issues in new places". Rejecting the practice, he said, "This is not acceptable." Echoing his comment on Gyanvapi Masjid that "We look for a Shivaling beneath every mosque," implying that we should not, he cautioned: "The days of hegemony are gone," and that now "People choose their representatives, who run the government." Questioning the "language of dominance," he acknowledged the pluralistic nature of Indian society, where 'tradition' allows people to live in harmony while following their respective faiths. Drawing a comparison of India with the world, where similarity is the principle of unity, for India, he said, "Diversity is an ornament of unity, and we should respect and accept it." Rejecting hatred, malice, enmity, and suspicion daily under the burden of the past, he ruled out the 'majority-minority' binary and emphasised, "Everyone is equal here." To be a Vishavguru, India should be a nation of people who can rise above caste and religious differences. By what he has said, Bhagwat has targeted more than one point while acknowledging the reality of about 200 million Muslims besides the Christians, Sikhs, and others in India, on the one hand, and the geopolitical realities, on the other. If that is so, then the word 'Hindu' needs to be accepted as an Arabic-Persian cognate of the Sanskrit 'Sindu' and 'Hindustan' as a reference to the land of Hindus, i.e., the people living beyond the river Sindhu, but not a place of and for the people of a specific religion. The historical chronicles state that the river 'Sindu' was pronounced as 'Indus' by the Greeks



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Its wisdom extends across diverse fields such as management, leadership, psychology, and medicine. For example, many prestigious The Relevance of Beeja Sanskara and Garbha Sanskara A lesser-known yet significant



KASHINATH SAMAGANDI

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

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

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

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

**Ayurvedic Insights on Foetal Development**

The Gita's teachings influence Ayurvedic principles, particularly in prenatal care. It identifies six essential Bhavas contributing to foetal development: Matruja Bhava (mother's qualities) Pitruja Bhava (father's qualities) Atmaja Bhava (soul connection) Satmyaja Bhava (compatibility) Rasaja Bhava (nutrition) Satvaja Bhava (mental stability) These emphasise the importance of parental health, nutrition, emotional well-being, and spiritual align-



ment in shaping the child's future. Such principles form the core of Garbha Sanskara practices, increasingly recognised in modern prenatal care for their holistic approach. **The Balanced Mind:** Sthitaprajna One of the Gita's most profound teachings is the concept of Sthitaprajna. This idea of remaining unaffected

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

**Holistic Health Through Integration**

The Gita advocates an integrated approach to Ahar (diet), Vihar (lifestyle), Nidra (sleep), Achar (conduct), and Vichar (thoughts). These elements must work cohesively to promote comprehensive health and wellness. This holistic philosophy supports inter-science and intra-science integration in medicine. Intra-science integration ensures that all aspects of a medical system

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

**Holistic Development and Liberation:**

The Gita offers a roadmap for holistic self-development, encompassing physical, mental, and spiritual growth. Its teachings on Dharma (duty), Karma (action), and Bhakti (devotion) provide practical guidance for leading a purposeful and ethical life. Moreover, the Gita provides insights into personal development, emotional mastery, and the attainment of Moksha (liberation).

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

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

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



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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

"Our Constitution gives us fundamental rights and we are conscious of those fundamental rights but there are fundamental duties also. Nations blossom, nationalism is nurtured, growth is secured, harmony is stabilised when every

citizen of the country believes and subscribes to fundamental duties. For civic duties, you as a disciplined member of the force can really be torch-bearers," he added.

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

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

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

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

In his address, the vice president also emphasised that



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

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

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

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

"A rise that is incremental for last decade or so, a rise that is envy of the world, a rise that is positively impacting every person in this country," he said.

Dhankhar said the month-long camp, with convergence of

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"To reflect on our digital pen-

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

It will feature a virtual address by chief guest Christine Carla Trinidad and Tobago, according to the Ministry of External Affairs.



The theme of the convention is 'Diaspora's Contribution to Viksit Bharat'.

President Droupadi Murmu will deliver the valedictory address on January 10. She will confer the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards 2025 on select members of the Indian diaspora to recognise their achievements. India's economic growth, pol-

icy reforms and the country's developmental trajectory in several key sectors will be showcased at the convention with an aim to strengthen the country's connect with its diaspora, people familiar with the preparation for the event said.

The country will also be showcased as an attractive investment destination, they said.

This year, the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention is being organised by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in partnership with the Odisha government.

Prime Minister Modi will also inaugurate four exhibitions at the PBD convention, including one titled 'Vishwaroop Ram - The Universal Legacy of Ramayana'.

This exhibition would present the timeless epic of Ramayana through a curated juxtaposition of traditional and contemporary art forms, the MEA said on Sunday.

The second exhibition will be on the diaspora's contribution to technology and Viksit Bharat. It will acknowledge the contributions of the Indian diaspora to the development of technology in the world.

Another exhibition would be on the spread and evolution of the Indian diaspora in the world. It will showcase rare documents of people who migrated from Mandvi in Gujarat to Muscat in Oman. The PBD convention will have five thematic plenary sessions including one on 'Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers: Stories of Migrant Skills' and another titled 'Beyond Borders: Diaspora Youth Leadership in a Globalised World'.

The third plenary will be 'Green Connections: Diaspora's Contributions to Sustainable Development'.

Another will be 'Diaspora Divas: Celebrating Women's Leadership and Influence -- Nari Shakti'.

The MEA said the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas will also be held on January 8.

