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CBI need not seek state consent: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



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



PM Narendra Modi with beneficiaries of a housing scheme, during the foundation stone laying and inauguration ceremony of various development projects, in New Delhi

Modi kicks off Delhi election campaign, Kejriwal reacts

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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



Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

GRAP III INVOKED

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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

WEATHER

AQI	371
MAX	21.2°C
MIN	7°C

smog and poor air quality since the beginning of winter, ranked third among the world's most polluted capitals in Friday's live rankings by Swiss group IQAir. Meanwhile, over 500 flight services were delayed at Delhi airport and dozens of trains were affected across North India as the harsh winter chill has tightened its grip on north India, including Delhi, with dense fog blanketing the region and temperatures plunging further. According to FlightRadar24 data, about

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



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

AP ■ WASHINGTON

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

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

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

PTI ■ DHAR (MP)

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



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

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

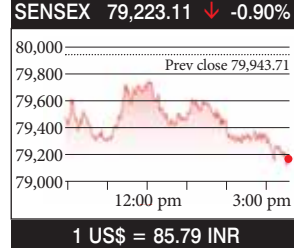
MeitY Invites Objections on Draft Data Rules

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

MARKETS



Sensex, Nifty tank, ahead of earnings season

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

From begging to manning traffic, inspiring journey of 39 transgenders

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

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

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



A transgender traffic assistant manages traffic, in Hyderabad

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

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

Jharkhand in the grip of intense cold, Chatra records 4.5 degrees

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The state is currently grappling with an intense cold wave as sub-10 degrees Celsius temperatures prevail across its length and breadth. The biting cold has been attributed to the dominance of crisp and cold north-westerly winds blowing down from the northern parts of the country, triggered by recent snowfalls in Jammu and Kashmir and other northern regions.



skies with sub-10 chill," said a duty officer at the Met Centre.

Data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) reveals a widespread drop in temperatures across the state: Ranchi: The capital

recorded a minimum temperature of 8 degrees Celsius, marking a significant chill. Jamshepur: Known for its industrial vibrancy, the city recorded a minimum temperature of 9.8 degrees Celsius, adding to the discomfort of

the residents. Daltonganj: Registered a bone-chilling low of 7.4 degrees Celsius. Bokaro Steel City: Recorded a minimum of 8.1 degrees Celsius. Kolhan Region: Several areas, including Chaibasa in West Singhbhum, saw temperatures drop to 8 degrees Celsius. Chatra: Experienced the coldest dip, with the temperature plummeting to 4.5 degrees Celsius.

Deoghar and Dhanbad: Both districts recorded minimum temperatures around 6.5 degrees Celsius. Hazaribag and Khunti: Registered 6.9 and 5.3 degrees Celsius, respectively. Lohardaga: Recorded a minimum of 6.4 degrees Celsius. Pakur: Saw a low of 8.6 degrees Celsius. Simdega and Ramgarh: Registered minimum temperatures of 6.3 and 7.3 degrees Celsius,

respectively. Godda: The only district to experience relatively milder conditions, with a minimum of 11.6 degrees Celsius.

The plunging temperatures have brought life in Jharkhand to a near standstill during the early mornings and late evenings. Residents across the state are donning heavy woollens and resorting to bonfires to keep themselves warm. Schools, offices, and businesses have also witnessed delayed starts as people try to navigate the chill.

Health officials have issued advisories urging people to avoid prolonged exposure to the cold and to stay hydrated to counter the dry air accompanying the chill. Vulnerable groups, including the elderly and young children, have been

advised to take extra precautions.

With no significant weather disturbances on the horizon, the prevailing conditions are expected to persist. The state's weather is likely to remain dry, with clear skies offering some respite during the daytime, though the nights will continue to be cold.

For Jamshepur and surrounding areas, this marks one of the coldest spells in recent memory, demanding heightened preparedness and resilience from its residents. As the cold wave intensifies, local authorities are ensuring that shelters and warm clothing are made available to those in need, especially in rural areas and among the homeless population," said an official.

It was her chaos that made her beautiful!



DR SHRADHA SUMAN

Every woman is a complicated mix of thousands of emotions difficult, confusing, sometimes smart, other times vulnerable, empowering as well as empathic at times.... It's her chaos that makes her beautiful. Her innate immunity to change in life, her capacity to adjust and accept everything despite the turmoil within makes her who she is. She's aware of her weaknesses and often oblivious of her strength that's inside of her.

deciding things are a part of the social obligations which have been made by society which is primarily male dominated. I'm proud to be a bag of emotions and feelings, because I'm human and full of hormones, which is normal biology.

The healing power of emotions makes a woman beautiful. She goes through every mental change right from birth, though her lifetime till she dies. Most women in our society have been trained mentally to expect least for their "services" to the family. The role of emotion in bodily regulation, dissociation, trauma, transformation, marital communication, play, well-being, health, creativity, and social engagement exists in and sometimes all a woman does is shed tears... Of joy, anger, sorrow, despair, rejection, pride....

Yes it's okay not to be okay. It's okay to cry. It's okay to throw tantrums and it's okay to live in the edge. Just because every time we think rationally there is a little girl whispering, "You are not alone woman and think of the repercussions it would have."

That's because she cares. That's makes her beautiful. An emotional wreck... she's forever disturbed... Her chaos makes her who she is "You are beautiful the way you are...."

THE WRITER IS A DOCTOR BY PROFESSION AND AN OCCASIONAL WRITER, WHO IS PASSIONATE ABOUT WOMEN AND CHILD HEALTH. SHE WORKS FOR AN NGO PROMOTING MENSTRUAL HYGIENE IN RURAL JHARKHAND. MOTHER TO A 7 YEAR OLD, SHE LOVES WEAVING STORIES AROUND WOMEN AND THEIR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES WHICH IS LARGELY IGNORED BY THE MASSES. VIEWS ARE PERSONAL.

BOKARO MLA AND KIMS LEADER DISCUSS PEOPLE'S ISSUES WITH SAIL CHAIRMAN

PNS : BOKARO

On January 2, 2025, Bokaro MLA Shweta Singh and KIMS leader Sangram Singh met SAIL Chairman Amarendu Prakash to address key public concerns in the Bokaro Assembly constituency.

Singh emphasized the urgency of accelerating the Bokaro Steel Plant's expansion project, which aims to boost production to 12 million tons and create employment opportunities. She also demanded updates on the operationalization of Bokaro Airport, urging SAIL to expedite the transfer of funds to the Airports Authority of India, similar to progress made in Rourkela.

Discussions included the stalled international cricket stadium project, with Singh suggesting its land be handed to the state government if the cricket association cannot proceed. She also proposed allocating vacant city lands to displaced residents and businesses and establishing an ancillary unit to boost local industry and employment.

Singh urged SAIL to align with the aspirations of Bokaro's citizens and support the state government's efforts to transform the city into a hub of development and global recognition.



6 ROAD ACCIDENTS IN JUST 3 DAYS OF 2025 IN PALAMU DIVISION

PNS : DALTONGANJ

Six road accident deaths in just 3 days of the New Year in Palamu division comprising 3 districts namely Latehar, Garhwa and Palamu division have come as a terrible news in the new year.

The latest death of two today occurred on the NH 75 at Kasiyadeeh under the Satbarwa police station limits wherein intense and dense fog led to a head on collision between a bus and a truck. According to the officer in charge of the Satbarwa police station Anchit Kumar the Ranchi bound bus coming from Daltonganj had a serious collision with a 16 wheel loaded truck enroute to Daltonganj at Kasiyadeeh, 6 kms from the Satbarwa police station.

The truck driver identified as Pushnender Kumar, 35 hailing from Uttar Pradesh who was rushed to the mission hospital Tumbagara succumbed to his injuries during treatment in the mission hospital.

One bus passenger, Reeyasat Miyan, 52 also died during treatment in the mission hospital. The bus driver Shashi Pandey, 40, of Garhwa district has been referred to the higher centre in Ranchi.

Over 70 complaints resolved at Janata Darbar

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Deputy Commissioner, Ananya Mittal, held a Janata Darbar at the Collectorate office, addressing the issues of over 70 complainants. The initiative provided a platform for common people to voice their grievances and seek redressal for personal and social issues. The Deputy Commissioner assured complainants of timely action, with several applications resolved on the spot.

Key Issues Raised: The Janata Darbar witnessed a diverse range of complaints and requests, including: Land Acquisition Compensation: Several complainants highlighted delays in receiving compensation for land acquired for developmental projects. Medical Aid: Appeals for financial assistance for medical treatment were made by individuals facing critical health issues. Domestic and Land Disputes: Disputes related to family inheritance and property boundaries were prominent

among the grievances. Relocation Concerns: Requests for relocation assistance were raised by those affected by developmental activities.

Irregularities in Salary Payments: Issues such as the stoppage of salaries for certain teachers deemed illegal were brought to the Deputy Commissioner's attention. Road Encroachment and Death Threats: Complaints about road encroachment and threats to personal safety were lodged. Employment in Anganwadi Centers: Job seekers, particularly women, requested employment opportunities in Anganwadi centers. Basic Amenities and Police Inaction: Residents submitted memorandums seeking action on unresolved police complaints and improvements in basic facilities.

Several applications were promptly resolved during the Janata Darbar. The Deputy Commissioner directed departmental officers to address the issues efficiently



and ensured that all forwarded applications received timely attention. Specific instructions included: Coordination Among Departments: Officers were instructed to collaborate with block offices and related departments to expedite investigations and solutions. Spot Resolutions: Cases that could be addressed immediately were resolved on the spot, ensuring quick relief for the complainants.

Deputy Commissioner Mittal emphasized the

administration's commitment to resolving public grievances efficiently. "Timely action and proper coordination among departments are key to ensuring justice and relief for the people," she stated. She further instructed officials to monitor the progress of applications forwarded during the Janata Darbar and provide updates to the concerned parties. Residents expressed satisfaction with the initiative, lauding the Deputy Commissioner's proactive approach and empathetic lis-

tening. For many, the Janata Darbar provided a rare opportunity to directly engage with the district administration and seek resolutions to longstanding issues. The administration plans to hold regular Janata Darbars to address grievances comprehensively and ensure accountability among officials. The Deputy Commissioner reiterated the need for continuous engagement with the public to build trust and improve governance.

Bokaro gears up for international-level Marathon 2025



R SHARMA : BOKARO

Bokaro, India's first Global Active City, is gearing up to host the much-awaited SAIL Bokaro Half Marathon 2025 on February 2, 2025, starting at 6 a.m. With the theme "Healthy and Wealthy Bokaro," the event is a testament to Bokaro Steel Plant's (BSL) commitment to promoting fitness, inclusivity, and international standards.

The Bokaro Steel Plant management, known for its emphasis on teamwork and quality, has undertaken extensive preparations to ensure the marathon's success. During a recent media briefing, Kundan Kumar, CGM (Town Administration), highlighted the symbolic nature of the event, representing inclusivity and community spirit. This year, the participation target has been set at 4,000, and arrangements are expected to be in place to provide accommodations for outstation participants this time—a significant improvement based on last year's feedback.

Building on its prestige, this year's marathon, like last year, is certified by the Association of International Marathons and Distance Races (AIMS), ensuring its global recognition. Kishan Chand, (GM), highlighted that the event will continue to uphold the highest quality standards, from medical assistance to volunteer support, ensuring a seamless experience for participants. Further Kishan Chand said that significant highlight of the 2025 marathon is the integration of modern tech-

nology for accuracy and efficiency. Each participant will be equipped with bibs embedded with electronic semiconductor chips, which will record their timings through sensor beams.

The event will feature four categories: 2 km for Specially Aabled, 21 km Half Marathon, 10 km Run, and 5 km Run/Walk. All participants will be awarded medals and certificates, with winners receiving cash prizes on the same day—making it a unique and rewarding experience for all.

MK Dhan, COC, emphasized that the marathon is part of BSL's broader campaign to inspire Bokaro residents to embrace healthier lifestyles. This initiative aligns with the city's designation as a Global Active City, encouraging physical activity and community participation.

AK Avinash (GM) said that to support participants, comprehensive facilities will be provided, including emergency services with ambulances, helpline numbers, security coordinators, and other basic amenities. BSL expect overwhelming participation, reflecting the growing enthusiasm for such fitness initiatives in Bokaro and beyond.

At the press conference, Kundan Kumar (Chief General Manager, Town Administration), MK Dhan (Chief of Communications), Kishan Chand (General Manager, Finance and Accounts), Avinash Kumar (General Manager, Town Administration), Abhinav Shankar (Senior Manager, Public Relations).

City bids tearful adieu to Founder of Jeevan

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Mahavir Ram, the revered founder of the suicide prevention organization Jeevan, passed away on Thursday night, leaving the city and countless lives he touched in mourning. He was 86 years old. Ram was admitted to Tata Main Hospital (TMH) on Wednesday following a decline in his health. Despite intensive care in the Critical Care Unit (CCU) and treatment for pneumonia, his condition worsened, and he passed away at 9 PM.

Ram was not only the founder of Jeevan, a pioneering organization committed to suicide prevention and mental health awareness, but also a dedicated member of various other organizations. He was associated with Rajasthan Maitri



Sangh, ASIA, and Laghu Udyog Bharati, where he worked tirelessly for the community. Through Jeevan, he championed mental health advocacy, reaching out to those in crisis and pro-

viding them with support and hope.

Ram's academic and professional journey was equally illustrious. He completed his engineering from BIT Sindri and went on to earn a PhD from the prestigious University of Sheffield, where he was also a gold medalist. His career in academia saw him serve as the Head of Department and Principal of the Metallurgy Department at NIT (formerly RIT), Adityapur. His contributions to the field of metallurgy and his dedication to nurturing young minds have left an indelible mark on the institution. Ram is survived by his son, Deepak Dokania, two daughters, and two grandsons. Known for his humility and warmth, he was deeply loved and respected by his family, col-

leagues, and the wider community. His death has created a void that will be hard to fill.

Jeevan, the organization he founded, has been at the forefront of suicide prevention in Jamshepur and beyond. Under his guidance, Jeevan provided counseling and support to countless individuals in their darkest moments, saving lives and fostering mental well-being. His vision and commitment have inspired many to join the cause, ensuring that his legacy of compassion continues.

Ram's last rites were performed today. The funeral procession started from his residence in CH Area at 11:30 AM and proceeded to Parvati Ghat. Family, friends, and well-wishers gathered to pay their final respects to a man who dedi-

cated his life to the service of others.

Tributes have been pouring in from across the city and beyond. Members of Jeevan, Rajasthan Maitri Sangh, and other organizations he was associated with remembered him as a visionary leader and a compassionate human being. "Mahavir Ram's contributions to the community and his relentless efforts to save lives will be remembered forever. He was a beacon of hope for many," said a spokesperson from Jeevan.

He said that Jamshepur has lost one of its most dedicated and compassionate leaders. Mahavir Ram's life was a testament to the power of service and empathy, and his contributions will continue to inspire generations.

Sacrifice of Randhir Verma cannot be forgotten: Governor

PANKAJ : DHANBAD

Governor Santosh Gangwar today said that the martyrdom of Randhir Verma is imprinted in the history of the country, it cannot be forgotten. When Rita Verma was elected to the Lok Sabha, she had narrated stories of Randhir Verma's martyrdom. His sacrifice is worth remembering and it is the history of the country. The Governor said this while addressing the 34th martyrdom ceremony of Randhir Prasad Verma organized at Randhir Verma Chowk on Friday.

He said, "Ever since I have come to this state, I have heard stories of freedom fighters, which happen to be important for a country's independence. There were many incidents during that period and those efforts were done to save the country. Randhir Verma's sacrifice will be written in history as heroes like him can only imagine sacrificing life for the country as at that time terrorists were dominating the entire country."



Randhir Verma sacrificed his life to stop them. Due to this extraordinary incident, for the first time the Government of India honoured a non-military person with the Ashok Chakra. Postage stamps were issued in their names. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described all the martyrs as the inspiration of the nation. Randhir Verma has done the work of making Swami Dayanand's national message alive. He advised youth to take inspiration from the sacrifice of Randhir Verma as he worked for the benefit of the country. The people here have done the work of changing the ideologies about Jharkhand and Bihar. Governor said, our priority should be the interest of the country.

Earlier, Governor Gangwar, wife of the martyr Prof. Rita Verma, Rajya Sabha member Deepak Prakash, MP Dhulu Mahato, MLA Raj Sinha, Ragini Singh, Deputy Commissioner Madhavi Mishra and SSP Hrideep P Janardhanan paid their tribute by laying wreaths at the Randhir Verma memorial.

