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PIONEER IN SHORT

HINDU GROCER KILLED IN BANGLADESH
 A 40-year-old grocery shop owner was brutally killed in Palash upazila of Narsingdi district late Monday night, intensifying concerns over a spate of violent attacks in Bangladesh. The victim, Moni Chakraborty, who ran a long-established grocery store at Charsindur Bazaar, was attacked with sharp, locally made weapons while returning home after closing his shop. He sustained critical injuries and was declared dead on arrival at Palash Upazila Health Complex. Police have sent the body for autopsy and launched an investigation to identify the assailants and determine the motive. The killing triggered protests by local traders, who formed a human chain demanding swift justice, describing Chakraborty as a respected businessman with no known disputes. The incident coincided with another fatal attack on a Hindu businessman in Jessore district the same day, where ice factory owner and local newspaper editor Rana Pratap Bairagi was shot and had his throat slit. These deaths add to a series of recent attacks targeting members of Bangladesh's Hindu minority, including lynchings, arson and fatal assaults reported across several districts.

CAQM failing in its duty: SC slams pollution watchdog

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
 ■ New Delhi

Observing that the central pollution watchdog is "failing in its duty", the Supreme Court on Tuesday rapped the authority for seeking a two-month adjournment on the issue of temporary closure or relocation of toll plazas at Delhi borders to ease traffic congestion. The SC criticised the Commission of Air Quality Management (CAQM) for lack of "seriousness" in its approach and said it appears to be in no hurry to either identify the causes of the worsening Air Quality Index (AQI) in Delhi-NCR or long-term solutions.

Taking serious note of the severe air pollution levels in Delhi-NCR, the court on December 17 last year issued a slew of directions and asked the National Highways Authority of India and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) to consider either temporarily closing or relocating the civic body's



Security personnel keeping vigil in New Delhi

nine toll plazas at Delhi borders to ease massive traffic congestion.

On Tuesday, a bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi directed the CAQM to convene a meeting of experts in two

weeks and submit a report on the major causes of the worsening pollution. The court directed it to start considering long-term solutions in a phased manner and also consider the toll plaza issue, uninfluenced by the stand taken by

various stakeholders. As the hearing commenced, Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the CAQM, sought two months' time on the issue of toll plazas.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

2.89 crore names deleted in UP's electoral roll clean-up

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

After being postponed for the third time, the Election Commission on Tuesday released the draft voter list for Uttar Pradesh after the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls there, with 12,55,56,025 voters retained out of 15,44,30,092 listed earlier. With 2.89 crore names deleted due to deaths, permanent migration or multiple registrations, the State recorded the highest number of deletions (18.70%). Tamil Nadu (15%) and Gujarat (14.5%) ranked second and third, respectively, according to the States' draft rolls published earlier this month.

Giving details about the removal of 2.89 crore names from the draft list, the poll body said 46.23 lakh voters (2.99 per cent) were found to be deceased, while 2.57 crore voters (14.06 per cent) had either permanently migrated or were not available during the verification process. Another 25.47 lakh voters (1.65 per cent) were found to be registered at more than one place. The EC data



People search for their names in the draft voter list after the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh

shows nearly 6.70 crore names have been deleted from 12 States and union territories during the SIR exercise due to deaths, permanent migration or multiple registrations.

The deletion of 2.89 crore voters from the voters list in UP has sparked a political outcry as the opposition questioning the SIR exercise. UP Congress president Ajay Rai said the time allotted for the SIR exercise was short. "This is a completely hasty decision. The way the SIR process

was started by giving only one month in a large State like Uttar Pradesh is unreasonable."

"They gave one month even to a small state like Kerala. Uttar Pradesh should have been given at least five to six months, as was done earlier in 2002-03... Had it been done that way, the booth level officers (BLOs) would not have been under such pressure and suicides could have been avoided," he added.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

The Bystander



Bangladesh: Student leader's death sparks anti-India protest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
 ■ New Delhi

A day-long protest rally was held in Dhaka on Tuesday by the party of slain student leader Sharif Osman Hadi, demanding justice for his killing and raising a series of political and diplomatic demands, including the cancellation of work permits to Indian nationals in Bangladesh.