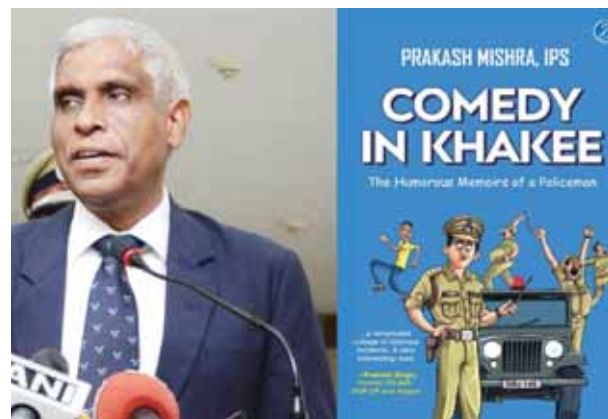
## Former CRPF DG Prakash Mishra pens 'humorous' memoir

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

The book, of course, does not name anyone. The memoir recounts how the son of a district magistrate in Odisha "loved to laugh, even at silly things, much to the annoyance of others". Mishra, a 1977-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, retired in 2016 from the post of director general (DG) of



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

overshadows the joys of life, 'Comedy in Khaakee' seeks to remind us the power of humour and the importance of laughter," Mishra writes in his book, which is set to release on January 11 in Delhi.

The book, much on the lines of the "humour in uniform" columns that appear in various publications globally, contains anecdotes, musings and observations about a variety of human beings and cir-

cumstances the former top cop observed while being in school, during his training at the National Police Academy and various stints with the Odisha Police.

He admits to playing pranks, sometimes bordering on the dangerous, along with his twin brother during his early days and later with his "partners-in-crime" friends and batchmates. The book describes an incident of a comrade at the residence of his senior -- a deputy inspector general -- collapsing while the officer was sitting on it and tales of "sumptuous" feasts being organised by police personnel for their seniors during routine police station inspections.

"There was a particular officer of the rank of commissioner, who used to love this kind of arrangement. I had heard that once, during an inspection of the office of the subdivisional officer, he was given such a sumptuous

lunch. Having eaten his full, he retired for an afternoon siesta," Mishra writes in the book.

The characters, including an "uncanny boss" who ended an important meeting as he had got offended with the "pink napkins" served with potato chips, remain unnamed. The 198-page book is peppered with anecdotes and repartee that went around in the police establishment during Mishra's tenure while dealing with a multitude of circumstances -- protests, riot-like situations or during routine practice at the firing range for cops.

The book is "for the jesters among us who remind us not to take ourselves too seriously and bring light into our lives with their wit and charm," according to Mishra.

The retired IPS officer confesses in the book that it was in his school that he learnt "rascals can be of different types."

## NIA arrests PFI member for funding plot

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA has arrested a cadre of the Popular Front of India (PFI) for channelising funds from Dubai for the banned outfit to further its unlawful activities in India, an official statement issued on Sunday said. A team of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested Mohammad Sajjad Alam of East Champaran district, Bihar, on Saturday as soon as he landed at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport here from Dubai, UAE, it said.

An arrest warrant had been issued against Alam, a trained cadre of the PFI, by a special NIA court. A lookout circular (LOC) had also been issued against him, the statement said. According to the NIA, the accused was involved in channelising illegal funds from Dubai to PFI cadres in Bihar through a UAE, Karnataka and Kerala-based syndicate. The funds were used for pro-



moting the banned outfit's criminal and unlawful activities, the NIA said.

The case, which was initially registered by Phulwari Sharif police in Bihar in July 2022, relates to PFI cadres' involvement in unlawful and anti-national activities.

The cadres conspired to create an atmosphere of terror and spread religious enmity between members of different religions and groups through activities prejudicial to the maintenance of peace and harmony in the country, the statement said. Aimed at disrupting

public tranquillity and causing disaffection against India, their activities involved the use of criminal force to advance the PFI ideology of establishing Islamic rule in India as envisaged in the organisation's vision document, "India 2047: Towards Rule of Islam in India, Internal Document: Not for circulation", the probe agency said.

The NIA, which took over the case days after it was registered by police, has charge-sheeted 17 accused in the case. Alam is the 18th accused to be arrested in the case.

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

PTI ■ JAMMU

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the newly created Jammu railway division through virtual mode on Monday, paving the way for efficient management of train services in the northernmost region of India. With the establishment of the new railway division in Jammu, a long-standing demand of people of the region has been fulfilled. This milestone event comes ahead of the much-awaited inauguration of train services to Kashmir from Katra, with the final trial run scheduled for Tuesday.

"The prime minister will inaugurate the Jammu railway division through virtual mode

from New Delhi tomorrow," an official said.

In Jammu, the event will be attended and addressed by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and Member of Parliament Jugal Kishore Sharma. Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh is also expected to participate.

Headquartered in Jammu, the newly created division will involve the reorganization of the Firozpur Division. It will include the following sections under its jurisdiction, including Pathankot-Jammu-Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla (423 route km), Bhogpur-Sirwal-Pathankot (87.21 route km), Batala (excluding)-Pathankot (68.17 route km) and Pathankot-



Joginder Nagar (narrow gauge section, 163.72 route km). The total length of these sections will be 742.1 kilometres. Presently, the Indian Railways operates 17 zones with 68 divisions across the country, he Railway officials said the final jurisdiction will be determined based on the Detailed Project Report.

The division will feature modern, hi-tech facilities, leveraging the full potential of Information Technology (IT), they said. With the creation of this division, the Indian Railways will now have 70 divisions under its 17 zones. The newly established division will oversee operations on India's iconic rail projects, including the country's first cable-stayed rail bridge, the Anji Khad Bridge and

the world's highest railway arch bridge over the Chenab River at Kauri.