Addressing the function, Prof. Verma said that even today people remember the martyrdom of martyr Randhir with love. Films like Gangs of Wasseypur have spoiled the image of Dhanbad. The people here are very good and have respect for the martyr's family. When she got the ticket after the sacrifice of SP Randhir Verma, she had no knowledge of politics but people chose me to represent them. The people of Dhanbad have tied me in the bond of love. I am grateful to Dhanbad till my death. She said that she did not have money for the renovation of the Randhir Verma memorial site.

Apollo Cancer Centre Kolkata performs country's first Robotic Surgery for rare Kidney Condition

PNS : BOKARO

Apollo Cancer Centre (ACC), Kolkata, has successfully performed India's first robotic surgery for Crossed Fused Ectopic Kidney, a rare congenital condition with fewer than 10 reported cases globally.

The complex Robotic Radical Nephrectomy was conducted on a 66-year-old patient by Dr. Tarun Jindal, Senior Consultant in Uro-Oncology. The hospital's cutting-edge robotic system allowed precise dissection of abnormal anatomy, minimizing risks and preserving the remaining kidney. The patient recovered swiftly, being discharged just four days after surgery.

Dr. Jindal called the achievement a testament to the potential of robotic surgery, enabling safe treatment for even the most complex conditions.

This milestone reinforces Apollo Cancer Centre's commitment to advancing medical care with innovative technology.



Governor exhorts youths to follow Vivekananda's teachings

PNS ■ Ranchi

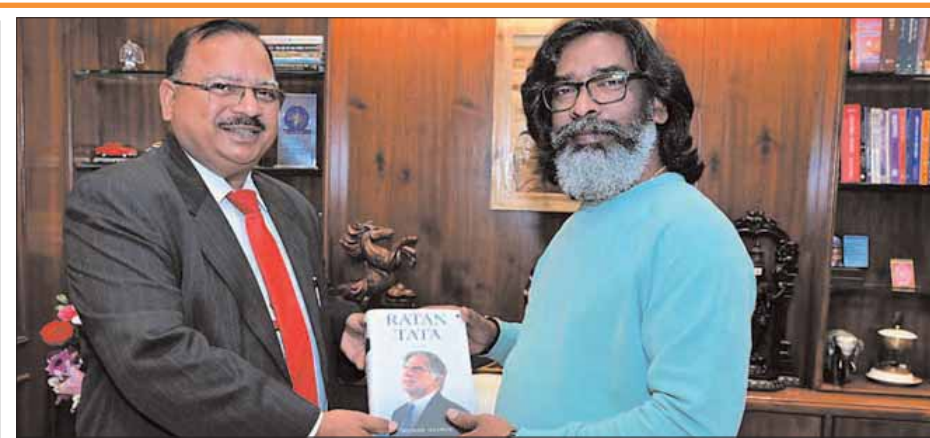
Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar, while addressing the youth at the Silver Jubilee State Convention of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) Jharkhand held in Dhanbad today, appreciated their contribution in the development of the country and Jharkhand and gave an inspirational message. The Governor said on this occasion that the organization of this convention is inspirational from many historical contexts. During the 150th birth anniversary of Bhagwan Dharti Aba Birsa Munda, 150th birth anniversary of Iron Man Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and the centenary year of ABVP's architect Professor Yashwant Rao Kelkar, this convention gives a message of new energy and resolve to the youth of Jharkhand. The Governor, while referring to the silver jubilee of the establishment of



Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar alongwith others at the Silver Jubilee State Convention of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) Jharkhand in Dhanbad on Friday. PNS

Jharkhand, recalled the contribution of Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee in the formation of Jharkhand state. He said that when the bill regarding the formation of the state was brought in the Parliament, he was a member of the Council of Ministers in the government of Atal ji and as a Lok Sabha MP, he had voted in favour of the formation of the state. Referring to the association of more than 82 thousand youth of Jharkhand with ABVP, the Governor said that this number is not just a figure, but a symbol

of the energy and dedication of the youth of the state. He called upon the youth to contribute to the implementation of the National Education Policy 2020 and to make Jharkhand a leader in the field of education, employment, sports, innovation and cultural development. The Governor explained to the youth the importance of continuous effort and dedication, citing Swami Vivekananda's idea of 'Arise, awake and do not stop till the goal is achieved'. The Governor praised the glorious journey of 75 years of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad and said that this organization not only gives the message of patriotism, but also provides a direction to the youth for their positive energy. The Governor called upon all the youth to play their role in realizing the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Developed India @ 2047'.



Additional Director General of Police RK Malik, greets Chief Minister Hemant Soren at the latter's residence on the occasion of New Year -2025 in Ranchi on Friday. PNS



Lohardaga MP Sukhdev Bhagat meets Chief Minister Hemant Soren and wishes him Happy New Year 2025, at official residence Kanke road in Ranchi on Friday. PNS

Theme song for 68th National School Sports Competition launched

PNS ■ Ranchi

For the 68th National School Sports Competition, State Education Project Director Shashi Ranjan while addressing a press conference at the Jharkhand Education Project Council on Friday described the role of journalists as incomparable in the success of the event. Administrative Officer of JEPCC Sachchidanand D Tigga, State Program Officer Dhirases Soreng and Jharkhand Olympic Association Treasurer Shivendranath Dubey were also present on the occasion. Ranjan informed that the sports competition will be inaugurated by the Education Minister Ramdas Soren at Bhagwan Birsa Munda Football Stadium in Morhabadi on January 5 at 4 pm. In the inaugural ceremony, Departmental Secretary Umashankar Singh, Sports Director Sandeep Kumar, officials of the Education and Sports



State Education Project Director Shashi Ranjan alongwith other officials during a meeting in Ranchi on Friday. PNS

Department as well as officials of sports associations will also participate. The official stated that teams have started coming to Ranchi for the event and as many as 35 teams from across the country will arrive in the State capital by tomorrow. Adequate arrangements for accommodation and medical services for the teams have been made. A total of 17 committees have been given the responsibility to handle the arrangements and their work is being continuously monitored. Ranjan also launched the theme song "Khelega India- Jeetega India" for the National School

Sports Competition to be held in Ranchi. As per the instructions of the State Program Officer, the lyrics of the theme song have been written by M Modassar, while this song has been composed by music composer Rohan Dev Pathak. The visuals of the theme song depict scenes from the state level Khelo Jharkhand competition and national school games held in the State so far. For the competition, the teams that arrived on Friday include those from Telangana, Lakshadweep, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, CISCE, Rajasthan, Vidyabharati, DAV, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Jammu Kashmir, Tripura, Kerala, Dadra and Nagar Haveli Daman, Bihar, Punjab and Odisha. Ensuring a tribal welcome, the teams were greeted with lota paani and tribal gamchha of Jharkhand while the players were encouraged with flower garlands.

4G POS machines will be installed in PDS shops: Minister

PNS ■ Ranchi

Food and Civil Supply Department Minister Irfan Ansari said that in view of the difficulties of the people of the State, clear instructions have been given to the department that 4G POS machines should be installed as soon as possible in place of 2G POS machines. The Minister said that due to the presence of 2G POS machines in all the Public Distribution System shops of the state, the beneficiaries are facing a lot of difficulties in distributing grains in proper quantity and on time, as well as the



people of the state are not able to get KYC done and get grains in proper quantity. Ansari said that the villagers of the state are not able to get their grains on time. "Appropriate steps are

being taken by the department to strengthen this system. In this regard, Chief Minister Hemant Soren has given clear instructions that protein-rich pulses, sugar, soybean etc. are not available in adequate quantity to the children of remote tribal and hill people of the state. Due to which the children of the state are becoming malnourished. To remove this malnutrition and to provide protein-rich grains to the weak children of the state, a letter has been sent by the state government to the Government of India to provide protein-rich grains," he added.

Mobile phone thieves' gang using minor kids busted

PNS ■ Ranchi

Ranchi Police have recently busted an organized gang that used to steal mobile phones from crowded areas. During police investigation, a minor was caught with 3 stolen mobile phones in Morhabadi area of Ranchi. Police have arrested the mastermind of this gang, Shivji Mahato, from Babupur in Sahibganj district. While another accused Devkumar is still out of police custody. In this case, the police have also arrested several minors, who are said to be associated with this gang. Based on what the minor told the police during interrogation, a raid was conducted in a house located in Sukhdevnagar area. Mastermind Shivji Mahato was arrested from here. Regarding the incident, the police said that 27 Android mobiles and 2 keypad phones have been recovered from Shivji Mahato's room. It was told that these mobiles were stolen from crowded areas like Khadi



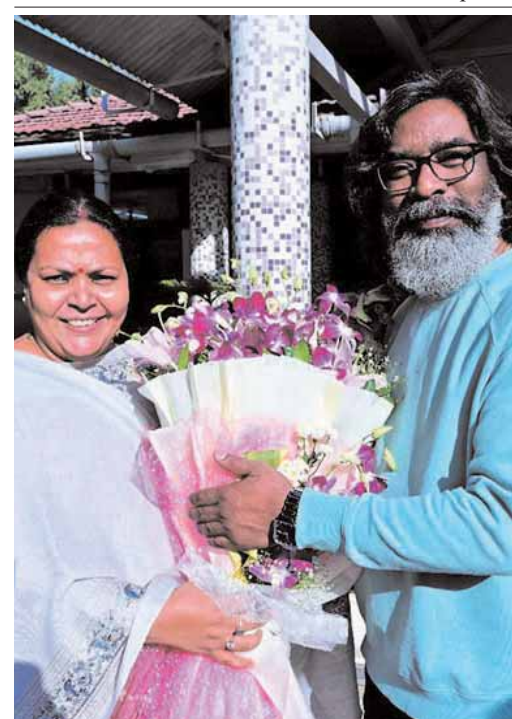
Saras Mela in Ranchi. During interrogation, the accused informed that minors were trained to steal mobiles in haat-bazaar and fair areas. This gang used to carry out the crime in a very organized manner. In this, first the minors were given special training. During this, they were taught the skills of stealing mobiles in such busy areas of the city, where people keep their mobiles in their hands. At the same time, after training, these children were sent to crowded areas to steal. Here the gang leader

used to give them feedback. Also, to avoid any unpleasant situation, the stolen mobile was quickly hidden. Gang leader Shivji Mahato said that the minors were given a salary of Rs 15 thousand every month which was the reward for their hard work. However, now the police have caught them and the accused have been produced in the court. After this, the minors have been sent to the child protection home. The police have started searching for other members of the gang.

Minister concerned over less number of bank branches

PNS ■ Ranchi

Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Cooperative Minister Shilpi Neha Tirkey expressed concern about the less number of bank branches in Chanho during her visit to the area. A meeting was held in Punjab National Bank regarding the problems of the people of the area related to the bank. She gave directions to the bank officials regarding the obstacles in the loan waiver scheme of up to Rs 2 lakh being run by the state government for the farmers. She said that farmers are facing the most problems regarding KYC. Due to lack of KYC, the people of the area are not able to take advantage of the government scheme on time. During this time, Tirkey also discussed with the bank officials on how to increase the number of bank branches. Due to less number of bank branches in Chanho, people coming from rural areas have to wait for hours. The Minister also distributed blankets among the needy people in Raghunathpur Panchayat of Chanho block. On this occasion, she said that the purpose of providing assistance in this cold season is to discharge its responsibility towards the public. This is a small effort to provide them some relief in this freezing cold. Everyone needs to come together and take initiative to help the needy. Tirkey reached the Koko Aiyu Shakti Puja Shal in Raghunathpur Panchayat again and bowed down to the feet of the mother.



Minister Deepika Pandey Singh meets Chief Minister Hemant Soren and wishes him Happy New Year 2025, at official residence Kanke road in Ranchi on Friday. PNS



Minister Shilpi Neha Tirkey meets Chief Minister Hemant Soren and wishes him Happy New Year 2025, at official residence Kanke road in Ranchi on Friday. PNS

As promised, Govt should buy paddy at Rs 3200 per quintal: Marandi

PNS ■ Ranchi

BJP state president and former chief minister Babul Marandi demanded justice for the farmers in paddy purchase by the state government. Addressing a press conference here on Friday he said that after the drought of the last two years, the state has had a good paddy crop this year. The farmers were expecting good returns for their hard work from the state government. Marandi said that the parties involved in the Hemant government had promised to buy paddy at Rs 3200 per quintal before the elections. But, the state government went back on its promise. Today, paddy is being purchased in the state at Rs 2300 per quintal and Rs 2400 per quintal with a bonus of Rs 100. The state government has set a target of purchasing 60 lakh quintals of paddy but the situation is such that paddy purchase centers have not been opened in the districts yet. Bureaucracy is so dominant that the Finance Minister is forced to return empty-handed from his area without inaugurating the paddy purchase center. Even where the centers are open in the state, many places are found



BJP State President Babul Marandi addresses a press conference at party HQ in Ranchi on Friday. PNS

locked. He said that the state government has not been able to purchase even 15 per cent of the target paddy till now. The state government is also deducting 10..15 kg per quintal by calling the paddy wet. He said that the state government has complicated the process of paddy purchase. Due to the indifference of the state government, farmers are forced to

fall into the clutches of brokers and middlemen. Farmers are forced to sell the crop produced by their hard work at Rs 1800..1900 per quintal. Here, brokers and middlemen from Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh are roaming from village to village on bikes to buy paddy. Marandi said that brokers and middlemen are reaching the villages directly with trucks and buying paddy from the farmers at a low price. He said that it is the responsibility of the state government to make the farmers self-reliant and to strengthen the farmers so that they can stand on their own feet. He said that the farmers of Jharkhand are not self-reliant in food grain production. Here, paddy is the only crop which farmers earn a few rupees by selling at MSP, rest of the pulses etc. are not produced here on a large scale. He said that in such a situation, there is a need to encourage the farmers but the state government is constantly engaged in disappointing the farmers. Marandi said that the central government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is dedicated to the all-round development of the farmers. Today, every year Rs 6000 is being sent to the farmers' accounts in three installments which is proving to be very helpful for the farmers. The central government is constantly increasing the MSP on crops. Recently, the subsidy on urea prices has been increased. Kisan Morcha President Pawan Sahu and co-media in-charge Yogendra Pratap Singh were present in the press conference.

Cold winds increase chill in Jharkhand

PNS ■ Ranchi

Due to cold winds coming to Jharkhand from the north-western direction of the country, the minimum temperature in the state has decreased further in the last 24 hours. The minimum temperature in most of the districts has dropped below 10 degrees Celsius. In such a situation, the Meteorological Department has said that there is no possibility of any relief from cold for the next 24 hours. There may be mist and fog in the morning on Saturday as well. Jamshepur and Daltonganj will also have fog in the morning. Clouds are also likely to remain. The Meteorological Department said that the effect of snowfall on the mountains is also visible in Jharkhand. The winds have increased the cold in Jharkhand. The mercury in Kanke of the capital Ranchi has dropped to 3.3 degrees Celsius. At the same time, the minimum temperature



of Khunti has reached 5.3 degrees Celsius. According to the Meteorological Department, the minimum temperature may increase by two to four degrees Celsius from Sunday to the next two days. Weather Center, Ranchi has said that the weather will remain dry on January 03 and January 4 and due to cold westerly winds throughout the day, the cold will increase and people will feel very cold. The weather department has said that on January 05 and January 6, after fog and mist in the morning, the sky may become partly cloudy. The weather center has said that there will be no change in the minimum temperature for the next two days, after that due to partial cloudiness in the sky, the temperature may increase by 2 to 4 degree Celsius. During this time, the temperature of Ranchi is likely to remain between 09 and 26 degree Celsius.

Bangla infiltration: BJP whitewash Didi 'blueprint' claim

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Terming it as a sensitive issue, the Supreme Court on Friday said it will devise an effective mechanism to combat caste-based discrimination in educational institutions besides the consequent action. Senior advocate Indira Jaising, appearing for the mothers of students Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadv, who allegedly died by suicide after facing caste-based discrimination, said from 2004 till now over 50 students (mostly from SC/ST) had killed themselves in IITs and other institutions after facing such discrimination. The Bench directed the UGC to furnish data on the number of institutions which had established equal opportunity cells in compliance with the UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions Regulations) 2012, popularly called "UGC equity regulations". "We are equally conscious of this sensitive issue. We will do something. We will have to find out some effective mechanism and modalities to see that the 2012 regulations are translated into reality," the bench said.

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

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

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

Right to property a Constitutional right, says SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

towards India. You can see a pattern in their activities. I leave you to judge their credibility. As far as we are concerned, they have none," Jaiswal said. "As regards (the report on) Pakistan, I remind you of what Hillary Clinton said -- 'You cannot keep snakes in your backyard and expect them only to bite your neighbours,'" he said. Clinton had made the comments in a blunt message to Pakistan in 2011, when she was serving as the US secretary of state. She had also said that Washington intended to "push the Pakistanis very hard" to remove militant safe havens and tackle groups like the Haqqani network that are responsible for cross-border strikes. In its report on India's "shadow" operations in Pakistan, the Washington Post, quoting unnamed Pakistani and western officials, claimed that the Indian intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), is carrying out a programme since 2021 to "kill at least a half a dozen people" inside Pakistan.