The rally, organised by Inqilab Moncho and titled March for Justice, began around 11.30am from Shahbagh and moved through several major areas of the capital, including Science Lab, Mohammadpur,



Mirpur-10, Uttara, Bashundhara, Badda, Rampura and Jatrabari, before concluding at Shahbagh in the evening. Protesters travelled both on foot and in pickup vans, chanting slogans calling for

accountability and punishment of those responsible for Hadi's death.

Participants said the demonstration was aimed at drawing public attention to what they described as slow progress in the investigation into the killing. They demanded that all involved in the crime, including the shooter, planners, accomplices and anyone who provided shelter to the suspects, be arrested and tried before the February 12 parliamentary elections.

As part of its four-point demand, Inqilab Moncho also called for the repatriation of the alleged killers, whom it claims have fled to India.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

JNU protest sparks political row

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

A political slugfest broke out on Tuesday after sloganeering against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) campus on Monday evening over the denial of bail by the Supreme Court to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 riots conspiracy case, prompting the Delhi Police to launch a probe into the matter.

Asserting that "any unlawful conduct or

anti-national activity will not be tolerated", the varsity said that an FIR has been registered in the Monday incident and the strictest action will be taken against students found raising objectionable slogans.

In a post on X, the university said, "An FIR has already been lodged in connection with the incident. The administration has vowed the strictest action against students found raising objectionable slogans against the Prime Minister and the Home Minister."

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Highway, telecom authority join hands to improve network on roads

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA
 ■ New Delhi

Emphasising the public safety implications and the strategic significance of the National Highway (NH) network, the Central road making agency has approached Department of Telecommunication (DoT) for to improve mobile network connectivity on the NH corridors across the country. As part of a comprehensive assessment undertaken by NHAI, 424 locations covering about 1,750 km across the National Highway network across the country have been identified as critically affected due to non-



Aerial view of National Highway 16 near Regupalem, East Godavari

availability of the mobile network connectivity. Besides DoT, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) too have been requested to issue directions to Telecom Service Providers

(TSPs) for addressing non-availability of the mobile network on several stretches of NHs, Expressways particularly on greenfield and remote sections.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

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Guru Tegh Bahadur's legacy goes beyond religion: CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday said the life, sacrifice and character of Guru Tegh Bahadur ji are not limited to any one era or community. She also said viewing Guru Tegh Bahadur merely as the Guru of a single faith would limit his towering personality. Paying tributes to him in Delhi Assembly, she said Guru Tegh Bahadur was among the greatest protectors of India's shared culture, collective consciousness and civilisational values. His life represent an eternal ideal of courage, truth, righteousness and human values in human history, the Chief Minister said. The Chief Minister informed the House that the grand and divine three-day congregation organised by the Delhi Government at the Red Fort

complex to mark the 350th martyrdom anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur was not just an event, but a powerful effort to connect history with the present generation. She also said she did not deserve any personal credit for the event, and that whatever was achieved was possible only due to the grace and blessings of Guru Sahib. Rekha Gupta said that following an unfortunate incident that had occurred earlier outside the Red Fort, there were widespread security concerns. She discussed the issue with Union Home Minister Amit Shah and with the cooperation of the Central Government, comprehensive security arrangements were put in place. As a result, lakhs of devotees were able to participate in the congregation dedicated to Guru Sahib Ji. She

informed the Assembly that the number of devotees was so large that the tents at the venue had to be expanded further. This clearly shows that the sacrifice of Guru Sahib continues to live in the hearts of the people. Recalling the sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Chief Minister said it was a historic coincidence that the very Red Fort from where decrees were once issued against Guru Tegh Bahadur today resonated with the melodious recitation of Gurbani. Thousands of devotees bowed their heads in reverence, and through the langar, a living example of service and equality was witnessed. She said the museum set up during the congregation presented a powerful portrayal of Guru Sahib's life, struggles and martyrdom. The Chief Minister said the