The Chenab Rail Bridge, located in Reasi district, stands 359 metres (1,178 feet) above the riverbed, making it 35 metres taller than the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The Jammu division will also manage the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Railway Link (USBRL) project, which is now nearing completion.

The Anji Khad Bridge has a total length of 473.25 metres, including a 120-metre viaduct and a 94.25-metre central embankment. Currently, the railway services in Jammu and Kashmir are managed by the Firozpur Division of Northern Railways.



# Delhi fog disrupts trains, delays flights for third consecutive day

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A thick blanket of fog covered Delhi on Sunday morning, disrupting flight and train schedules in the national capital for the third consecutive day in a row. The city also witnessed a dip in temperature, accompanied by cold wave conditions. However, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast light rain for Monday bringing a likely respite. "Dense fog conditions during late night to early morning hours is likely to continue over parts of North India till 09th January 09," it added. According to the flight tracking website, Flightradar24, over 200 flights have been delayed and

30 flights have been cancelled. The visibility at Palam was zero for 3.5 hours from 4 am to 7.30 am on Sunday. This was better than the nine hours of zero visibility conditions on Saturday, said the IMD. The visibility improved over Palam to 100 m at 8.30 am as the wind speed increased from 10 kmph to 13 kmph. At Safdarjung, minimum visibility of 50 m was reported at 5.30 am. The dense fog conditions lifted and moderate fog was later reported at 8.30 am as the wind speed picked up from 4 kmph to 6 kmph, said the IMD. "Compared to Saturday's 9-hour zero visibility spell, Palam experienced a relatively shorter duration of 3.5 hours of zero visibility on Sunday,"

the IMD added. According to Delhi airport officials, no flights were diverted on Sunday. The Indra Gandhi International (IGI) Airport issued a passenger advisory at 12.10 pm. "Low visibility procedures are still in progress at Delhi Airport. However, there has been no impact on flight operations. Passengers are requested to contact the airline concerned for updated flight information," the advisory reads. Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL) operates around 1300 flight movements daily. "Due to adverse weather conditions, flights to/from Delhi, Amritsar, Chandigarh, Kolkata and Lucknow are impacted," IndiGo said in a

post on X at 12.59 am. Several trains at New Delhi Railway Station were also delayed due to the dense fog conditions. Meanwhile, the air quality in Delhi remained in the 'very poor' category for the fourth consecutive day on Sunday. Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) reading at 1 pm was 339 ('very poor' category). The air quality is generally impacted when the smog thickens and temperatures dip, along with reduced wind speeds. The minimum temperature on Sunday was 9.4 degree Celsius, which is above normal by 3 notches. The maximum temperature was stood at 18.6 degree Celsius, which is below normal by one notch. Palam was the cold area which recorded 7.8 degree Celsius.

# Villages in Lakhimpur Kheri gripped by tiger fear

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LAKHIMPUR KHERI

Panic is spreading across Lakhimpur Kheri after a tiger mauled two people in back-to-back attacks, leaving a teenager dead and a man critically injured. With six deaths reported in six months due to tiger attacks, residents are demanding urgent action from the forest department. In the most recent attack on Sunday morning, Rozali (45), a resident of Baba Purwa village in the Tikunia Kotwali area, was attacked while working in his fields. The tiger pounced on him, tearing into his face and ears. Startled by his cries, nearby farmers rushed to his aid, armed with sticks, and managed to scare the tiger away. Rozali was rushed to the district hospital, where doctors say his condition remains critical. "We are living a nightmare," said Shakir Ali, a village elder.

"Every step outside feels like stepping into a predator's territory. The forest department told us this is a danger zone, but where are the warning signs or patrol teams? They seem to be waiting for more lives to be lost." Just a day earlier, Parasram, a 14-year-old boy from Padhua village, was fatally attacked while grazing cattle. The tiger dragged him nearly 500 meters into the forest before villagers' loud cries forced it to flee. Parasram could not be saved. His grieving mother collapsed upon hearing the tragic news, and the village mourns the young boy's loss. Adding to the string of attacks, a woman in Karibaredi village was ambushed on Friday while working in a sugarcane field. Illagers managed to chase the tiger away, and she is currently undergoing treatment at the Mitauli

Community Health Center. Sugarcane fields in the area, known for their dense cover, have become a haven for tigers, creating a deadly overlap between human activity and wildlife. Residents feel abandoned by the authorities, accusing the forest department of negligence. "Every attack is met with the same response: paperwork and no action," said Mukesh Verma, another farmer. "We've asked for patrolling teams and proper safety measures, but nothing concrete has been done. How are we supposed to protect ourselves with just sticks?" The forest department has yet to comment on the recent attacks or announce any new measures. In the meantime, fear continues to loom large over these villages as residents face the grim reality of venturing into their fields amidst an ever-present danger.

# Delhi Police deport illegal migrant from Palam village

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A Bangladeshi man living illegally in south west Delhi's Palam area was identified and deported. According to the police, the accused has been identified as Mohammad Shahidul Islam who had been living in Palam village for three years. He was deported through the Foreigners Regional Registration Office. Deputy Commissioner of Police (South-west) Surendra Choudhary said, "During routine patrolling in the jurisdiction of Palam Village police station, the staff received information from a secret informer about an illegal migrant seeking accommodation in Manglapuri. The individual was pointed out by the informer."