Protests intensify in Bihar over BPSC exam controversy, rail and road traffic disrupted



PTI ■ PATNA
Protests intensified on Friday over the demand for cancellation of the recent Bihar PSC exam, as agitators disrupted rail and vehicular movement in Patna, while police stopped a few Left-leading students' organisations from marching to the CM's residence. A day ahead of fresh tests for a select group of candidates, Independent MP Pappu

Yadav led his supporters in blocking rail and road traffic in several areas of Patna as well as other parts of the state, including Araria, Purnea and Muzaffarpur, officials said. The protesters gathered at Sachivalaya Halt Railway Station and squatted on the tracks for a brief period, causing a delay in the train movement, they said. Yadav's supporters also burnt tyres on roads in Purnea and

Patna, the officials said. "The agitators stopped the Buxar-Fatuha passenger train at Sachivalaya Halt Station around 9 am. The train was stopped for 20 minutes," East Central Railway Chief Public Relation Officer Sarwati Chandra told PTI. Members of some Left-leaning students' organisations also clashed with police upon being stopped from marching towards the chief minister's residence in the state capital, the officials said. Meanwhile, Jan Suraj founder Prashant Kishor continued with his fast-unto-death that he began on Thursday to press the demand for cancellation of the 70th Combined Competitive Examination (CCE) conducted by the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) on December 13. Mocking Kishor, Yadav likened the

Top leaders pay tribute to former PM Manmohan Singh at prayer meet

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Several top dignitaries paid tributes to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at a prayer meet organised in his memory at Gurudwara Rakab Ganj here. Among the top leaders who attended the prayer meeting (Kirtan and Antim Ardas) included Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Punjab Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, former Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot. Former SGPCC president Bibi Jagir Kaur, Leader of Opposition in Punjab assembly Pratap Bajwa and former deputy chairperson of the then Planning Commission Montek



Singh Ahluwalia also attended the prayer. Others who attended the ceremony included Congress leaders Jai Ram Ramesh and Pawan Khera, former Union ministers Salman Khurshid and Ajay Maken, and Sukhjinder Randhawa. BJP's Praneet Kaur and Manjinder Singh Sirsa were also present. Earlier, former vice-president Hamid Ansari, Sonia Gandhi and Kharge were among the dignitaries who attended the 'Akhand Path' at the ex-prime minister's residence on Friday. Former prime minister's wife, Gursharan Kaur sang a 'shabad (verse)' from the Sikh holy scriptures during the 'Akhand path (continuous recitation of Guru Granth Sahib)' at his residence.

Gurugram traffic police to wear body cameras to enhance road safety and transparency

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

The Gurugram traffic police will soon be equipped with body-worn video cameras to catch traffic violators on vital roads of Gurugram like MG Road and Golf Course Road. The cameras are expected to enhance road safety for both the traffic police and the residents of Gurugram. "All traffic inspectors and zonal officers were given instructions to use body-worn cameras while challaning and were also instructed not to argue with any driver while



challenging and to do their work with pleasant behaviour," Virender Vij, DCP (traffic), said. While challaning, the activities of the driver and the intersection will also be recorded with the use of these body-worn cameras. All these recordings will be kept safely so that in future if required, these body-worn camera recordings can be used for any evidence," he said.

Manipur CM clarifies apology, says opponents seeking unrest amid ethnic conflict

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Friday claimed that those who are indulging in politics over his apology to the people on the 20-month-long ethnic conflict are seeking unrest in the north-eastern state, and said his government's priority is to restore peace. Claiming that "past is past", he appealed to communities to sit together and find a permanent solution to the conflict that has plagued the northeastern state since May 2023. "Those who are indulging in politics over my statement are seeking unrest.

The opposition has no ideology. What I said was an expression of sadness and grief. My apology was to those who have been suffering and have lost their loved ones. Why should I say sorry to terrorists? I am saying sorry to the innocent people and those who were displaced from their homes," Singh said. The chief minister had on Tuesday apologised for the ethnic conflict in the state, which claimed more than 250 lives and rendered thousands homeless and appealed to all communities to forget and forgive past mistakes and start afresh.

President Droupadi Murmu hails NIMHANS as model for integrated medicine services

PTI ■ BENGALURU

President Droupadi Murmu on Friday hailed NIMHANS for its integrated medicine services as she considered it as a model for all. According to her, the application of Yoga and Ayurveda in the promotion of mental health and well being is worth emulating. "The integrative medicine services of NIMHANS (National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences) has been a model for all to examine the applications of Yoga and Ayurveda in the promotion of mental health and well being, and in that treatment of psychiatric and neurological disorders," Murmu said during the



Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Institute here. On the occasion, she inaugurated the Psychiatry Specialty Block, Central Laboratory Complex and

Bhima Hostel at NIMHANS. The President also dedicated state-of-the-art diagnostic facilities - the advanced 3T MRI Scanner and DSA System to the nation.

She said different kinds of meditations are also useful in countering negative mental forces, and added that they are being integrated in the Mental health care models.

She underlined the importance of using traditional approaches that are beneficial for all. Murmu said, "Our scriptures tell us that the mind is at the root of everything we perceive in the world." She underlined that greater focus on mental health promotions will become even more important in the years ahead. In the past, issues and concern of mental health had not received enough attention in some societies, the President said, adding that in recent times, awareness about mental health has been rising. She further said that the unscientific belief and stigma associated with mental illnesses are a matter of past, making it easier for those

suffering from various ailments to seek help. "This has been a welcome development, especially at this juncture, because a variety of mental health issues are taking epidemic proportions around the world. The COVID 19 pandemic in particular led to a spike in such concerns," Murmu pointed out. According to the President, working professionals face more stress, and a large number of the elderly people suffer from loneliness due to social challenges. However, it is truly heartening to note that the rising awareness has made it possible for patients to open up and share their problems," she said.

Former union home secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla takes oath as 19th Governor of Manipur

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Former union home secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla took oath as the 19th governor of Manipur during a function at the Raj Bhavan here on Friday. Bhalla was administered the oath of office by Manipur High Court Chief Justice D Krishnakumar in the presence of Chief Minister N Biren Singh. Inspected the guard of honour by Manipur Rifles personnel. Speaking on Bhalla's swearing-in as the governor, the chief minister said, "He is a dynamic person who knows the ground reality and the situation of the state very well. He is a very committed person. I wholeheartedly



welcome him. With his appointment as the governor of the state, I believe that normalcy and peace will be restored at the earliest." The former union home secretary took oath as the governor at a time when strife-torn Manipur has been witnessing periodic ethnic clashes between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023.

"Appointing one of the intelligent and competent persons as the governor of the state during these trying times shows that the central government is serious about solving the problems of Manipur," Singh said. Bhalla, who has the rare distinction of being the longest-serving union home secretary, completed his five-year tenure in August last

year. He is a 1984-batch retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre. President Droupadi Murmu appointed Bhalla the governor of Manipur last month. "I know Bhalla ji. He is a well-experienced person and held many important posts. He held posts in the home department. We appreciate his appointment as the governor of Manipur. I thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah for Bhalla's appointment," the chief minister said. Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya was holding the additional charge of Manipur.

Police constables arrested for hotel manager's death in new year's party brawl

PTI ■ SHIMLA

A police constable was arrested and another placed under custody for allegedly killing a hotel manager at a New Year's party in Himachal Pradesh's Chamba district, officials said on Friday. The accused, Anoop Kumar and Amit Kumar were posted as constables in the Chamba district while the victim was identified as hotel manager Rajinder Kumar. According to police, the incident occurred during a New Year's party when three police personnel visited a hotel in Banikhet, Chamba. Anoop and Amit got into a

heated argument with Rajinder and Sachin, a hotel employee. In the heat of the moment, Rajinder, Anoop and Sachin fell from the hotel's elevated parking space and suffered injuries. While Anoop and Sachin suffered fractures, Rajinder Kumar succumbed to injuries. Superintendent of Police (SP) Abhishek Yadav said that Amit has been arrested while Anoop will be formally placed under arrest after getting discharged from the hospital. The involvement of the third police personnel is under investigation. Rajinder's family members earlier held a protest and

demanding action against the accused. They blocked the Pathankot-Chamba National Highway for a few hours which disrupted vehicular movement. They withdrew the protest after the SP assured them of stern action. Yadav said that the accused were posted in Chamba and were sent to Dalhousie for duty. "While they were returning from their duty, they headed up to the hotel where the incident took place. We have also checked CCTV footage in which we can see that a scuffle had taken place" he said. Further investigation into the matter is underway, he added.

Odisha CM declares unseasonal rain as natural calamity

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Friday declared the unseasonal rain in December last year as a natural calamity to facilitate disbursement of compensation from the state disaster response fund (SDRF) to farmers for crop damage due to the untimely weather event. Addressing the 'Krushi Odisha Conclave' 2025 here, he said farmers who have lost 33 per cent or more crops due to the unseasonal rain, would be provided assistance as per the provisions in the relief code. The assistance of around Rs 291 crore will be given from the state disaster response fund (SDRF), he said. "Unseasonal rain was not on the list of natural calamities in the state. However, keeping in view the crop damage and plight of farmers, our government today declares the unseasonal rain as a natural calamity in the state to facilitate the disbursement of compensation from the state disaster response fund," he said. According to district collectors, 6,66,720 farmers have so far reported 33 per cent or more crop loss due to rain between December 20 and 28, the chief minister said. "These cultivators are entitled to get financial assistance of about Rs 291.59 crore as compensation," he said. Crop on around 2,26,791 hectares of agricultural land has been damaged by the untimely weather event, he added.

2013 to 2025, Maha Kumbh grows threefold in 12 years

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

As the sacred city of Prayagraj prepares to host the Maha Kumbh 2025, an air of excitement envelops the region, promising a spiritual gathering unparalleled in scale and splendour. This iteration of the Kumbh Mela surpasses the grandeur of 2013, showcasing transformative progress in infrastructure and amenities, making it a hallmark of modern governance and cultural heritage. The event's ₹5010 crore budget, bolstered by ₹2010 crore from the central government, marks a monumental rise from the ₹1214 crore allocated for the 2013 Kumbh. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi



Adityanath remarked, "This year's Kumbh is not just a religious event but a global spectacle. The increased budget reflects our dedication to creating world-class

infrastructure for devotees from around the globe." The Maha Kumbh grounds have expanded from 16 square kilometers in 2013 to a sprawling 40 square

kilometers, accommodating an estimated 40 crore pilgrims over 45 days. Mahakumbh Nagar, a temporary district with 25 sectors and 56 police stations, exemplifies meticulous planning. "The scale of Maha Kumbh 2025 is unprecedented. This transformation highlights how far we have come in managing such a massive event," said Dr. Shailendra Singh, a senior official overseeing preparations. For devotees, the improvements are palpable. The number of toilets has surged from 33,903 to 1.5 lakh, complemented by 300 portable units, while change rooms have increased fourfold to 10,000. "Our aim is to provide not just a

spiritual experience but also a safe and hygienic environment for everyone," said Ramesh Tiwari, sanitation head of Mahakumbh Nagar. Naval Raghuvanshi, a regular pilgrim from Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh, shared his experience: "I also came to the Maha Kumbh in 2013. There is a lot of difference between that system and today's system. Facilities have increased. Earlier, we had three toilets in our camp; this time, we have 11. We used to get two taps; now, we have six taps." Transportation facilities have also undergone a remarkable upgrade. Over 7,000 buses, including 200 air-conditioned ones, and more than 200 charter flights will

complement regular flights from 23 cities, while 3,000 special trains will ensure seamless connectivity. The infrastructure is geared to handle the daily influx of approximately 5 lakh passengers. Lighting and energy have seen significant advancements, with ₹391 crore allocated to power the Kumbh area. The setup includes 1,532 kilometers of wiring, 67,000 streetlights, and 170 substations. "Illuminating the Kumbh is as symbolic as it is practical, embodying the light of spirituality that guides millions," observed A.K. Mishra, Chief Engineer for Maha Kumbh 2025. Technology will play a vital role, with drones, AI-powered

cameras, and face-recognition systems ensuring security and efficiency. Visitors can also access real-time assistance via a dedicated Google Chat feature. The event is expected to break records, with peak attendance on Mauni Amavasya, January 29, anticipated to exceed 4 crore devotees, surpassing the 3 crore recorded in 2013. Swami Anand Giri, a noted spiritual leader, expressed, "Maha Kumbh 2025 is not just an event; it is a phenomenon that unites humanity in faith and devotion." With its fusion of tradition and modernity, Maha Kumbh 2025 is set to redefine spiritual gatherings, serving as a beacon of India's rich cultural legacy and innovative capabilities.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

America under attack

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

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



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

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

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

PICTALK



A worker plucks chrysanthemum flowers at a farm, in Nadia

A legacy of leadership, humanity and service



SANTHOSH MATHEW

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



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

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



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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ENSURE WORKERS' SAFETY

Madam — This refers to the editorial, 'Save Priya' (January 3). It is indeed the responsibility of the Indian government to ensure the safety and security of millions of Indian nationals who choose to avail the employment opportunities extended in other countries. When the government is not able to provide employment in India, it is but natural that helpless people venture going abroad seeking livelihood means. Had the government provided jobs they would not have thought of going abroad. Therefore, the government should negotiate with the countries employing Indians to ensure the safety and security of the employees.

In case any of them are found guilty of any crime, they should be sent back to face legal proceedings in the home country. This is not new. In the case of Abu, the extradition is agreed to with the condition of not awarding him capital punishment. Above all, it is time to rethink awarding capital punishment. Let us imagine a scene of punishing all those involved in various crimes, those who instigated and promoted them in Manipur in the recent months. An individual killing another individual is a crime to be punished by awarding death sentences, but mass killing and raping go unpunished and even if punished, enjoy remission and paroles. Review is imminent.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

ISIS STRIKES AGAIN

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

Sports award winners announced



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

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

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

SOLAR POWER FOR RESIDENTS

Madam — It is an excellent initiative by the UT Administration of Chandigarh to provide solar plants to the residents of the 'City Beautiful' under the RESCO (Renewable Energy Service Company) scheme at no cost, inviting the tapping of solar energy and savings for every household. The sun is available in plenty in northern India, which will make the scheme very successful. This scheme needs to be promulgated rapidly in other cities of the nation too, with the initiative of the Union government, to benefit the maximum number of people.

It will help in saving natural energy, a privilege available in abundance to only a few select countries. The government should ensure that benefits are given only to those holding authorised infrastructure duly registered to discourage further unauthorised constructions and ensure correct utilisation of government funds.

R S Narula | Patiala

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Balancing dreams and parental aspirations: A dilemma for students

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

We tend to be over-cautious when we guide our children in their professional choices. I realised this only after I had cajoled my children into studying sciences till their class 12. My rationale was that they could always switch to any other course for graduation, but the reverse was not possible. They are now happily pursuing their non-science professions, often ribbing me about how much better they could have done in their Board examinations had I not insisted. Many parents from my social circle still struggle to resolve the conundrum. A senior colleague faced such a dilemma for his daughter two decades back. My daughters were by now happily pursuing their dreams. I freely dispensed my wisdom to let the young lady pursue whatever she wanted. He was contemplative for some time before agreeing. He remembered his school friend, the son of a famous medical doctor. The friend was pushed into a medical college sometime in the late sixties. He quit after a couple of years, joined a



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

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

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



SANJAY CHANDRA



FIRST COLUMN

OVERCOMING JEALOUSY AND POSSESSIVENESS

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



RAVI VALLURI

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

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

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



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

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

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

How waterways shape global dominance



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

While many dismiss his comments as the reckless utterances of a man out of touch with the world's realities, those who know history understand that this is how empires operate: through calculated moves disguised as political theatrics. The bottom line is this: the manipulation of waterways remains an open secret, and the struggle for control is as intense as ever—whether by the West or any power with imperialistic and hegemonic ambitions.

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

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

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

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

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

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



HIMA BINDU KOTA

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

further led to the market's downward spiral. Geopolitical tensions including regional wars, ambiguous crude oil prices and subsequent disruptions in supply chains have impacted the markets and sector-specific tragedies like the Jeju Air crash in South Korea contributed to the overall bearish sentiment.

Weaker than expected third quarterly results, particularly in the banking and consumer goods sector, dampened the confidence displayed by the markets due to the resilient first two quarters showed by the Indian economy. This reduced the conviction further as the banking and consumer goods sectors were considered growth engines since the beginning of the year.