# BJP leaders' car hit by dumper in Sambalpur, two killed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ SAMBALPUR

Two BJP leaders were killed after a dumper hit their car in Odisha's Sambalpur district in the early hours of Sunday, police said. The deceased were identified as Debendra Nayak and Muralidhar Chhuria. Nayak was BJP's Goshala mandal president, while Chhuria is a former sarpanch. Both of them were close to senior BJP leader Nauri Naik.

The incident happened around 1.30 am on NH 53 in the Burla police station area. There were six people in the car, including the driver, and they were returning home in Kardaola from Bhubaneswar, police said. All six persons were taken to a nearby hospital where doctors declared two of them dead. The injured were undergoing treatment there. Suresh Chanda, who was injured in the accident, alleged, "The vehicle hit our car from behind twice. Suspecting

someone trying to hit our vehicle intentionally, the driver turned the car towards a rural road from the highway near Kantapalli Square. Still, the dumper chased our vehicle and hit it badly. As a result, the car overturned." Chanda said he was conscious till the dumper hit their car twice on the highway, but lost sense when it hit the third time. "I am sure that someone intentionally caused the accident. By mistake, one can

hit a vehicle once. Why would someone be hit thrice from behind?" asked the injured BJP worker. After visiting the injured persons, Naik, a former MLA of Rengali, alleged that it was not an accident but a deliberate collision. "Someone has deliberately hit their vehicle thrice," he claimed. SP Mukesh Kumar Bhamoo said, "We have seized the dumper and detained its driver."

# BJP leaders target Kejriwal, Atishi at rally

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

South Delhi BJP MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Sunday launched a scathing attack on AAP supreme Arvind Kejriwal and Chief Minister Atishi, comparing them to Mughal rulers and Britishers and stated that they have looted the Capital for the past 10 years. In a public rally in Rohini, Bidhuri said, "The truth is that Delhi was looted by Ghoris, Ghaznis, Nadir Shah, Timur Lang, and the British while in the last 10 years, Arvind Kejriwal and Atishi have plundered Delhi. These looters have to be thrown out of Delhi." UP He added that the crowd gathered at the rally is a testament to the fact that at least 60 candidates from the BJP will win the Delhi elections and form BJP government in the national Capital. Further, in his address, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva said, "Today, at this rally, I feel the wave of transformation that

will not only give Delhi but the entire country a new direction. A new hope has been born in Delhi." New Delhi BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj said, "Just as Delhiites gave all seven parliamentary seats to BJP in the Lok Sabha elections and made Narendra Modi the Prime Minister for the third time, this time, the public is determined to bring BJP to power in the Assembly." Meanwhile, the Chief Minister Atishi congratulated the people of Delhi and said, "Today, the RRTS line is being inaugurated in Delhi. The RRTS, a joint effort of the Central Government, Delhi Government, UP Government, and Haryana Government, is connecting the NCR region with Delhi. The first RRTS stretch from Sahibabad to New Ashok Nagar is being inaugurated today. The Delhi Government has also invested Rs 1,260 crore in the RRTS line being built from Delhi to Meerut, as it will boost the economic development of Delhi."

# Punjab officials face SC over Dallewal's health

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear Monday a contempt petition against the Punjab chief secretary and director general of police for non-compliance of an order directing medical aid to farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who is on an indefinite hunger strike. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kottiswar Singh is scheduled to hear the matter. The top court had earlier pulled up the Punjab Government and said its officials and some farmer leaders were making irresponsible statements in the media over attempts to break Dallewal's indefinite fast. The court had come down heavily on the Punjab

Government for not moving Dallewal to a hospital even as it doubted the intention of the agitating farmers for resisting availability of medical aid to their septuagenarian leader. On December 20, the apex court put the onus on Punjab government officials and doctors to decide on his hospitalisation. The court said Dallewal, 70, could be moved to the makeshift hospital set up within 700 metres of the protest site at Khanauri border point between Punjab and Haryana. Dallewal has been on an indefinite fast at the Khanauri protest site since November 26 to press the Centre to accept the farmers' demands, including a legal guarantee of minimum support price for crops.

# Special category visas for international students

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Furthermore, they are available in different levels, from Undergraduate (Bachelors), Post-graduate (Masters), Doctoral level (PhD) and certification-based courses. Due to the availability of an array of options (in courses), the students have the flexibility to choose the course of their interest and study in premier Indian institutes. Furthermore, the process to get on board with SII is relatively easy and can be done through its online application submission, seeking admission to students' choice of programmes and further processing of applications for seeking

admission, the officials said. Students can get started right away by completing the Registration, by clicking on the 'Register Now' tab. The students are required to fill in simple details such as name, country, date of birth, mobile number and email ID. Every student aspiring to complete their higher education in India and applying to study in India must have their unique student SII ID as this ID is what will help them to access their dashboard, track the progress of college and course applications, visa/e-visa, and other higher education in India-related processes. No student SII ID means no chance of studying or moving to India, the officials added.

# GRAP III revoked following marginal improvement...

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"Delhi's average AQI has been consistently improving as at 2PM it clocked 348, at 3PM it recorded 343, which further improved to 339 in the 4PM AQI Bulletin provided by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), and again improved to 335 at 5PM, clearly indicating a downward trend. Keeping in view the disruptive nature of restrictions under Stage-III of GRAP impacting a large number of stakeholders and public as well as considering the trend of improvement in the average AQI of Delhi, the GRAP Sub-Committee unanimously decides to revoke Stage-III of revised GRAP in the entire NCR,

with immediate effect," it said. "Construction & Demolition project sites and industrial units etc. which have been issued specific closure orders on account of violations/non-compliances of various statutory directions, rules, guidelines etc. under no circumstances shall resume their operations without any specific order to this effect from the Commission," read the order. While Stage-III measures are no longer in effect, the CAQM has urged the public to continue adhering to the citizen charter under Stage-II guidelines, especially considering the ongoing winter season when meteorological conditions can vary unpredictably.

# Bidhuri shoots from the hip; Cong fumes, BJP distances

From page 3

"Some people are making statements on social media for political gain with a wrong perception based on a statement given by me in some context. My intention was not to insult anyone. But still if anyone has been hurt then I express my regret," Bidhuri also said in a post on X. However, even Bidhuri's party members are trying to distance themselves from the controversial remarks with Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva asking BJP leaders to keep a control on their language. "I have not heard the entire statement of Ramesh Bidhuri but I think that all the women, who are in politics, face a lot of difficulties. So, we should not use such statements and keep control on our language," he said.

The BJP leader added that he would also tell Congress that when such remarks are made against BJP's MP Hema Malini, they don't stop it. "Having said that, respect for women and control over our language is our duty and such statements are not welcomed by us," he stated. Meanwhile, Delhi Chief Minister Atishi strongly criticized Bidhuri for his 'sexist' remarks, calling it a 'reflection of the BJP's anti-women mindset'. She also questioned the BJP's ability to ensure women's safety in Delhi, given the attitudes and behavior displayed by its leaders. The Kalkaji MLA further expressed her confidence in the people of Delhi, particularly women, to respond to such actions in the upcoming elections. "I believe that not only the people of Kalkaji but also the citizens of

Delhi, especially the women, will give a fitting response to the BJP for these comments and this mindset in the upcoming elections," she added. Congress candidate from Kalkaji and Mahila Congress president Alka Lamba lashed out at Bidhuri and accused him of "insulting" women once again in his "usual indecent language". "Will the public in Kalkaji have such (a person) who cares neither for the dignity of the House (Parliament) nor respects the women," she said in a post on X. She demanded Bidhuri to tender a public apology for his statement and asked the senior BJP leaders to clear their stand on the issue. The Mahila Congress workers led by Lamba also torched an effigy of Bidhuri over his alleged statement against Gandhi.

The statement was made by Bidhuri during campaigning in Kalkaji constituency on Saturday, one of his aides said. Delhi Congress President Devender Yadav said that Gandhi has stood for women empowerment and Bidhuri's objectionable statement reflected BJP's anti-women attitude. "If BJP respects the women of the country, it should ask Bidhuri to tender a public apology forthwith," he said. The former two time Lok Sabha MP from South Delhi and three time MLA from Tughalaqabad constituency is not new to controversies surrounding his public statements. Earlier last year, Bidhuri invited widespread condemnation over his outburst during a Lok Sabha session, targeting then BSP MP Danish Ali. His behaviour was referred to the Privileges Committee of the Lok Sabha.

# Strict anti-spam norms on anvil

From page 3

TRAI's 2025 to-do list also includes framing recommendations for network authorisation, new authorisation framework for broadcasting, and revamp of national numbering plan for fixed line, while work will continue on combating and curbing spam calls and pesky messages. TRAI is in the process of operationalising system of separate 160 series for service or transactional calls by principal entities (say banks, insurance companies or other service providers) to differentiate them from promotional calls. Currently, both types of calls are being routed under 140 series, which will henceforth be used only for promotional calls. Lahoti said the regulator will firm up its recommendations on millimeter wave spectrum band (auction of spectrum in 37-37.5 GHz, 37.5-40 GHz and 42.5-43.5 GHz bands) in about a month's time and also bring out a consultation paper on backhaul spectrum by March this year. "Another thing which we will be working on is the digital

consent acquisition. Although the provision for this exists in the regulation (TCCCPR), the practical constraint has been the legacy consents... Because there are volumes of consent which have been acquired on paper or reside in the past systems of principal entities, the challenges has been about how to take those consents onboard to the DLT, because you cannot completely discard them," Lahoti said. TRAI plans to work with all stakeholders to find a workable solution, to ensure such onboarding and scrubbing does not cause any disruptions. "Presently, if you receive message or a call from a particular service provider or seller and you complain that this is spam, they are able to say that no, we have the consent of this particular subscriber on paper. Still, this is not on record, on the system, but with the principal entities. So we want to move to a system where all these consents come on the DLT platform," he said. "The problem is how to onboard the consents which are already there and how to provide the consumer an

option that if he/she has not given that consent, they should be allowed to exit," he said, adding TRAI's pilot, which starts in January, will rope in select service providers and principal entities to devise and test a mechanism by which the past consents, can be migrated onto DLT. There should be a cut-off date beyond which legacy and paper-based consents would no longer be valid but that is a massive time-consuming exercise, he said. TRAI will also bring-out new, tighter regulation for spam control in a month, he said referring to August discussion paper on 'Review of the Telecom Commercial Communications Customer Preference Regulations, 2018' where the regulator among other issues had sought stakeholder view on whether a higher tariff should be introduced for calls and SMS-es beyond a certain limit in a graded manner. The regulator in the consultation paper mooted that telecom subscribers making over 50 calls or sending out even 50 SMS a day, along with certain other markers, should be

scrutinised as a potential pesky callers. About recent reports of Department of Telecom (DoT) seeking clarity from TRAI on telcos' bank guarantee encashment to recover fines against violation of regulatory provisions related to anti-spam norms, Lahoti said, "after the DoT asked this question to us, we already identified the particular licence clauses which were violated, and informed the DOT that these are licence conditions which were violated, and now they have to take action, including the amount of financial disincentives which is outstanding against them." On the industry pushback on the voice-only STVs, Lahoti said that the regulator has to take a balanced view after taking all aspects into consideration. "We have to take a balanced view, after taking the interest of both sides into consideration...You cannot compel the consumer to buy data, unless they want to. You can encourage them to buy data, not force them to buy data...Do your marketing, education, we are not stopping you..."