Stock market valuations in India and around the globe were elevated in 2024. In India, the higher valuations were fuelled by strong domestic economic growth and robust corporate earnings, leading to sustained investor confidence. Several companies ranging from premium P/E ratios, like Infosys (28-30x); HUL (55x); Bajaj Finance (40x); and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

An attorney for Mumbai attack convict Tahawwur Rana has urged the US Supreme Court to review the lower court's decision to extradite him to India, citing the principle of double jeopardy which prevents a person from being tried or punished twice for the same offence. India is seeking the extradition of Rana, a Canadian national of Pakistani origin, as he is wanted in the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks case. Having lost the legal battle in lower courts and several federal courts, including the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco, Rana had filed a petition for a writ of certiorari before the US Supreme Court on November 13. On December 16, US Solicitor General Elizabeth B. Prelogar urged the Supreme to reject the petition. Rana's counsel Joshua L. Dratel, in his response on



December 23 challenged the US Government's recommendation and pleaded with the Supreme Court that his writ be accepted. In a long battle, this is Rana's last legal chance not to be extradited to India. "The (Supreme) Court should grant the writ. On the merits, it should hold that the term 'offence' in the double jeopardy provision of the United States-India extradition treaty (and many other similar treaties) refers to the conduct underlying the charges in the two countries, rather than the elements of the crimes the respec-

tive countries have charged," Dratel argued. The court has scheduled a conference for both parties on this issue on January 17. Rana, currently lodged in a jail in Los Angeles, faces charges for his role in the Mumbai attacks and is known to be associated with Pakistani-American terrorist David Coleman Headley, one of the main conspirators of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. In his petitions for a writ of certiorari to review the judgment of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, Rana argued that he was tried and acquitted in federal court in the Northern District of Illinois (Chicago) on charges relating to the 2008 terrorist attack on Mumbai. "India now seeks to extradite him for trial on charges based on the identical conduct at issue in the Chicago case," it said. Prelogar disagreed. "The government does not concede that all of the conduct

on which India seeks extradition was covered by the government's prosecution in this case," the US Solicitor General had said. "For example, India's forgery charges are based in part on conduct that was not charged in the United States: petitioner's use of false information in an application to formally open a branch office of the Immigration Law Center submitted to the Reserve Bank of India," she said. "It is not clear that the jury's verdict in this case—which involves conspiracy charges and was somewhat difficult to parse—means that he has been 'convicted or acquitted' on all of the specific conduct that India has charged," Prelogar said. A total of 166 people, including six Americans, were killed in the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks in which 10 Pakistani terrorists laid a more than 60-hour siege, attacking and killing people at iconic and vital locations of Mumbai.

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

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korean investigators left the official residence of impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol after a near-six-hour standoff on Friday during which he defied their attempt to detain him. It's the latest confrontation in a political crisis that has paralyzed South Korean politics and seen two heads of state impeached in under a month. The country's anti-corruption agency said it withdrew its investigators after the presidential security service blocked them from entering Yoon's residence for hours, due to concerns about their safety. The agency said its outnumbered investigators had several scuffles with presidential security forces and expressed "serious regret about the attitude of the suspect, who did not comply with the legal process." Outside the residence, a large group of pro-Yoon protesters braved freezing temperatures for hours, waving South Korean and American flags while chanting slogans vowing to protect him. The National Police Agency said it planned to investigate the chief and deputy chiefs of the presidential security service on suspicion of obstructing official duty and summoned them for questioning on Saturday. Yoon, a former prosecutor, has resisted investigators' attempts to question him for weeks. The last time he is known to have left the residence was on Dec. 12, when he went to the nearby presidential office to make a televised statement to the nation, making a defiant statement that he will fight efforts to oust him. Investigators from the country's anti-corruption agency are weighing charges of rebellion after Yoon, apparently frustrated that his policies were blocked by an opposition-dominated parliament, declared martial law on Dec. 3 and dis-



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

patched troops to surround the National Assembly. Parliament overturned the declaration within hours in an unanimous vote and impeached Yoon on Dec. 14, accusing him of rebellion, while South Korean anti-corruption authorities and public prosecutors opened separate investigations into the events. A Seoul court issued a warrant to detain Yoon and a separate warrant to search his residence on Tuesday, but enforcing them is complicated as long as he remains in his official residence. Yoon's lawyers, who filed a challenge to the warrant on Thursday, say it cannot be enforced at his residence due to a law that protects locations potentially linked to military secrets from search without the consent of the person in charge. The office said it will discuss further actions but did not immediately say whether it would make another attempt to detain Yoon. The warrant for his detention is valid for one week. Yoon's lawyers have also argued that the Corruption

Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials, which is leading a joint investigation with police and military investigators, lacks the authority to investigate rebellion charges. They said that police officers don't have the legal authority to assist in detaining Yoon, and could face arrest by either the "presidential security service or any citizens." They didn't elaborate further on the claim. If investigators manage to detain Yoon, they will likely ask a court for permission to make a formal arrest. Otherwise, he will be released after 48 hours. During a background briefing to reporters, an official from the anti-corruption agency said its investigators were able to approach within 200 meters (yards) of Yoon's residence but were stopped by a barricade comprising around 10 vehicles and approximately 200 members of the presidential security forces and troops. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity per department rules, said three of its prosecutors were eventually allowed to approach the building but they weren't able to confirm whether

Yoon was inside. While the presidential security act mandates protection for Yoon, it does not authorize the presidential security service to block court-ordered detentions, which would amount to an infringement on judicial authority, said Park Seongbae, an attorney specializing in criminal law. While the president mostly has immunity from prosecution while in office, the protection does not extend to allegations of rebellion or treason. "There's a high possibility that the act of blocking the execution of a detention warrant would constitute an obstruction of official duty," he said. The law requiring consent of the person in charge for searches in locations with potential military secrets could continue to hinder Yoon's detention. Courts often require law enforcement officials to obtain search warrants with detention warrants in case they need to search the site to locate the suspect, which is also what the anti-corruption agency did in their pursuit of Yoon.

China downplays reports of flu outbreak, says country safe for travel

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Friday played down reports of a massive outbreak of flu in the country overwhelming hospitals, saying that cases of the

respiratory diseases which occur during the winter were less severe this year compared to last year. The Foreign Ministry here said it is safe for foreigners to travel to China.

"Respiratory infections tend to peak during the winter season in the northern hemisphere," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Mao Ning told the media here in response to a question on the

spread of influenza A and other respiratory diseases in China. Videos circulating on social media show overcrowded hospitals. "The diseases appear to be less severe and spread with a smaller scale compared to the previous year," she said. "I can assure you the Chinese government cares about the health of Chinese citizens and foreigners in China. It is safe to travel in China," she said. She also referred to guidelines issued by the National Disease Control and Prevention Administration of China regarding the prevention and control of respiratory diseases in the winter. For the past few days, reports of a massive flu outbreak in China have been circulating abroad, particularly in India and Indonesia. Health officials, however, maintain the outbreak is an annual occurrence during the winter. China is currently experiencing severe cold weather for the past few months.

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, (यांत्रिकी शाखा), भोपाल
क्रमांक. 157/यां.वि./24 भोपाल, दिनांक 30.12.2024

निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना
निम्न कार्य हेतु म.प्र. लोक निर्माण विभाग में पंचोक्त टेकेदारों से ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। विस्तृत विवरण Website <https://www.mptenders.gov.in> पर है।

क्र.	निविदा क्र.	कार्य का संक्षिप्त विवरण	अनुमानित लागत (रु. में)	निविदा क्रय करने का अंतिम	
				दिनांक	समय
01	2024_UAD_391606_1	PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF PARK AT NAMO VAN AT LALGHATI M.P.	5,94,39,194/-	28-JAN-2025	05:30 PM

नोट - संशोधन केवल वेबसाइट पर ही देखे जा सकेंगे, समाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशित नहीं होंगे।

Executive Engineer
Municipal Corporation Bhopal
District Bhopal
दि.क्र. 1031/024/025

U GRO Capital Limited
4th Floor, Tower 3, Equinox Business Park, LBS Road, Kurla, Mumbai 400070

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES
E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE OF 15 DAYS FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE ASSET(S) ["SECURED ASSET(S)"] UNDER THE SECURITIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 READ WITH PROVISION TO RULE 8 AND 9 OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Secured Asset(s) mortgaged / charged to U GRO Capital Limited ("Secured Creditor"), the possession of which has been taken by the authorized officer of Secured Creditor, will be sold on "AS IS" and "AS IS WHERE IS" and "Whatever there is" on the date and time mentioned herein below, for recovery of the dues mentioned herein below and further interest and other expenses thereon till the date of realization of amount, due to Secured Creditor from the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) mentioned herein below. The Reserve Price, Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) and last date of EMD deposit is also mentioned herein below:

Details of Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)	Details of Demand Notice	Details of Auction
1. Dawesco LLP 2. Neil Dawes Bhutani 3. Raemon Dawes Bhutani, 4. Arun Bhutani Loan Account Number : UGDELTH0000011248	Date of Notice : 10-06-2024 Outstanding Amount : Rs. 85,66,772/- as on 05-06-2024	Reserve Price : ₹ 1,00,37,115 /- EMD ₹ 10,03,712/- Last date of EMD Deposit : 22-01-2025 Date of Auction : 24-01-2025 Time of Auction : 11 AM to 01 PM Incremental Value : Rs. 1,00,000/-

Description of Secured Asset(s): "All that part and parcel of the immovable property bearing Property No. 129, area measuring 35 square yards, out of Khasra No. 303, consisting of Ground Floor, First Floor, Second Floor, Half Third Floor, situated in Abadi of Lal Dora of Village Saidulajab, Tehsil Saket (M.B. Road), New Delhi. Butted and bounded on the East by House of Mr. Ram Kumar, on the West by House of Mr. Raj Kumar, on the North by main M.B.Road, on the South by House of Others."

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in U GRO Capital Limited/Secured Creditor's website. i.e. www.ugrocapital.com or contact the undersigned at UgroCapital@ugrocapital.com

TAKE FURTHER NOTE that the previous sale notice published on dated 03-01-2025 in respect to the Secured Debt(s) and/or Secured Asset(s) herein above may be deemed as withdrawn on account of inadvertent error.
Date: 04-01-2025, Place : New Delhi

Authorised Officer, UGRO Capital Limited

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that my client Sarita is in process to avail the LAP against her property of land area measuring 10 marla, out of Khasra/Khata no. 744/855, Muslati no. 105, Kila no. 1817-41, 1718-01, situated in the revenue estate of Bhandoli, Tehsil Sohna, Distt. Gurugram, Haryana (avaluing loan from PCHL) having acquired the same vide Sale dated 30/11/2018, Doc no. 4348 executed by Urmila. She confirmed she is not having the below mentioned Documents pertaining to the property in question for that online FIR has already been lodged on dated 31/12/2025 vide application no. 13227002500006. Original Sale Deed dated 17.08.2012 executed by Urmila in favour of Urmila (Doc no. 3570). All persons having any claim against or in respect of the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable) registered or otherwise, gift, trust, inheritance, family arrangement, maintenance, bequest, partnership, possession, lease, sublease, tenancy, license, lien, charge, pledge, etc., contained in Book No. 1, Zild No. 31239, Page No. 185/208 in the Olo Sub-Registrar-IV, Ghaziabad, pertaining to property address Freehold Residential Plot No. A-61, admeasuring area 25 sq. yds. (20.90 sq.mtr.) of Falling under Khasra No. 427 situated at Pushp Vihar, in Village-Sadullab, Pargana & Tehsil - Loni, Distt - Ghaziabad (U.P.). In lieu of the same an NCR/FIR/Information Report LR No. 2443611/2024, dated 28.12.2024 has been filed with P.S. Crime Branch, Delhi. Hence, this notice is issued to public at large that if anyone finds the same, kindly contact the undersigned including 07 days of this publication.

TAPAN RAGHAV (Advocate)
Ch. No. G-220, Karkardoola Complex, Delhi-110032. (M - 8800096522)

MANIBHAVNAM HOME FINANCE INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED

NOTICE UNDER SECTION 13(2) OF THE SECURITIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002

The undersigned being the Authorized Officer, under the provision of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, of Manibhavnam Home Finance India Private Limited having its Registered Office at 2nd Floor, N-2, South Extension Part-I, New Delhi-110049, (hereinafter referred to as "MBHF"), which has duly been Authorised by the Central Government, vide a notification dated 17.06.2021, to be treated as a Financial Institution, for the purposes of the "The Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, hereby issue you the following notice:

1. MUKHI DEVI W/O RAM DEV SAHANI, 2. RAM DEV SAHANI C/O RAM SWARUP SAHANI, 3. LAXMI D/O RAMDEV SAHANI, 4. DHEERAJ SAHANI S/O RAM SWARUP SAHANI, All At - PLOT No-112 B, KHASRA No. 11/5, NATHUPURA, ULTRA KHAND ENCLAVE, BURARI DELHI - 110084, ALSO AT- M-215, GALI No. 14, SHASTRI NAGAR, ASHOK VIHAR (NORTH WEST DELHI), DELHI - 110025.

Loan A/c Numbers : LP000000002145 & HL000000001356, Loan Amount Availed /Date : Rs. 2,00,000 / 29-Jun-2020 & Rs. 19,70,000 / 30-Apr-2019.
Date of 13(2) Notice : 12-12-2024, NPA Date : 09-Oct-2024

Demand Date and Amount as Per Sec. 13(2) Act. Notice : Rs. 28,52,995.17/- as on 05-DEC-2024

Mortgage Properties: All That Piece And Parcel Of Property Entire Single Storey Built Up Property Bearing No. 112-B (Old), & New No. 112, With Land Area Measuring 50 Square Yards Or Say 41.805 Square Meters, Comprising Of Ground Floor With Its Roof/Terrace Rights Upto Sky High, Comprising In Khasra No. 11/5, Situated In The Area Of Village Burari, Delhi-110084, Abadi Known As Shastri Park Ext. Intra-Khand Enclave, Block-A, Gali No.3, Burari, Delhi-110084, And The Same Is Bounded As Under:- East:- Road, North:- Other's Property, West:- Road, South Other's Property.

1. SONAM W/O- KAMAL MAVI, 2. KAMAL MAVI S/O- BHOOP SINGH, Both at - R/O-GT ROAD OPP CHHAPRAJUA POLICE CHOWK DADRI, UTTAR PRADESH - 203207. ALSO AT:- KHASRA No. 782, VILLAGE-KHERA DHARAMPURA GAUTAM BUDHA NAGAR UTTAR PRADESH 203207. Sr. No 2 also at - ALSO AT:- LITTLE FEET PRACTICE SCHOOL OFF ROAD OPP CHHAPRAJUA POLICE CHOWK DADRI, UTTAR PRADESH-203207. ALSO AT - KHERA DHARAMPURA CHHAPRAJUA, GAUTAM BUDHA NAGAR UTTAR PRADESH 201009.

Loan A/c Numbers : LP0000000009865, Loan Amount Availed /Date : Rs. 48,233.9 / 30-Jul-2022. Date of 13(2) Notice : 17-DEC-2024, NPA Date : 09-12-2024

Demand Date and Amount as Per Sec. 13(2) Act. Notice : Rs. 29,27,606.47/- as on 13-DEC-2024

Mortgage Properties : ALL THAT THE PIECE OF PARCEL OF PROPERTY RESIDENTIAL HOUSE AREA MEASURING 284 SQ. YDS., I.E., 237.45 SQ. METERS, OUT OF KHASRA No. 782, SITUATED IN THE AREA OF VILLAGE KHERA DHARAMPURA PARGANA & TEHSIL DADRI, DISTRICT GAUTAM BUDHA NAGAR, U.P. Boundaries :- East- Road 12th, West- House Bijendra, North- House Aazad, South- House Anand.

1. Danavati W/O Naresh Kamat, 2. Naresh Kamat S/O Janak Kamat, 3. Dinesh Kamat S/O Janak Kamat, 4. Umesh S/O Janak Kamat. All At - H No-315 Bombay Colony Nandgram Ghaziabad - 201001. Also At- Dps Public School, No. 526/1, Judges Enclave, Ahinsa Khand 2, Indrapuram-201010. Also At :- Amity International School, Sector 4, Sector 6, Vasudra, Ghaziabad-201012.

Loan A/c Numbers : LP000000005135, Loan Amount Availed /Date : Rs. 48,233.9 / 30-Jul-2022. Date of 13(2) Notice : 17-DEC-2024, NPA Date : 09-12-2024

Demand Date and Amount as Per Sec. 13(2) Act. Notice : Rs. 45,179.43/- 14-DEC-2024

Mortgage Properties : ALL THAT PIECES AND PARCEL OF PROPERTY H.NO 315 BOMBAY COLONY NAND GRAM GHAZIABAD UTTAR PRADESH GHAZIABAD 201003. total area 26.14 sq.mt.