# RRTS brings Meerut closer to delhi

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He said, "Projects launched by PM joint venture between Delhi govt, Centre; reflects AAP's commitment to city's development." Those who say that the AAP keeps fighting; today's inauguration is an example that shows that AAP only works for the people of Delhi. Jo log ye aarop lagate hain ki AAP laddi bahot hai, ye joint udghatan un logon ko jawab hai (Those who accuse AAP of always being confrontational, this joint inauguration is a response to them)." Kejrival said in a press conference. Referring to the challenges

faced by his party, he claimed AAP leaders were imprisoned and tortured but maintained their focus on governance. They sent our top leadership to jail - but the atrocities that happened against us, we didn't make that an issue - otherwise these projects would not have been inaugurated. Agar apne par huye atyachaar ko hum dil pe le lete toh aaj ye dilli metro ki line nahi banti, iska udghatan nahi hua hota (If we had taken the injustices done to us to heart, this Delhi Metro line would not have been built, and its inauguration would not have happened today)" he said. In a veiled attack on Modi,

Kejrival said "PM Modi in 2020 had promised repeal of Section 81 and Section 33 of Delhi Land Reform Act along with land ownership rights & alternative plots for farmers. "Only Centre can repeal Section 81 and Section 33; Delhi Assembly has passed resolutions twice and sent them to Centre demanding it. The prime minister must answer why Delhi Master Plan 2021 hasn't been notified & why Delhi Land Pooling Policy hasn't been notified?," Kejrival said. PM Modi also assured that no public welfare scheme would be discontinued if the BJP assumed power but the party's

government would weed out the corruption in their implementation. He asserted the BJP would usher in change. "Only when this 'aapda (disaster)' is gotten rid of in Delhi, the double-engine of development will come in," Modi said. "In the past 10 years, Delhi has witnessed a state government that is no less than an 'aapda (disaster)'. Delhiites have realised this. Only one voice is reverberating in Delhi -- 'Aapda nahi sahenge, badal kar rahenge (will not tolerate disaster, will bring change)," Modi said. The prime minister said when the people of Delhi were grappling with

COVID-19, struggling to find oxygen and medicines, the entire focus of the 'aapda people' was on building their 'Sheesh Mahal'. "They made a huge budget for the 'Sheesh Mahal'. This is their truth... They do not care about the people of Delhi. That is why every Delhiite today is saying... 'we will not tolerate aapda, we will change,'" he said. The AAP has so far not reacted on the CAG report on Sheesh Mahal and the PM's attack - with Kejrival not speaking about the controversy when he addressed the press to respond to the Prime Minister's

speech. The prime minister said the Centre had been developing highways in Delhi, expanding the Metro network, starting the Namoo Bharat Regional Rapid Transit System, and running big hospitals. "However, the moment you step out of a Metro station, you can see potholed roads, overflowing sewers. Some areas are such that even auto and cab drivers refuse to ply due to long traffic jams," he said. Modi also accused the AAP government of spreading fear that a BJP government in Delhi would discontinue several welfare schemes implemented by it. The prime

minister asserted a new BJP government would implement central schemes that, he claimed, had been stalled by the AAP government with renewed vigour. "For Delhi, these people have made every season, every weather, 'aapda kaal'. The energy of Delhiites is spent in dealing with 'aapda' throughout the year," he said. "Aapda" turned every season into an emergency, with water shortages, waterlogging and pollution, the prime minister alleged. "Therefore, only if AAP is removed from Delhi, the double-engine of development and good governance will come."

"We are in the 21st century and 25 years have passed. Two or three generations have entered their youth. The next 25 years are very important for Delhi. The next 25 years will see India emerging as a developed nation before their eyes. We all will be stakeholders in this journey," Modi said. The national capital should be a part of this glorious journey, he added. "In Delhi, people blessed the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections and now, in the assembly polls, are set to bless the BJP. This is a golden opportunity to win the heart of Delhi and free it of disaster ('aapda)," he said.



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

AP ■ SEOUL

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

# Ukraine will ask allies to boost its air defences: Zelenskyy

AP ■ KYIV

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

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

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

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

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

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

AP ■ JERUSALEM

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

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

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

# Costas Simitis dies at 88

AP ■ ATHENS

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

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

PTI ■ DHAKA

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



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

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

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

# Snow brings widespread disruption across UK, Germany

AP ■ LONDON

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

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

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

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

# Winter storm threatens central US with snow, blizzards

AP ■ WASHINGTON

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

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

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

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





## COMFORTING COLOURS

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

### THE SCIENCE OF COLOUR THEORY

Colour theory is the foundation of how we perceive and interact with colours. It encompasses the colour wheel, which is divided into primary, secondary, and tertiary colours which we all have studied in our primary schooling. Each colour elicits different emotional responses. For instance, warm colours like red and orange can stimulate energy and excitement, while cool colours such as blue and green promote calmness and relaxation. In real life the application of colour theory can transform a space into chaos or calmness. For example, a healthcare facility painted in soft blues and greens can create a soothing atmosphere for patients, reducing anxiety and promoting healing. Conversely, vibrant yellows and oranges in a creative workspace can inspire innovation and collaboration. Understanding the *Colour Band* and *Spectrum* is very important, to choose the right shade. The colour spectrum, which includes the visible light spectrum, ranges from red to violet. Each colour in this spectrum has unique psychological effects.

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



**YELLOW:** Symbolises happiness, optimism, and intellect; often connected to cheerful, open-minded, and social people.  
**BLUE:** Represents calmness, trust, and stability; typically associated with reliable, calm, and thoughtful individuals.  
**BLACK:** Conveys sophistication, authority, and mystery; often linked to powerful, serious, and independent personalities.  
**WHITE:** Symbolises purity, simplicity, and innocence; usually associated with peaceful, organised, and honest individuals.  
**ORANGE:** Represents enthusiasm, warmth, and creativity; often linked to adventurous, energetic, and sociable people.

Colour choices vary from person to person, and there are many factors that can influence how someone perceives colours. An individual can utilise the colour band to create dynamic environments. For instance, a gradient of colours transitioning from warm to cool can guide individuals through a space, influencing their mood as they move. So how can anyone select the *Colour Codes* and understand *Shade Cards* for their use. There are multiple options in shades of whites, yellow, red etc. available at the stores. So, to choose the right shade, the first method is *The Pantone Matching System (PMS)* is one widely used colour code system that provides standardised colours for various applications, from paint to textiles. Second, you can refer to the *colour fan deck* of any paint brand and choose from the colour family you like the most and feels aesthetic to you. Most recommended colours to promote mental health are *light taupe, beige, pastel pinks, lavender, pastel greens, white or ivory, icy blue*. By understanding the psychological effects of colour and utilising these tools effectively, a person can create spaces that not only look beautiful but also nurture the body, mind, and soul. Try to unlock new possibilities for enhancing your daily lives through the power of colours.

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



### SOME SYMBOLIC MEANINGS OF VARIOUS COLOURS WITH PERSONALITY TRAITS:

**RED:** Symbolises passion, energy, and action; often associated with assertive, energetic individuals or leaders.  
**GREEN:** Represents growth, harmony, and balance; often linked to nurturing, environmentally conscious, and calm personalities.  
**PURPLE:** Conveys luxury, spirituality, and creativity; usually associated with imaginative, artistic, or introspective individuals.



## BREATHE IN AND BREATHE OUT

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

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

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



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

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



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



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

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



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

PTI ■ SYDNEY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## It's frustrating but you have to respect your body: Bumrah

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Laid low by a back spasm, Jasprit Bumrah was frustrated at missing out on bowling on the "spiciest wicket of the series," but the premier India pacer emphasized that sometimes it becomes imperative for a player to respect his body.

Bumrah could not bowl on day three when India needed to defend a small 162-run target on a tricky wicket.

Australia needed just 27 overs to overhaul the target and claim the Border-Gavaskar Trophy after 10 years as they took advantage of Bumrah's absence.

"It was really frustrating but sometimes you have to respect your body, can't fight it. Disappointing, probably missed out on the spiciest wicket of the series," Bumrah said, who was named Player of the Series for his 32 wickets in the series, during the post-match presentation.

"Felt a bit of discomfort during my second spell in the first innings and had to check it out."

Resuming day three at 141 for six, India lost their remaining four wickets for 16 runs to be all out for 157 in their second innings.

Asked about the discussion in the morning, Bumrah said: "The chat this morning was about the same thing, about

having belief and showing character. Lots of ifs and buts, the whole series was fought hard, we were in the game today as well, not like we were out of it, this is how Test cricket goes."

"Being in the game for longer, creating pressure, absorbing pressure and playing to the situation are all important. You have to adapt to the situations and these learnings will help us in the future."

Bumrah added that the experience of playing in Australia will help young players like Nitish Reddy and Harshit Rana in future.

"They've (youngsters) gained a lot of experience, they'll go from strength to strength. We've shown that we have a lot of talent in our group."

"Lot of the youngsters are keen, they're disappointed that we haven't won but they'll take learnings from this experience. It was a great series, congratulations to Australia, they fought really well."

Travis Head, who emerged as the highest run-scorer in the series with 446 runs, heaped praise on Bumrah.

"He's a great performer, he had an exceptional tour. It is the best individual performance I have seen in Test cricket," Head said.

Winning captain Pat Cummins described his team's 3-1 victory in the five-match series as

"unreal" and expressed immense pride in regaining the trophy.

"Unreal. A few of us didn't have this Trophy. Lived up to all the hype. Just been clear with our plans. We tried to be proactive, and ultimately, it worked out. Immensely proud," he said.

The star pacer also praised the camaraderie within the squad.

"We weren't at our best in Perth, but we had a lot of fun playing alongside each other. I love playing with these guys. Such a special group. I feel privileged to be part of such a team. Three debutants in this series fitted in well and contributed at different times."

Reflecting on his own performance, Cummins called the series "one of my most favourite Test series."

"Pretty happy with how I played. I had a fresh start coming into this series. These are the big series you prepare for. There were some keen moments when our mainstays really stood up. You need to do that to beat a side like India. Our guys put their hands up. It would go down as one of my most favourite Test series," he added.

Adjudged Player-of-the-Match for his impressive 10 for 76, Scott Boland expressed his satisfaction after playing a key role in Australia's 3-1 win.

He had replaced injured Josh Hazlewood in the squad.

## Started setting new goals for 2025 after World Championship and Khel Ratna: Gukesh

PTI ■ BENGALURU

D Gukesh climbed dizzying heights in the past one month, a World Championship triumph getting garnished by the Major Dhyani Chand Khel Ratna award recently, but the chess prodigy now wants to reset his focus and goals to tackle a "challenging" 2025.