Further with reasons, we believe that you are evading the service of demand notice, hence this publication of demand notice. You are hereby called upon to pay MANIBHAVNAM HOME FINANCE INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED within a period of 60 days of publication of this demand notice the aforesaid amount alongwith further interest, cost, incidental expenses, charges etc., failing which MANIBHAVNAM HOME FINANCE INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED will take necessary action under all or any of the provision of Sec. 13(4) of the said Act against all or any one or more of the secured assets including taking possession of this secured assets of the borrower/s. Further you are prohibited U/S 13(13) of the said Act from transferring either by way of sale/lease or in any other way the aforesaid secured assets. Please note that no further demand notice will be issued.

Date - 04.01.2025
Place - Delhi & UP

Authorised officer
MANIBHAVNAM HOME FINANCE INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is to inform the public at large that Mr. Umesh Kumar and Mrs. Anju Rani had acquired Built Up Property bearing No. WZ-475, area measuring 41 sq. yds., situated in the area of Village Basal Darapur Delhi vide Sale Deed Dt. 22.02.2024 executed by Mr. Pradeep and Now Mr. Umesh Kumar and Mrs. Anju Rani is the undisputed owner of the said property.

OR

Any person / firm / institution / company having any claim or right in respect of the said Property by way of inheritance, share sale, agreement, lease, license, gift, possession, legal heirs, partners or encumbrance however or otherwise is hereby required to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice of his/her their share or claim, if any, with all supporting documents at below mentioned address. After expiration of notice period, the claims, if any of such person shall be treated null and void and also treated as waived and not binding on our client.

Ajay Kumar Giri (Advocate) H No. 26/161, Basement, Vikram Vihar, Lajpat Nagar 4, New Delhi - 110024

INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) FOR ASSIGNMENT OF NBRI (NOT READILY REALIZABLE ASSETS) UNDER REGULATION 37A OF THE IBSI (LIQUIDATION) PROCESS REGULATIONS, 2016

IN THE MATTER OF COMPACT LAMPS PRIVATE LIMITED- IN LIQUIDATION
(CIN - U31501DL2005PTC1400731)

EOI's are being invited for assignment of following Not Readily Realizable Assets ("NBRA") in the matter of Compact Lamps Private Limited under Regulation 37A read with Regulation 44A of IBSI (Liquidation Process) Regulations, 2016 (Within ambit of IBC, 2016) on "AS IS WHERE IS, AS IS WHAT IS, WHATEVER THERE IS AND WITHOUT RECOURSE BASIS". The details of the same are as follows:-

- Transaction Application under Preferential and Undervalued Application filed under Section 43 and 45 of the Code having IA No. 2658/2020 and Fraudulent Trading or wrongful trading Application filed under Section 66 of the Code having IA No. 2660/2020. (All rights and interests including litigation right).

Interested parties may submit their offers to the undersigned latest by 20th January, 2025 and accordingly relevant documents will be shared with the interested parties for their due diligence. The assignment will be subject to the provisions of the IBC, 2016, Regulations made thereunder and the process document. For further details please refer to process document published on website <https://insolvencyandbankruptcy.in/public-announcement/compact-lamps-private-limited/>

Note:- The issuance of this EOI does not imply that the Liquidator is bound to select an applicant/ assignee/transferee or to appoint the Preferred applicant/assignee/transferee as successful applicant/assignee/transferee for the assets of the company on offer and the Liquidator reserves the right to reject all or any of the offers in consultation with SCC.

Sd/-
Deepika Bhugra Prasad - Liquidator
Compact Lamps Private Limited (in Liquidation)
IBBI Regn No: IBSI/PA-003/IP-NO010/2017-2018/1186
AAA Insolvency Professionals LLP
64, 1st Floor, Okhla Estate, Phase III, New Delhi-110020
Email ID: compact.lamps@aaainsolvency.com; assetsale@aaainsolvency.com
Contact No. : + 91 8800865284 (Mr. Wasim/Raj Kumar)
Date: 03/01/2025 & Place: New Delhi

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

AP ■ KYIV

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

20, hasn't publicly fleshed out his policy on Ukraine but his previous comments have put a question mark over whether the United States will continue to be Ukraine's biggest — and most important — military backer. Zelenskyy is eager to guarantee that Washington's support keeps coming, and he met with Trump in New York even before last November's US presidential election. With the war about to enter its fourth year next month, and with Trump coming to power, the question of how and when Europe's biggest conflict since World War II might end has come to the fore. Russia controls about one-fifth of Ukraine and last year capitalised on weaknesses in Ukraine's defences to slowly advance in eastern areas despite high losses of troops and equipment. The war's trajectory is not in Ukraine's favour. The country is short-handed on



the front line and needs continued support from its Western partners. Trump responded favorably to the possibility raised by French President Emmanuel Macron of Western peacekeepers being deployed in Ukraine to oversee an agreement that stops the fighting, Zelenskyy said. He met with Trump and Macron in Paris last month. "But I raised an issue, saying we didn't hear what specific countries will join this initiative, and whether the US will be there," Zelenskyy said. The Ukrainian leader is determined for his country to become a NATO member. The alliance's 32 member coun-

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

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

PTI ■ BEIJING

Investing heavily in modernisation, the Chinese military has cautioned its armed forces against banking heavily on artificial intelligence saying that AI should be a tool to guide but not a replacement for human decision-making in the battlefield because it lacks self-awareness capability. "As AI evolves, it must remain a tool guided by human judgment, ensuring accountability, creativity, and strategic adaptability remain at the forefront of military decision-making" an article published in People's Liberation Army Daily, the official media of the Chinese military said on New Year's Eve. "AI must work in tandem with human decision-makers to optimise command effectiveness, enhancing rather than replacing human agency," it said. AI can be used to augment human capabilities — through data analysis, simulations or planning — but cannot replace the

of the technology is its inability to reflect on its own actions or take responsibility for its decisions, unlike human commanders who can refine their plans in response to the circumstances. Even advanced systems, such as autonomous missile defence, typically rely on human operators for final decisions to ensure accountability. The Daily said PLA preferred a model where "humans plan and AI executes" in which the technology is used to carry out the strategies and tactics developed by commanders and keeps an element of human oversight. The military prefers a structure where machines analyse data, provide insights and suggest potential actions. However, "final decisions rest with human commanders, safeguarding against errors stemming from AI's black-box nature", the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post report said. The article said another weakness

joint training to meet the goal of becoming a world-class military by 2049. The PLAA has continued to demonstrate long-range joint fire capability, the US Department of Defence report titled "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China" said. The PLA Navy (PLAN), numerically has the largest navy in the world, with a battle force of over 370 ships and submarines, including more than 140 major surface combatants. The PLAN is largely composed of modern multi-mission ships and submarines, it said. PLA Air Force (PLAAF) is modernising and indigenising its aircraft and unmanned aerial systems rapidly, matching US standards. In 2023, the PLA transferred significant portions of PLAN shore-based, fixed-wing combat aviation units, facilities, air defence, and radar units to the PLAAF; the Pentagon report said.

Human autonomy and creativity are indispensable on the battlefield, it said adding that while human commanders can respond to situations dynamically, and exploit enemy weaknesses AI operates within predefined algorithmic boundaries and its responses often lack originality, it said. The Daily said PLA preferred a model where "humans plan and AI executes" in which the technology is used to carry out the strategies and tactics developed by commanders and keeps an element of human oversight. The military prefers a structure where machines analyse data, provide insights and suggest potential actions. However, "final decisions rest with human commanders, safeguarding against errors stemming from AI's black-box nature", the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post report said. The article said another weakness

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New Orleans inches toward normalcy

AP ■ NEW ORLEANS
 A mix of law enforcement, street performers and football fans has filled New Orleans' blocks as the city inches back to normalcy while mourning victims of the deadly New Year's rampage in which an Army veteran ploughed a truck into revelers.
 The attack along Bourbon Street killed 14 people, along with the driver, Shamsud-Din Jabbar, who officials said was inspired by the Islamic State militant group. Jabbar was fatally shot in a fire-fight with police after steering his speeding truck around a barricade and ploughing into the crowd. About 30 people were injured.
 Authorities finished processing the scene Thursday morning, removing the last of the bodies. Bourbon Street — famous worldwide for music, open-air drink-

30 killed by Israeli strikes in Gaza

AP ■ DEIR AL-BALAH
 At least 30 people, including children, were killed in Gaza by Israeli strikes overnight and into Friday morning, said hospital staff, as air sirens sounded across Israel and stalled ceasefire talks were set to resume.
 Staff at the Al Aqsa Martyrs hospital said more than a dozen women and children were killed in strikes that hit various places in Central Gaza, including Nuseirat, Zawaida, Maghazi and Deir al Balah. Dozens of people were also killed across the enclave the previous day, bringing the total of people killed in the past 24 hours to 56. Strikes Thursday hit Hamas security officers and an Israeli-declared humanitarian zone. The Israeli army did not immediately comment on the latest strikes, but says it only targets militants and blames Hamas for civilian deaths.
 Israelis also woke up to attacks early Friday morning. Israel said missiles were fired into the country from Yemen, which set off air raid sirens in Jerusalem and central Israel and sent people scrambling to shelters. There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage, though a faint explosion, likely either from the missile or from interceptors, could be heard in Jerusalem. Israel's army said a missile was intercepted.
 As the attacks were underway, efforts at ceasefire negotiations were expected to resume Friday.
 Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said he had authorized a delegation from the Mossad intelligence agency, the Shin Bet internal security agency and the military to continue negotiations in Qatar.
 The delegation is leaving for Qatar on Friday.
 The US-led talks have repeatedly stalled during 15 months of war, which was sparked by Hamas-led militants' Oct. 7, 2023 attack into Israel. The militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250.
 Around 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, at least a third believed to be dead.
 Israel's offensive in retaliation has killed over 45,500 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which says women and children make up more than half the dead. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its tally.
 Israel's military says it only targets militants and blames Hamas for civilian deaths because its fighters operate in dense residential areas.

PUBLIC NOTICE

My clients Joginder Kumar and his wife Rita Devi both R/o A-43, Ground Floor, Gali No.01, Aali Vihar, Sarita Vihar, South Delhi Delhi-110076 have disowned their daughter Roshni from their all moveable-immovable properties and severed all relations with her due to her disobedience. My clients shall not be responsible for her any act.
A.K. Mishra (Advocate) Ch. No.415, Saket Court New Delhi-17

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client Mrs. Raj Bala owner of Plot No. 84-A, area measuring 250 sq. yds. of Plot No. 84, Total area measuring 500 sq. yds. out of Kharsa No. 523, situated in the abadi of Lal Dora of Village Mahipal Pur, New Delhi-110037. Through Registered Relinquish Mnt Deed Dated 23.12.2024 executed by Mr. Prashant Sehrawal (Son) and Mr. Paras Sehrawal (Son) vide Reg. No. 2024/1516 at SR-VII, Delhi the above-mentioned property is going to be mortgaged with Fedbank Financial Services Limited. If any person/bank/financial institution having any claim/right, lien, Any objection whatsoever in regard to the above property, should notified to the undersigned/Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092 along with documentary evidence under address through registered within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived. Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092; Mob. 9811215181

PUBLIC NOTICE

Information is given to general public at large that Simran W/o Rahul Kashyap who is/are purchasing the Property Bearing Municipal No. 2532, Ground Floor Without roof Rights, having area measuring 52 Sq. Yards, Ward No. XII, Situated at Basti Punjabiyan Subzi Mandi, Delhi-110007 from Inder Mohan Sharma S/o Kausal Kumar Sharma who was the owner of property by virtue of Sale Deed dated 13.10.2023 (Doc. No. 2023/19/13596), registered in the office of the Sub-Registrar-Delhi executed by Veena Sansi W/o Inder Mohan Intend to mortgage the same against the financial assistance from Shubham Housing Development Finance Company Limited. Registration Particular of Original Sale Deed dated 13.10.2023 (Doc. No. 2023/19/13596) of said property is lost and not available with Seller i.e. Inder Mohan Sharma S/o Kausal Kumar Sharma. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any person(s) having any objection regarding ownership and/or creating mortgage of the said property is/are hereby requested to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days at below address.
NCR LAW ASSOCIATES
 Advocates & Consultants A-9, Sector-9, New Vihar, Ghaaziabad, (U.P.)-201009, Mob. 9999826427, 9999721152

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that my client Bishnu is an executor of the Will of the late Mr. P. D. Singh, P.O. No. P0700500025, Area Measuring 96 Sq. Yds., out of Kharsa No. 523, situated at Waka Mauja Ballabgarh, Tehsil Ballabgarh, District Faridkot, Haryana (having loan from PCHFL from Meenu, having acquired the said property vide Transfer Deed dated 12/9/2022 (Document No. 4390) executed by her mother Girra. He consents that the said property is not having the below mentioned Documents pertaining to the property in question for that online FIR has already been lodged on dated 25/12/2024 vide application no. 132297240045 Original Sale Deed dated 31.10.1995 in favour of Girra (Doc No. 4157)
 All persons having any claim against or in respect of the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, family arrangement, maintenance, request, partnership, possession, lease, sublease, tenancy, license, lien, charge, pledge, easement or otherwise whatsoever, are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to the undersigned within 7 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned. Kamal Kant Gupta (Advocate) Unit No. FF-2, First Floor, Mahalaxmi Metro Tower Sec-4, Vasahat, Gzb. (U.P., Mob. 9811065335)

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the public at large that my client ICICI Bank is advancing an education loan to Mr. Arjuman Khurana, Mr. Amit Khurana & Mrs. Vartika Khurana for Apartment No. 2002 (260.31 Sq. Mtrs.), 20th Floor, Tower No. WT-03, Windchamps, Sector-112, Village - Chauma, Gurugram, Haryana (said property). The said property was originally owned by Mr. Suninder Malhotra, however, upon his demise, the property devolved upon Mrs. Sushma Malhotra (wife), Mr. Jatin Malhotra (son), and Ms. Varuna Malhotra (daughter). The son and the daughter executed a Relinquishment Deed in favour of Mrs. Sushma Malhotra and subsequently a Conveyance Deed dated 25.09.2020 was executed by M/s Experion Developers Pvt. Ltd. The said property was purchased by Mr. Amit Khurana and Mrs. Vartika Khurana and is now being mortgaged. If anybody has any claim or objection upon the said property by way of inheritance, share, sale, agreement, lease, license, gift, possession, legal heirs, partners, encumbrance however or otherwise is required to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice with supporting documents. After the expiration of notice period, the claim(s), if any of such person shall be treated as null and void and will be treated as waived.
TAPAN RAGHAV (Advocate)
 Ch. No. G-20, Karkardooma Courts, Delhi-110032. (M - 8800096522)

PUBLIC NOTICE

Information is given to general public at large that my client Mr. Zafar Ali S/o Mohd. Ali who is the owner of One Shop bearing Pvt. No. B, on Ground Floor without roof rights, area measuring 15.79 sq. mt. Part of Property bearing Municipal No. XIV/1055-56 and 1062, situated at Ward No. XIV, Pan Mandi, Sander Bazar, Delhi-110006, by virtue of Sale Deed dated 09.11.2020 executed by Mr. Anil Kumar s/o Late Jagat Ram (Doc. No. 7839), Any person(s), institution(s) having any claim and/or objection in respect of the said property shall communicate the same to the undersigned at our address within 07 days from the publication of this notice with documentary evidence in support thereof, failing which the claim, of such person(s)/institution(s) shall not be binding upon the said property or purchaser.
Ram Prakash Pandey, (Advocate), 2E/23, 3rd Floor, Jhandewalan Extn., New Delhi-110055, Mob. 9871308962

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that Mr. Naresh Kumar Gupta is the GPA holder of Property Bearing No. 7, B, area measuring 26 Sq. Yds. i.e., 20.90 Sq. Mtrs. out of Kharsa No. 1014, situated at Subhash Park-2, Malabar colony, Pargana Lohi, Tehsil G, District Ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh-201309. He is in possession through Regd. GPA dated 15.08.2018 as doc. no. 4332 executed by Smt. Archana in favour of Mr. Naresh Kumar Gupta in respect of the said property.
 Mr. Naresh Kumar Gupta intends to transfer the ownership of aforementioned Property by way of Sale Deed to Mr. Bijendra Singh. Subsequently, Mr. Bijendra Singh is in the process of mortgaging the said property with SBFG India Home Finance Co. Ltd. (Formerly Fullerton India Home Finance Co. Ltd.). Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within 07 days from the date of this public notice. Any objections submitted after the completion of this 07-day period will not be considered binding with respect to the said property or the interests of our client.
 If anyone wishes to raise an objection, please do so within the stipulated 07-days period by contacting Law Veritas: North (Advocates & Legal Consultants) at Office No. 11, 1st Floor, Building No. A-4/A1, Sector-16, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301; Landline: +91202-3191685, e-mail: accounts@veritnorth.in