Gukesh will be seen in action in the Tata Steel tournament in Wijk aan Zee in Netherlands, beginning on January 17.

The event will see participation from frontline players such as Anish Giri, Arjun Erigaisi, Fabiano Caruana and R Praggnanandhaa among others.

"Yeah, 2025 will offer a very tough challenge. A lot of new and interesting tournaments are coming up. The world championship was in the past.



"I'm very happy about it and all the awards and receptions," Gukesh told a select media gathering during the felicitation ceremony organised by WestBridge Capital here on Sunday.

"But now, I have started thinking about new goals, new tournaments and new ways to prepare. The goal, the approach will be the same, to

give my best, to keep improving myself, and win as many tournaments as possible.

"So, I am looking forward to a fun year with a lot of learning, a lot of improvements and hopefully a lot of good results," he added.

However, Gukesh will have to carry with him the tag of world champion and along

with it loads of expectations and increased scrutiny. But the 19-year-old is prepared to stand in the limelight.

"Yeah, I have been used to being under the attention for a while. Obviously, after the world championship, it will be more. But the basic things I remember are to keep improving myself and accepting failures when they come."

"I think in general, I have high expectations of myself. So, I think my aim is to meet my own expectations rather than that of others," he said.

But has he been able to handle all the adulation that has deservedly come his way?

"I had thought that it (winning the World Championship) would be somewhat similar to the Candidates, but obviously it's much more. I'm grateful for all the attention and recognition."



## Varun Tomar shines in men's 10m air pistol

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reigning Asian champion Varun Tomar grabbed the spotlight by clinching both the senior and the junior men's 10m air pistol titles at the 67th National Shooting Championship Competitions (NSCC) here on Sunday.

The 21-year-old Army marksman, who narrowly missed out on last year's Paris Olympics, overcame a sluggish start in the senior final to snatch his maiden national crown at the expense of teammate Pradhyumn Singh, who fell short by 0.8 points.

Rajasthan's Aakash Bhardwaj won the bronze.

Tomar then had a similar slow start in the junior final, but quickly made up ground, staying in touch with eventual silver winner Nikhil Saroha of Uttar Pradesh who was on a start-to-finish mission.

Tomar's patience finally paid off after the 21st shot as Nikhil blinked with an 8.5, handing the senior pro an easy double gold in the end at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting range.

Tomar's score in the senior final was 238, while he was clearly more confident in the junior final, resulting in greater accuracy with a tally of 246.2.

Pradhyumn also rounded off a fruitful day with a second medal, a bronze in the junior men's air pistol.

The youth final saw a UP 1-2 when Chirag Sharma overcame the 14-year-old Dev Pratap by margin of 1.3 after 24 shots.

## Gavaskar upset after not being invited to present BGT with Border

PTI ■ SYDNEY

The legendary Sunil Gavaskar on Sunday expressed his displeasure after not being invited to present the trophy, named after him and Allan Border, to Australia following their win over India in the high-voltage five-match rubber.

Australia reclaimed the Border-Gavaskar trophy after 10 years with a six-wicket win over India in the fifth and final Test.

Border presented the trophy to the home team but Gavaskar, despite being at the venue at the same time, was inexplicably ignored.

"I certainly would have loved to have been there for the presentation. After all it is the Border-Gavaskar Trophy and it is about Australia and



India," Gavaskar was quoted as saying by Code Sports.

"I mean, I am here on the ground. To me it should not matter that Australia won when it comes to the presentation. They played better cricket so they won. That's fine.

"Just because I am an Indian.

I would have been happy to present the trophy with my good friend Allan Border," he added.

Had the Indian team won the trophy, Gavaskar would have been invited to present it to the victorious side.

Cricket Australia (CA) later confirmed that Gavaskar was

aware he would have presented the award to Indian captain Jasprit Bumrah if the tourists had won the Sydney Test and retained the trophy.

"We acknowledge it would have been preferable if both Allan Border and Sunil Gavaskar had been asked to go on stage," a CA spokesperson said in a statement.

Both India and Australia have been competing for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy since 1996-1997 and the rivalry has grown to become one of the biggest in Test cricket.

The five-match series that Australia won drew record crowds at multiple venues and broke an 87-year-old attendance record at the Melbourne Cricket Ground last week.

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

PTI ■ SYDNEY

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

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

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

"It's not the right moment right

now for me to talk about where we are going to be after five months. A lot of things change in sport. Forms change, people change, attitude changes, everything changes in sport. And we all know that five months is a long time," Gambhir said at the post-series press conference.

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

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

were bowled outside the off stump.

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

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

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

Kohli last played a Ranji Trophy match in 2012 while



Rohit's most recent domestic red-ball game was in the 2015-16 season.

The 'Ro-Ko' Dilemma

The tough-talking former player refused to be drawn into a discussion on the much-

speculated future of Kohli and Rohit, insisting that they are the best judge when it comes to analysing their role in Indian cricket.

"See, I can't talk about the future of any player, it's up to

them as well. But yes, what I can say is that they still have the hunger, they still have the passion, they're tough people and hopefully they can continue to take Indian cricket forward," he said.

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

He wants the star duo to do some soul searching as to where they stand.

"First of all, every individual knows where their game and hunger is. That is the most important thing for any sport and any profession."

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

I need to be fair to everyone Gambhir, in his pre-match

press conference, spoke about honesty in the dressing room.

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

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

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

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

"If you're committed to what

we are doing with honesty, I think that should be fine. And more importantly, to keep the dressing room happy, I have to be absolutely honest and equal and fair to everyone in that dressing room."

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

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

"I am the first one to accept mistakes"

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

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