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M.P. STATE AGRICULTURAL MARKETING BOARD

Office of The Chief Engineer, 26 Arera Hills, Jail Road, Bhopal Board/Nirman/P.CeII/Consultant Empanelment/24-25/1259 Bhopal, Dated : 02.01.2025

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

M.P. State agricultural Marketing Board, Bhopal ("MPSAMB") invites REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL from reputed organization/agency for "Empanelment of Consultants & Architects/firm" for providing Technical Consultancy Services, Architectural Planning, Designing & Estimation, Preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR), Bid Process Management etc. for various Infrastructures, building construction projects and PPP (Public Private Partnership) & BOT (Built, Operate & Transfer) projects in Head Office Bhopal, Divisional Office and APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) of Madhya Pradesh. (STN No. 2025_MPSAMB_392598) Interested firms may submit their proposals on e-procurement portal i.e. www.mptenders.gov.in. The following Empanelment Tender to be received Online up to 5:30 PM on 23.01.2025. Technical bid documents with EMD & Financial Offer to be received online only as per Detailed NIT. The tender documents can be obtained Online on the above Portal and detailed information can also be seen on website www.mpmadboard.gov.in
Note : Any corrigendum in this NIT, if required, shall be displayed only in above portal regarding any matter included in this NIT or otherwise. Other details can also be seen on our website www.mpmadboard.gov.in
M.P.M./118119/2025 EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (PROJECT CELL)

राष्ट्रीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, कुरुक्षेत्र
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
 (Under the Ministry of Education, Govt. of India)
KURUKSHETRA-136119 (HARYANA)
 Advt.No.03/2025
Special PhD Admission Drive for SC/ST in Even Semester of Academic Year 2024-25
 National Institute of Technology, Kurukshetra invites online applications via Google Form from Indian and Foreign nationals for admission in the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Degree Programs on Full Time (Institute/CSIR-UGC-NET-JRF), Self-Financed Full Time and Part Time seats for Academic Year 2024-25. Number of Seats, Online Application Form Link, and other relevant details along with Ph.D. Regulation are available on the Institute website: www.nitkkr.ac.in under Admission 2024-> Ph.D. tab. All interested candidates may fill the Google Form latest by **January 10, 2025, 03:00 PM**. If the application is incomplete or any information is found misleading/false at any point during or after the admission process, the candidate's candidature/admission will be cancelled and the application fee will not be refunded in any case. Please visit Institute website regularly for any announcement or updates in this regard.
 Sd/- Registrar /IC

GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, AMRITSAR
 (Established by the State Legislature Act No. 21 of 1969)
 Only University of Punjab to have earned "Category-1" Status
 Accredited with CGPA 3.85 on four-point scale at "A++" grade (highest among all India centre, state public and private universities) and conferred upon "University with potential for Excellence" status by UGC
ADMISSION NOTICE FEBRUARY-2025 BATCH
UGC-DEB ENTITLED COURSES UNDER DIRECTORATE OF ONLINE STUDIES
Admissions are open for following UGC DEB entitled courses in fully Online Mode under Directorate of Online Studies, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. The candidates may visit the Directorate's website (<http://gndu-online.in>) for filling online application form and further details.

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

Admission is Open for Academic session Jan-2025 batch and LAST DATE to apply online is 28th Feb 2024
 All Courses are approved under entitled category by UGC-DEB, New Delhi vide letter No. F.No.2-1/2024 (DEB-II) dt. Nav. 2024
 For an enquiry please contact the Directorate office via email, onlineprograms@gndu.ac.in, contact: admission@gndu.ac.in or via phone/whatsapp @ +91-7253875261/ 9005287819, 0183-282-3113
Note: Any corrigendum / Addendum to the Admission notice may be issued, if required, as per rules & regulations of the University, will be published on the Director website only.
Dean Academic Affairs
 Prof. Dr. Subhraj Kumar Jain, Director, Directorate of online Studies, GNDU, Amritsar
 Parveen Kumar Director, Public Relations Department, GNDU, Amritsar

PUNE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION-HEALTH DEPARTMENT
TENDER CELL DEPARTMENT
TENDER ADVERTISEMENT

Sr.No	Particulars	Date
1	Tender Form Sale Period	04/01/2025
2	Tender Form Receiving Period	04/01/2025
3	Bid Submission End Date	29/01/2025
4	Tender Opening Date	31/01/2025
5	Pre-Bid Meeting Date	10/01/2025

Tender No.	Depart ment Name	Name Of Work	Tender Fees	B1/B2	Emd Amt.	Period of Work	Contact Person Mobile No
PMC/Health/CMS/12/2024-25	Health	For Pune Municipal Corporation's hospitals and dispensaries to purchase medical equipments and instruments for a period of 24 months.	17987/-	B-2		24 months	Rahul Namdev Wadgaye 9881190696

Sd/- Dr. Sanjeev Wavare Asst. Medical Officer of Health Pune Municipal Corporation
 Sd/- Dr. Nina Borade Medical Officer of Health Pune Municipal Corporation

PUNE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION-HEALTH DEPARTMENT
TENDER CELL DEPARTMENT
TENDER ADVERTISEMENT

Sr.No	Particulars	Date
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ADVT NO : 3/1160
 DATE : 03.01.2025

CORRIGENDUM NO. 01
 Corrigendum for Tender Notice of work contract vide DRM(Works)/Kathihar's Notice No. KIR/Engg/55 of 2024 Dated: 23-12-2024.
 Please read the modified Date of Closing & Opening of the tender as under:

The existing Date & Time		The modified Date & Time	
Date & Time of closing of Tender	Date & Time of opening of Tender	Date & Time of closing of Tender	Date & Time of opening of Tender
15:00 hrs. on 22-01-2025	15:30 hrs. on 22-01-2025	15:00 hrs. on 03-02-2025	15:30 hrs. on 03-02-2025

Bidding start date on 20-01-2025 instead of 08-01-2025. All other terms and conditions of above tender will remain unchanged.
 Divisional Railway Manager (Works), Kathihar
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
 Serving Customers With A Smile

verka
 Har Din Da, Har Din Da
THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD.
 SCO 153-155, SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022, EPABX No. 0172-5041812,66
 Notice Inviting Tender www.verka.coop

tenders are hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following items:-

Sr. No.	Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative Qty
1.	For Verka Head Office, Chandigarh a) LN2 Containers b) - Maize Hybrid c) Bajra hybrid (Multicut seeds) d) Thermoforming packaging film for vacuum packing of paneer.	Annual/ 252 No's 1228.07 Qts 468.17 Qts Bottom web: 45 MT Top film: 18 MT
3.	For Verka Bathinda Dairy a) 80 ML paper cone sleeve with sugar rolled. i. Chocolate ii. Black Current iii. Caramel b) Lids for 80 ML Ice Cream Cone i. Strawberry ii. Black Current iii. Caramel c) Ice Cream Cones 40 ML for Ice Cream i. Butter Scotch ii. Chocolate d) Lids for 40 ML for Ice Cream Cones i. Butter Scotch ii. Chocolate e) 125 ML IML cups for Ice Cream i. Cookies and Crumb ii. Muddy Chocolate iii. Almond Chocolate iv. Almond Carnival v. American Nut vi. Afghan Dry Fruit vii. Kaju Anjir viii. Mango ix. Strawberry x. Pink Guava xi. Litchi f) Polyfilm for 60 ML bar and Ice Candy i. Choco delight ii. Rabri Kulfli iii. Mango Bar iv. Cola Bar v. Orange Bar vi. Mango Duet vii. Black Current viii. Rajshog ix. Fista x. No Added Sugar g) Used corrugated waste, can steels, Polyliner/Polyfilm Scrap (milk, curd, lassi, butter etc), Assorted used curd/kheer cups/ misc bottles scrap, assorted used matka scrap, empty ghee tins, ghee jars, plastic tray, powder tins, SNAP/WMP craft paper and liner, PVC cutting rolls, primary and secondary packaging material, Misc. used Cannies (Capacity 1 to 15 litre) Scrap, Misc used Cannies (capacity above 20 to 50 litres) scrap. h) Disposal of other unserviceable items lying at Verka Bathinda Dairy.	05 Lacs 05 Lacs 05 Lacs 05 Lacs 05 Lacs 05 Lacs 20 Lacs 20 Lacs 20 Lacs 20 Lacs 50000 No's 50000 No's 50000 No's 50000 No's 50000 No's 50000 No's 20000 No's 20000 No's 20000 No's 2500 kg 1000 kg 500 kg 500 kg 1000 kg 1000 kg 500 kg 2000 kg 2000 kg Annual Rate contract Half Yearly Rate contract

NOTE:
 1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in.
 2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.
 Dy. General Manager (Purchase)
 NA/12/27285/2023/40473 Dated CHD :- 1/3/2025

STORES E-PROCUREMENT

E-procurement Tender Notice No. S/31/2024-25 Dated: 30-12-2024. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works.

SN.1. Tender No. 83/24/0004C/OT/261/2024-25
Closing/Opening date: 13-01-2025
Brief Description: Thermal Tickets Rolls of 500 each for Unreserved Ticketing System (UTS) as per specification under RB's Commercial circular no. 12 of 2018 dated 09.02.2018 and 55 of 2018 dated 25.09.2018 [both attached], special note: (1) Top coated thermal paper shall be with image durability of minimum two years. (2) Masking tape/paper tape used for joining plain white paper at the end of last ticket shall be affixed on the front side of the ticket roll in such a manner that the black mark on behind of the ticket does not get over lapped. Tape should not cover ticket more than 5 MM. [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery] [Quantity Tolerance (+/-): 1% age, Item Category: Normal, Total PO value variation Permitted: Max 8 lacs] 1) Qty-2368.00 Numbers for Dibrugarh Town/WORKSHOP/DEPOT, NFR (Assam), 2) Qty-9162.00 Numbers for Guwahati FORMS DEPOT, NFR (Assam), 3) Qty- 6070.00 Numbers for Kathihar/GSD, NFR (Bihar), 4) Qty-5467.00 Numbers for New Jalpaiguri/GSD, NFR (West Bengal), P.L.No.- 83250050.

SN.2. Tender No. 61/24/5546/OT/262/2024-25
Closing/Opening date: 16-01-2025
Brief Description: Manufacture and Supply for Nylon reinforced Grooved Rubber Sole Plates 6 mm thick for 1 in 8.5 turnouts on 60 kg PSC sleepers to RDSO Drg. No. T-4965, conforming to IRS specification for Rail pads for placing beneath Rail, St. No. T-55-2023. [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery] [UJAM linking:] Item Type: Goods, Qty- 406 Set for SSE/P.Way/TD/Bongaigaon, NFR (Assam), P.L.No. 60110892.

SN.3. Tender No. 30/24/1329A/OT/263/2024-25
Closing/Opening date: 20-01-2025
Brief Description: Set of control arm for LHB bogies consisting of 1) Control Arm Lower Left, Drg No. FIAT 1267716 Ver 00R2 or latest 2) control arm upper to FIAT Drg No. 1277122 Ver-01R3 or latest Mat Spec.-: 17.334 100 06/107/01 Amnd. 01, MDTs-166 Rev-02, IS:1865-91 SG 400/18L [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery] [Inspection Agency: TPI, Stage Insp.: No, Stages: 0] [UJAM linking:] Item Type-Goods 1) Qty-140 Set for Dibrugarh Town/WORKSHOP/DEPOT, NFR (Assam), 2) Qty: 66 Set for Pandu/GSD, NFR (Assam), 3) Qty- 156 Set for New Bongaigaon/WORKSHOP/DEPOT, NFR (Assam), 4) Qty- 20 Set for New Jalpaiguri/GSD, NFR (West Bengal), 5) Qty- 6 Set for Kathihar/GSD, NFR (Bihar), P.L.No.- 33500137.

SN.4. Tender No. 61/24/5412/OT/264/2024-25
Closing/Opening date: 27-01-2025
Brief Description: Elastic Rail clips MK-V as per RDSO Drg No T-5919 with latest alteration and in accordance with IRS Specification IRS T-31-2018, (Fourth Revision) and as amended up to 20 days prior to the date of closing of tender. [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery] [Inspection Agency: TPI, Stage Insp.: Yes, Stages: 1] [UJAM linking:] Item Type: Goods, Qty- 2077544 Nos for SSE/P.Way/TD/Bongaigaon, NFR (Assam), P.L.No.- 60110557.

SN.5. Tender No. 30/24/1465/OT/265/2024-25
Closing/Opening date: 30-01-2025
Brief Description: Manual uncoupling arrangement assembly for LHB passenger coaches. MAT. SPEC.: RDSO/2011/CG-03 (REV-03) [Warranty Period: 84 Months after the date of delivery] [Inspection Agency: TPI, Stage Insp.: No, Stages: 0] [UJAM linking:] Item Type: Goods 1) Qty- 541 Nos. for Dibrugarh Town/WORKSHOP/DEPOT, NFR (Assam), 2) Qty- 40 Nos. for Pandu/GSD, NFR (Assam), 3) Qty- 401 Nos. for New Bongaigaon/WORKSHOP/DEPOT, NFR (Assam), 4) Qty- 2 Nos. for New Jalpaiguri/GSD, NFR (West Bengal), P.L.No.- 33542600.

SN.6. Tender No. 61/24/5474/OT/266/2024-25
Closing/Opening date: 21-01-2025
Brief Description: Fabrication and supply of newly developed improved Switch Expansion Joint for 2 degree to 4 degree curve for 60 kg (UIC) rail section for long welded Rail on PSC sleepers along with all parts as per Drawing excluding ERCs, Liners & Rubber Pads (a) 60 kg Improved Switch Expansion Joint for 2 degree to 4 degree curve as per RDSO Drg No. T-8924 (Rahee make Drg.No. RH/PC5911 (Rev-4) [Warranty Period: 84 Months after the date of delivery] [Inspection Agency: TPI, Stage Insp.: No, Stages: 0] [UJAM linking:] Item Type: Goods. Qty: 18 set for SSE/P.Way/TD/Bongaigaon, NFR (Assam), P.L. No. 6060128.

SN.7. Tender No. 61/24/5225A/OT/267/2024-25
Closing/Opening date: 27-01-2025
Brief Description: T/O 1 in 16 60 kg, RDSO DRG No. T-5891 (Fabricated switches [Description-11200mm O/R (Curved) Fan shaped Switch for 1 in 16 T/O for BG 60 Kg (UIC) on PSC Sleepers to RDSO Drg. No. T/5692 Alt. 03 as per IRS Specification IRS-T-10-2023 complete with stock rails, tongue rails and all parts with fittings including check rails as listed in the RDSO drawing but excluding Liner, Elastic rail Clip, Fish plate & Fish Bolts, & PSC Sleeper] and CMS Xing body [Description-CMS Crossing 1 in 16 BG for 60 kg Rails on PSC Sleepers as per RDSO Drg No. T/5693 (Alt.02) complete with fittings as per specification No. IRS T-29 (Revised 2022). List of fittings to be supplied with is enclosed as Annexure-A] [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery] [Inspection Agency: TPI, Stage Insp.: No, Stages: 0] [UJAM Linking:] Item Type: Goods, Qty: 6 set for Sr. Section Engineer/P.Way/New Halong, NFR (Assam), (ii) Qty: 7 set for SSE/P.Way/Hill/Lumding, NFR (Assam), P.L. No. 60220077.
Note: For full details of tender notice and tender documents, tenderer may log on to the website (www.ireps.gov.in). Prospective bidder who intend to participate in above tender are required to log on themselves with the above website and submit their offer electronically, if they are already registered with IREPS. In Case they are not registered with IREPS, they are advised to obtain class-III Digital Signature Certificate from the certifying agencies under Govt. of India IT Act 2000 and participate in the above tenders.
 PCMM, Maligaon

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday said the electric vehicle (EV) companies present in the meeting have unanimously agreed that they would no longer need subsidies once the existing subsidy regime ends. Stakeholders from the EV sector held deliberations with the minister here on issues pertaining to development of battery charging and swapping infrastructure. The minister also said that companies are free to choose their own business models.

Whether they prefer to collaborate and share resources for battery swapping or sell vehicles with their own batteries, the decision is entirely up to them, he said. "Everybody was unanimous in the room that once the existing subsidy regime comes to an end, none of them requires the subsidy to grow further... Each sector has one or the other model which makes it self-sustaining and does not call for further subsidies," Goyal told reporters when asked about the views of companies on subsidies.

In a bid to woo global EV makers into the country, in March last year the government rolled out an electric vehicle policy, under which duty concessions were offered to companies setting up manufacturing units in the country with a minimum



investment of USD 500 million. The government has plans to install 10,763 public charging stations across the country under the FAME-II scheme.

Under FAME-India Scheme phase-II, incentives are provided to buyers of electric vehicles in the form of an upfront reduction in the purchase price of electric vehicles.

There is another scheme - PM E-DRIVE - to support electric mobility through support for 14,028 e-buses, 2,05,392 electric three-wheelers (L5), 1,10,596 e-rickshaws and e-carts and 24,79,120 electric two-wheelers. In addition, e-trucks, e-ambulances, EV public charging stations and

upgrading of testing agencies are also supported under the scheme. The government has also rolled out the production linked incentive (PLI) schemes for auto sector and manufacturing of Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC).

Electric vehicles are covered under PLI scheme for automobile and auto components, which was approved in 2021 with a budgetary outlay of Rs 25,938 crore for a period of five years. Goyal said that awareness is increasing among people about cost benefits of using EVs.

"The electric mobility today is absolutely ready and set to fly. They do not need newer incentives or

subsidies, the existing subsidies are available for some more time and will help them give that appropriate kick start to the EV ecosystem... There are options and ideas available by which electric mobility can be successfully marketed," he said.

When asked about their discussions on battery charging infrastructure, he said Petroleum and Explosive Safety Organization (PESO) has released draft guidelines for installation of multiple EV charging/battery swapping facilities at petrol pumps. The idea is to make it easier for setting up charging infrastructure at petrol pumps or gas stations.

The ministry has suggested to make those guidelines self-monitored and self-certified so that whoever is setting up the charging station will self-regulate those.

"Similarly, we want to encourage resident welfare associations, commercial establishments, office complexes to have electric charging equipment. Charging, swapping or auto companies are ready to do the investments," Goyal said. The ministry also suggested the industry body of the sector to run a campaign to increase awareness about benefits of EVs.

Besides, he said, they can consider developing a common app or tool through which people will know the nearest charging stations and other information required for growth of the sector.

EPFO rolls out centralised pension system in all regional offices

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Retirement fund body EPFO has completed the Centralized Pension Payments System (CPPS) rollout in all its regional offices across the country that will benefit over 68 lakh pensioners, the labour ministry said on Friday.

The CPPS is a paradigm shift from the existing pension disbursement system that is decentralised, with each zonal/regional office of EPFO maintaining separate agreements with only 3-4 banks, the ministry explained in a statement.

Under CPPS, a beneficiary will be able to withdraw pension from any bank and there will be no need for to visit the bank for verification at the time of commencement of pension, and the amount will be immediately credited upon release, it stated.

The CPPS system January 2025 onwards will also ensure disbursement of pension throughout India without any need for transfer of pension payment orders (PPO) from one office to another even when the pensioner moves from one location to another or changes his bank or branch, it said.

This will be a great relief to pensioners who move to their hometown after retirement. The first pilot of CPPS was



completed in October last year in Karnal, Jammu, and Srinagar regional offices with the pension disbursement of about Rs 11 crore to more than 49,000 EPS pensioners, a ministry statement said. The second pilot was taken up in November in 24 regional offices where about Rs 213 crore pension was disbursed to more than 9.3 lakh pensioners, it stated.

According to the statement, in a landmark move towards enhancing pension services, the EPFO completed full-scale rollout of the new CPPS under Employees' Pension Scheme 1995 in December.

About Rs 1,570 crore pension was disbursed to more than 68 lakh pensioners pertaining to all 122 pension-disbursing regional offices of the EPFO for December 2024.

Announcing the successful rollout, Union minister

Mansukh Mandaviya said, "The full-scale implementation of the CPPS across all regional offices of EPFO is a historic milestone. This transformative initiative empowers pensioners to access their pension seamlessly from any bank, any branch, anywhere in the country."

The minister said the CPPS eliminates the need for physical verification visits and simplifies the pension disbursement process.

"The CPPS is a testament to our commitment to modernise EPFO services and ensuring convenience, transparency, and efficiency for our pensioners."

"With this rollout, we are setting a new benchmark in pension service delivery, aligning with the vision of a tech-enabled and member-centric EPFO," he said.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rising demand for premium devices, led by Apple and Samsung, is expected to increase India's smartphone market size to over USD 50 billion (about Rs 4,28,900 crore) this year, market research firm Counterpoint Technology Market Research said on Friday.

The Indian smartphone market size was estimated at USD 37.9 billion (about Rs 3.25 lakh crore) in 2021, according to the research firm.

"India's smartphone market is on track to achieve its highest-ever value in 2025, crossing USD 50 billion. Brands like Apple and Samsung are leading this shift by offering competitive options in the premium and ultra-premium segments," the report said.

Apple India has registered a total income of Rs 67,121.6 crore, while Samsung reported revenue of Rs



71,157.6 crore from the mobile phone vertical in the financial year 2024.

According to the report, the retail average selling price of India's smartphone market is expected to cross the USD 300 mark (about Rs 25,700) for the first time in 2025.

"Apple is expected to see strong demand for its Pro models, driven by local manufacturing and recent price reductions across its

iPhone lineup. Meanwhile, Samsung's value-focused strategy is gaining traction, particularly with its flagship S series," the report said.

Chinese brands like Vivo, Oppo, and OnePlus are attracting consumers by offering advanced camera systems etc. In the affordable premium category, ranging between Rs 30,000-45,000 apiece.

"Meanwhile, OnePlus is

making a comeback by addressing Indian retailers' concerns related to display and motherboard, which had negatively impacted its performance earlier this year. Besides, the company's planned investment of Rs 6,000 crore (about USD 720 million) in local market expansion is expected to accelerate its recovery and growth," the report said.

The premium segment (starting above Rs 30,000) is projected to exceed 20 per cent market share by 2025, the reports said.

"The shift towards premiumisation is also being driven by consumers increasingly opting for offline stores, where they can experience premium smartphones first-hand before making a purchase. The growing interest in AI-powered features has further motivated consumers to seek hands-on demonstrations to better understand these innovations and make more informed decisions," it said.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rural poverty has declined significantly to 4.86 per cent in the fiscal ending March 2024 from 25.7 per cent in 2011-12 mainly driven by government support programmes, said a SBI research released on Friday.

Urban poverty too is estimated at 4.09 per cent, down from 13.7 per cent in 2011-12.

"The sharp decline in rural poverty ratio is on account of higher consumption growth in lowest 0-5 per cent decile with significant government support and such support is important as we also find that change in food prices has a significant impact on not just food expenditures, but overall expenditure in general," said the SBI research on consumption expenditure survey.

The latest Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, released by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, showed that consumption



inequality in rural as well as urban areas declined during the August 2023-July 2024 period as compared to a year ago.

The SBI research said that the Consumption Expenditure Survey reveals a remarkable decline in rural poverty estimated at 4.86 per cent in 2023-24 (7.2 per cent in FY23 and 25.7 per cent in FY12) and urban poverty estimated at 4.09 per cent (4.6 per cent in FY23 and 13.7 per cent in 2011-12).

It is possible that these numbers could undergo minor revisions once the 2021 census is completed and the new rural-urban population share is published, the research report said.

"We believe urban poverty could decline even further. At an aggregate level, we believe poverty rates in India could now be in the range of 4-4.5 per cent with almost minimal existence of extreme poverty," it said. Enhanced physical infrastructure is scripting a new story in rural mobility, it said and added that one of the reasons for the increasingly shrinking horizontal income gap between rural and urban and the vertical income gap within rural income classes," SBI said.

"The difference between rural and urban monthly per capita consumption expenditure/Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE) to rural MPCE is now at 69.7 per cent, a rapid decline from 88.2 per cent in 2009-10... Mostly due to the initiatives the government has taken in terms of DBT transfers, building rural infrastructures, augmenting farmer's income, (and) improving the rural livelihood significantly," it said.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday said despite global economic uncertainties, India's exports of goods and services are expected to cross USD 800 billion this fiscal, which will be a record. Last fiscal year, the exports stood at USD 778 billion.

He said though there will be stresses in the global system, but India's exports basket is large.

"My estimate is that we will cross USD 800 billion in exports, another record given the world situation," he told reporters here. He added share in services exports is also growing at a rapid pace.

On exports to developing and least developed countries (LDCs), he said those nations have been stressed because of the forex crisis they are facing after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Forex reserves drop by USD 4.11 Billion to USD 640.27 Billion

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's forex reserves dropped by USD 4.11 billion to USD 640.27 billion during the week ended December 27, the Reserve Bank said on Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the overall kitty had dropped by USD 8.478 billion to USD 644.391 billion. The reserves have been declining for the last few weeks, and the drop has been attributed to revaluation along with forex market interventions by RBI to help reduce volatility in the rupee. The forex reserves had increased to an all-time high of USD 704.885 billion in end-September.

For the week ended December 27, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 4.641 billion to USD 551.921 billion, the data released on Friday showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves increased by USD 541 million to USD 66,268 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down by USD 12 million to USD 17.873 billion, the apex bank said.

Zepto sets up new entity to shift to marketplace model



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Quick commerce company Zepto has set up a new entity Zepto Marketplace to rejig its operations from a B2B model to a marketplace model, according to people in the know.

Zepto Marketplace was registered in October 2024, and the company's operations will soon switch to the new model once the operational and regulatory nitty-gritty are sorted out, sources said.

A mail query sent to the company did not elicit any response.

The shift, according to sources, will enable Zepto to have a greater hold on quality control and service.

Zepto is also set to soon launch "Thor"-a SaaS inventory management platform to further streamline operations, they added.

The development comes as Zepto prepares for a public listing within this year.

Zepto's peers like Blinkit and Swiggy Instamart already follow a marketplace model. Under the current structure, Zepto licenses its brand name and operations to three companies: Geddit Convenience, Drogheria Sellers and Comnodum Groceries. These three

companies purchase their stock from Kiranakart Technologies Pvt Ltd and sell it to end consumers via the Zepto platform.

In essence, Kiranakart Technologies is a B2B company that sources and buys products directly from brands and sells them to Geddit Convenience, Drogheria Sellers and Comnodum Groceries, Zepto's three licensee companies. These companies then sell to the end consumer.

For every sale that the three companies make using Zepto's platform, they pay a licensing fee to the latter.

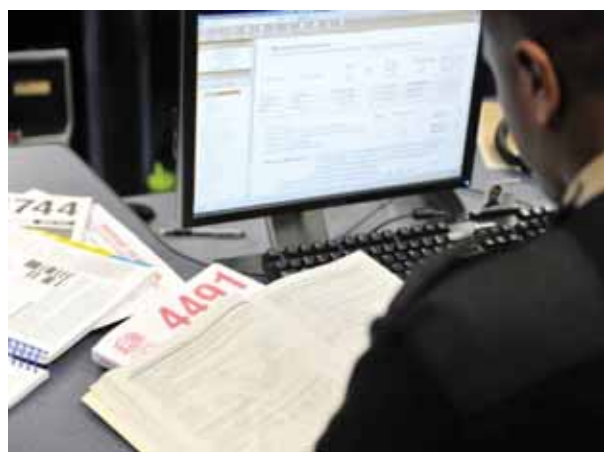
Thus, under the present B2B model, Zepto is the technology platform, serving as an intermediary between operators, sellers and delivery partners. Sellers list themselves on the platform while dark stores are franchise-managed and delivery partners are third-party rendering a gig.

Zepto reported a 120 per cent increase in operating revenue to Rs 4,454 crore in FY24. The company also proposes to launch a separate app for Zepto Cafe, which is engaged in quick delivery of snacks and other food items.

Zepto's valuation stands at USD 5 billion. In November 2024, it raised USD 350 million in a funding round that included investments from Indian HNIs, family offices, and leading financial institutions.

With business growing rapidly, Zepto is looking to expand to over 50 cities by next quarter from about two dozen cities right now.

ICAI seeks tax benefits to promote climate change mitigation strategies



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chartered accountants' Capex body ICAI has sought tax benefits for promoting climate change mitigation strategies and a separate section for income from shares and securities in the income tax returns form.

Besides, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has sought a special tax regime for partnership firms and limited liability partnerships (LLPs) as well as simplification of income tax return forms.

The institute on Friday said it has advocated for prudent tax reforms aimed at fostering economic growth and encouraging environmental sustainability in the pre-Budget Memorandum 2025.

"Provision of tax benefits for promoting climate change mitigation strategies, which will not only contribute to India's climate change goals

but also drive economic growth by promoting sustainable business practices is a suggestion in this direction," it said in a release.

Among other suggestions, ICAI has proposed a new head to show income from shares and securities that will have provisions relating to taxability of income by way of dividend, interest or capital gains.

Rationalising conditions for treating a return of income as defective in the e-filing regime and provision of opportunity of being heard before treating a defective return as invalid is another suggestion by the institute.

ICAI has also pitched for simplifying the capital gains provisions under sections 54 to 54F of the Act, extending 10 per cent tolerance band to cases where value is determined by the valuation officer under Section 50C(2), rationalising rate of tax under Section 115BBE in

respect of cash credits and unexplained investments.

Further, the institute has proposed obtaining report of a chartered accountant in the prescribed form certifying the sum chargeable to tax instead of going through the process of getting the certificate of lower deduction of tax from the assessing officer, where a non-resident transfers immovable property to a resident.

As per the release, another recommendation is to exempt the transferee responsible for paying to a non-resident transferor from the requirement of obtaining TAN.

Meanwhile, ICAI has submitted its final recommendations regarding simplifying the I-T Act, including introduction of special tax regime for partnership firms/LLPs, simplification of the registration and taxation regime of charitable trusts as well as provisions for determining residential status of individuals.

Other suggestions include simplification of income tax return forms, alignment of TDS/TCS rates with the objective of serving as an audit trail, periodic review of disposal of cases by assessing officer, mandatory time limit for disposal of appeals, and effective grievance redressal mechanism.

Another recommendation is the extension of time limit for filing belated return to March 31 of the assessment year.



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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices traded almost flat at Rs 79,700 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal closed at Rs 79,720 per 10 grams on Thursday. Silver slipped Rs 230 to Rs 90,400 per kg on Friday.

The white metal settled at Rs 90,630 per kg in the previous trading session. However, the price of gold with 99.5 per cent purity rose Rs 130 to Rs 79,300 per 10 grams on Friday.

Meanwhile, in futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for February delivery increased Rs 6 to trade at Rs 77,723 per 10 grams. Gold traded with minor gains in the domestic market, while Comex gold maintained a sideways trend around USD 2,655 per ounce." Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at

LKP Securities, said. The market remains steady with limited movements as participants await further global cues to determine the next direction, Trivedi said.

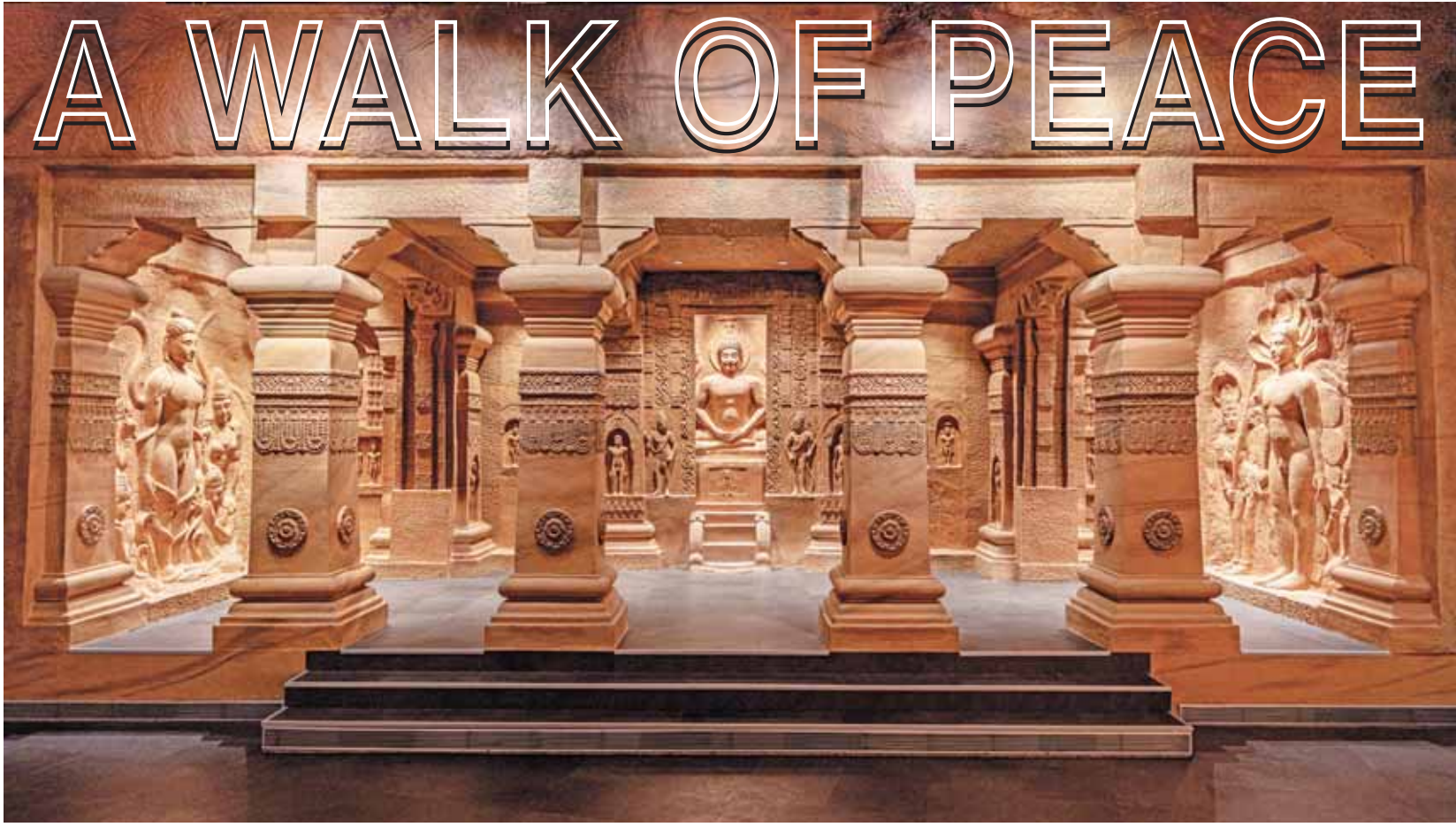
Silver climbed Rs 517 or 0.58 per cent to Rs 89,690 per kg in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

Globally, Comex gold futures rose USD 2.10 per ounce or 0.08 per cent to USD 2,671.10 per ounce. "Gold extended gains on Friday buoyed by safe-haven demand after news reports came that US President Joe Biden discussed contingency plans to strike Iran's nuclear facilities if it made progress towards developing a nuclear bomb before Trump's inauguration on January 20," said Saamil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities.

Comex silver futures quoted 1.05 per cent higher in the Asian market hours at USD 30.22 per ounce.



A WALK OF PEACE



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



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

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



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

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

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

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



THE ART OF REVERENCE

By SAKSHI PRIYA

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



In the soft glow of the spotlight, where music casts its magic and dance flows with the rhythm of devotion, the Sant Shiromani Surdas Mahotsav unfolded as a rare gem, shimmering with the glow of India's classical arts and spiritual heritage. It was an invitation to step into a world where time slows and the sacred words of Sant Surdas meet the expressions of dance and music. The Geetanjali International Foundation proudly presented the 5th edition of the Sant Shiromani Surdas Mahotsav. This grand celebration paid tribute to the 16th-century Bhakti poet Sant Surdas, allowing Indian classical dance and music to showcase the spiritual and artistic heritage of the revered saint. As the opening notes of the tabla reverberated through the C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, it was clear that the evening was destined to be something extraordinary. There's something deeply moving about watching dancers embody poetry, not just through their steps, but in their very being. This was evident from the moment Diksha Rawat and Karthika Umikrishnan, disciples of the esteemed Vidushi Uma Dogra, took the stage. Kathak, often described as a dance of storytelling, was brought to life in the most vibrant and energetic

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

communicates emotion. In her portrayal of the Nayika's yearning for Lord Vishnu, Vaidyanathan's expressions were a masterclass in silent storytelling. Her eyes, her hands, every angle of her body spoke volumes, capturing the delicate interplay of longing and love in a way that words could scarcely do justice. True dance is never just about physical movement, it's about the silent dialogue between the dancer and the audience, a dialogue that connects deeply and unspoken. But what truly made the evening unforgettable was the duet between Rani Khanam and Rama Vaidyanathan. As they danced together, interpreting a playful poem by Sant Surdas, it was as if the very essence of Krishna's mischievous nature danced through them. Watching these two talented artists, each representing a different classical tradition, merge their energies was a moment of pure magic. The chemistry between them was visible and the playful interaction between Krishna and his devotees came to life through their expressions, perfectly capturing Surdas's wit and deep devotion. The performance left the audience reminded once again of the power of classical arts to evoke deep emotions and connect people to something greater than themselves. The Sant Shiromani Surdas Mahotsav was a celebration of a poet's legacy, of India's soul and its arts, an experience that connected everyone in attendance to something much larger than themselves.

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

Canvas of Emotions

By TEAM VIVA

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

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

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



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

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

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

PTI ■ SYDNEY
Rohit Sharma "opted to rest" in the team's interest but the same old script unfolded on a new day for Indian batters as they surrendered meekly for a paltry 185 in the face of some hostile seam bowling from Australia on the opening day of the fifth and final Test here. Virat Kohli (17 off 69 balls), whose form and technical weaknesses are also under the scanner, was for the seventh time dismissed in the corridor of uncertainty in the tour, a problem that seems incurable at the moment. At stumps, Australia were 9 for 1 with stand-in skipper Jasprit Bumrah sending the woefully out-of-form Usman Khawaja (2) back in the hut. Teenage sensation Sam Konstas was unbeaten at 7 after hitting Bumrah for a first-ball four. The 19-year-old also had an animated exchange with the Indian star. Bumrah opted to bat under overcast conditions and the ultra-defensive



He could have been out off Boland's first delivery but tried to battle hard. However, it has always been that one moment in which his hands and the willow magnetically follow a delivery in the corridor of uncertainty. **Pant curbs natural instincts for a session** Having copped criticism from all quarters for his bizarre shot selection in Melbourne, Pant, for a change, copped body blows, trying to curb his natural game. The big-hitter in him came out only on a couple of occasions with one of them fetching him a straight six off Beau Webster. Pant put his head down and endured nasty blows on his bicep, helmet and twice in the sensitive abdominal area. He and the dogged Ravindra Jadeja (26 off 95 balls) defended dourly as they added 48 off 151 deliveries for the fifth wicket. Only 50 runs were scored in the second session and trying not to be adventurous proved counter-productive with most batters retreating in a shell letting Boland and company dictate the terms of play. Finally, Pant's patience ran out and one pull shot too many became his undoing. India realised they haven't scored enough runs and lost a lot of wickets. The defensive tactic in the second session when the ball got old ended up costing them dearly. There wasn't much swing on offer despite cloudy conditions but a decent grass cover ensured that Boland's back-of-length deliveries proved enough. As far as Pant was concerned, the "honest conversations" with head coach Gautam Gambhir seemed to have worked with the southpaw respecting the game situation for most part. If Pant was disciplined, Shubman Gill's judgement on the last delivery before lunch did cause trouble for India. Gill (20 off 64 balls) did all the hard work for close to couple of hours before stepping out to Nathan Lyon on the last ball of the session only to be caught at first slip.



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

PTI ■ SYDNEY
Debutant all-rounder Beau Webster feels facing ace India pacer Jasprit Bumrah will be an enormous challenge on the SCG pitch which is helping seamers, and the Australian did not place his finger on an ideal first innings score. India were all out for 185 and then Australia lost Usman Khawaja off the last ball of the day to Bumrah to end at 9 for one. "Think there's definitely a method to go about batting on this wicket. But Jasprit is a world class bowler and no doubt he's going to challenge our whole batting group. He's phenomenal with his lengths and lines, it is going to be tough on a wicket that will offer a fair bit for him," Webster said in the post day one press conference. He said getting India out for a total less than 200 on a seamer friendly track was a commendable effort. "It was a pretty seamer-friendly track and most of the day the ball stayed pretty new with the grass coverage. It is not an abrasive square either. So, the plan was to bowl a little bit fuller and entice those front foot defences and front foot drives. "Thought Scotty (Boland) was excellent, he's been unbelievable since he came back into the team and saw why he's a world class bowler. Thought all the bowlers were really good today to bowl them out for 200." Webster said the degree of seam movement for a few deliveries was way more pronounced and hence they beat the bat regularly. "There were a couple of unplayable balls, when it seems that much it can be hard to get a wicket at times. We saw a nice-ish partnership (Jadeja-Pant), where we struggled to get a breakthrough through the sheer seam movement. We beat the bat a lot but couldn't find the edge." The 31-year-old was all praise for Boland and said the pacer can find a way to get wickets on any surface and when there is help on offer, he is on par with the best in business. "If there's anything in the wicket he finds it and if there's nothing in the wicket he still manages to find a way through," the lanky Tasmanian said. "He's been fantastic this whole series when he's got his chance, he's relentless. I think it's his line and length and his natural angle that makes it really hard for right-handers, but when we see him go round the wicket to left-handers it's impressive stuff." Webster caught the great Virat Kohli at third slip and he found Boland's bowling enjoyable. "It's great to watch from the third slip today, the amount of movement he gets and how accurate he is and how challenging he is for both left and right handers.

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

PTI ■ SYDNEY
Former India cricketers Sunil Gavaskar and Ravi Shastri feel that the Boxing Day Test might have been Rohit Sharma's final appearance in Test cricket, following his bold call to rest himself for the series finale that began here on Friday. The 37-year-old chose to sit out with the series on the line, having scored only 31 runs in five innings across three Tests. "I think it probably means that (if) India don't qualify for the WTC final, the Melbourne Test will be Rohit Sharma's last game," Gavaskar said during the lunch break on day one. "The WTC cycle will start with the England series, and the selectors would likely want someone available for the 2027 final. Whether India gets there or not is another matter, but that's what the selection committee is likely to do. "We have probably seen Rohit Sharma for the last time in Test cricket," he added. Shastri echoed the sentiment, predicting that Rohit would "pull the plug" on his Test career after the series. "At the toss, Jasprit [Bumrah] mentioned it before I could ask," Shastri said during commentary. "He said the captain opted to sit out and said the team will be stronger if Shubman Gill plays. "It can happen when you're out of sorts, you're mentally not there, you don't have the runs under your belt. It still is a brave call for a captain to own up and say, 'I'm prepared to take the bench in this game,'" he added. Rohit has struggled in Test cricket recently, breaching the 20-run mark only twice in his last eight matches. With India trailing 1-2 in the series, they must win the final Test to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, which they've held for a decade, and remain in contention for a spot in the World Test Championship (WTC) final against South Africa. If India fail to qualify, their next Test series will be a tour of England starting mid-June. "If there was a home season coming up he might've thought of carrying on, but I think he might just pull the plug at the end of this Test," Shastri said. "He's not getting younger ... it's not that India don't have youngsters. There are very, very good players in the wings and it's time to build. "Tough decisions, but there is a time for everything," Shastri added. At the toss, stand in skipper Jasprit Bumrah said "our captain has shown leadership by opting to rest in this game."



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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Elated to become a Khel Ratna awardee after his career-defining Olympic performance, Indian men's hockey team captain Harmanpreet Singh said the honour is a recognition of his "fascinating" journey in which he still has plenty more to achieve. Double Olympic-medallist shooter Manu Bhaker, chess world champion D Gukesh, Harmanpreet and Paralympic high jump gold-winner Praveen Kumar were finalised for the 2024 Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna award by the sports ministry on Thursday. "(It's the) biggest recognition of my life. It's a big achievement for me. I am really very happy. I think it's the best part of my life that I am getting such a huge award and recognition," the 28-year-old Harmanpreet, who was India's top goal-scorer in the Paris Games with 10 strikes, told PTI in an interview. Harmanpreet has also claimed the FIH Player of the Year award three times, including the year gone by. But he is far from satiated. "Throughout my journey I have learnt a lot, I have seen a lot of ups and downs including wins and losses. But I think you only learn from those experiences. From day one, my mindset has been how to improve myself," said the star player who was born into a family of farmers in Amritsar's Timmowal village and whose international career began in 2014. A team-man to the core, Harmanpreet credited his fellow players for making it possible for him to shine individually. "Whatever we are achieving we are achieving as a team. The journey has been very fascinating, I am getting individual recognitions and awards but only because of my teammates. "I have enjoyed my journey a lot till date. I have put on a lot of hard work and I am happy with what I have achieved till date," he said.



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

PTI ■ SYDNEY
Australian batting great Ricky Ponting on Friday said he was "surprised" by the Indian camp's wording around Rohit Sharma's absence from the fifth and final Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy but admitted that the move was on expected lines. The match started here on Friday with the visitors eyeing a win to level the series and retain the trophy. However, Jasprit Bumrah, who walked out for the toss, said Rohit has "opted to rest" from the Sydney Test. "I think the reaction has been that they all sort of expected that it might happen," Ponting told the ICC Review. "The chat's been for the last couple of days that everyone expected that Rohit would not play this game, that Shubman Gill would come back in and that (Jasprit) Bumrah would probably take over the captaincy again and that's the way it's turned out." Given the circumstances, Ponting was totally in agreement with the woefully out-of-form Rohit skipping the decider at SCG but the former Australia captain was surprised by the wording of the news that came from the India camp. "I was very surprised when I heard the term 'opting out' coming into such an important game," Ponting said. "We know he's been a great stalwart for Indian cricket over a long period of time. So the way that they've actually worded it, you can only take it



on face value. "We've got to believe what we're hearing coming out of the Indian camp, but being such a big game, knowing that they have to win this one to retain the trophy, it was an interesting time for one of their more experienced players to opt out." The 37-year-old white-ball great looked like a pale

shadow of himself in the ongoing series Down Under, struggling to execute even his bread and butter shots including the trademark front foot pull. During the customary pre-match warm-up session, Rohit was seen playing football with Virat Kohli, Rishabh Pant and Sarfaraz Khan, who along with Abhimanyu Easwaran will end the series without getting an international game. Ponting did not say it in as many words but he very well understands that it could be the end of road for Rohit in the game's traditional format. "You'd think it's probably a long way back for Rohit Sharma now in this format of the game," Ponting said. "India don't play a Test match, I believe, until the middle or late June, which is a long way away when you're sort of coming to the back end of your career. "I think he's been a terrific player for India so with those sort of guys, you wish them all the best and hope to see them back out there again, but as I said, I think it will be a long - and probably difficult road - back for him." Catch off Kohli's bat was clean Ponting had no doubt that the attempt made by Steve Smith at second slip off Kohli's blade was a clean take. Kohli edged a length delivery from Scott Boland to second slip, where Smith was positioned. Smith dived low to his right, seemingly catching the ball near the ground before flicking it upward toward gully, where Marnus Labuschagne completed the catch. However, the decision was referred to the TV umpire, who ultimately ruled Kohli not out. "I was in the back of the (commentary) box as it happened and from what I saw, and what I believe to be the interpretation of the rules, that seemed to be out to me," Ponting said. "The ball may have touched the ground. It may not have touched the ground, but the fact that his right index finger was still underneath the ball, I thought it was a clear catch." The incident took place in the eighth over, off the first ball Kohli faced and Ponting admitted the limited angles available did not help. "It might be one of those ones that depends which dressing room he's (Kohli) sitting in as well.



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

PTI ■ SYDNEY
India wicketkeeper batter Rishabh Pant said he batted with restraint on the opening day of the fifth Test against Australia because character of the SCG pitch and the game situation did not allow him to be his customary aggressive self. Pant, who copped severe criticism from all corners for his callous approach to batting during the previous Test at Melbourne, made a 98-ball 40 in India's 185 all out here on Friday. "I think in this innings, I was not in a frame of mind where I wanted to take charge of the game because the wicket was doing too much and the kind of situation we were in," Pant said in the post-day press meet. "I would say there might be a 50-50 chance which I could have taken early on in this innings but sometimes you have to play more secure cricket especially the way, wicket was behaving. "We knew that if we lost one more wicket here, we might lose 2-3 in quick succession. So that was the idea behind the way I was playing," he added. Pant's falling pull in Melbourne had prompted legendary Sunil Gavaskar to call the shot "stupid" and in the second innings, he slogged a half-tracker from Travis Head to find the only fielder in the deep when the Test match could have been saved. "Yes, there is a time to attack, but when you have to feel that from inside. I can't just premeditate that I'm going to play this way. Whatever the game asked me to do on a given day, that's what I tried to do and that is the mindset." For Pant, the equation is simple - everyone has learnt their own way to skin a cat but also need to learn the other way. "It is a natural habit to back whatever the way you have played the game. But eventually you got to keep on evolving and, that is, I feel there is not one way to play cricket. "But whatever comes more naturally is always better but you got to find that balance between playing aggressive cricket and having that balance when you play all those shots. That's what I'm trying to do," he explained his rationale.