Chief Minister Rekha Gupta speaking during the Winter session of the Legislative Assembly PIONEER PHOTO

Delhi Government ensured that the story of Guru Tegh Bahadur reaches future generations. With this objective, the Education Department distributed five lakh books in Delhi's schools. In addition, students of Delhi Government

schools were taken to those gurdwaras where Guru Tegh Bahadur had visited. Recalling the immortal words of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Chief Minister quoted, *Dharam het saka jin kiya, Sis diya par sir na diya*.

She said Guru Tegh Bahadur laid down his head for the protection of religion and humanity, but never compromised on his principles and self-respect. He refused to bow before the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb.

Guru Sahib made the supreme sacrifice to protect the religious freedom of Kashmiri Pandits. She said Guru Tegh Bahadur is known as *Hind ki Chadar*, because he protected not only his own faith, but also the faith of others. Delhi's Gurdwara Sis Ganj Sahib and Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib stand as living testimonies to his martyrdom and sacrifice. In her address, the Chief Minister said societies which become disconnected from their history and roots are scattered like straws in strong winds. Taking pride in one's culture, respecting values and remembering the sacrifices of our ancestors is the responsibility of all of us. Referring to the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister said the Prime Minister consistently speaks of "develop-

ment as well as heritage". The Delhi Government is working in accordance with the same vision. The Government encourages every citizen living in Delhi to remain connected to their roots. She said Delhi today has become a living reflection of a 'Mini India' and 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat'. Her Government has celebrated festivals from north to south with great enthusiasm, including the Kanwar Yatra, Ramlika, Chhath Mahaparv, Garba, Teej and Onam. The Chief Minister assured the people of Delhi that her government will continue to work tirelessly for the preservation and promotion of culture. Delhi will be taken forward by treating it as one family, woven together in the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat', with every citizen moving ahead together.

Delhi horror: 3 held for stabbing 18-year-old boy

ABHINAV KUMAR JHA
New Delhi

Delhi Police arrested three men for fatally stabbing an 18-year-old and critically injuring his friend in north-east Delhi's Welcome area. The arrests, made on Tuesday, quickly resolved a case that had alarmed local residents. The victim, Arman (18), was killed late Monday night after being stabbed multiple times during a confrontation near the Peeli Mitti area. His friend Altaf remains hospitalised with serious injuries. Police said the case was solved by a team from Welcome police station after investigators traced key clues and identified the attackers. The three men arrested for the stabbing are Suhail alias Jaadu (20) from Janta Colony, Ilman (22) from Markaji Chowk, Jafraabad, and Rizwan alias Kida from Subhash Park. All reside in northeast Delhi. Police clarified that each suspect was directly involved in the incident, based on evidence collected during the investigation. The incident took place around 10 pm on January 5, when Welcome police received a PCR call about a stabbing in the park. A police



team rushed to the spot and found Arman and Altaf lying on the ground with deep stab wounds. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northeast) Ashish Mishra said the victims were immediately taken to Jag Pravesh Chandra Hospital. "Arman was declared dead. Altaf is undergoing treatment and his condition is serious," the DCP said. Preliminary investigation revealed that the two friends were sitting in the park when an argument broke out with a group of youths. What began as a verbal altercation quickly escalated into a violent incident. The attackers allegedly pulled out knives and stabbed both men several times before fleeing the scene. Residents in the area reported hearing shouting

followed by cries for help. "People ran towards the park after hearing screams, but the attackers had already escaped," a local resident said. A case was registered under sections related to murder and attempt to murder. A forensic team examined the spot and collected blood samples and other material evidence. Police also scanned CCTV footage from nearby streets and shops to trace the movements of the suspects before and after the attack. According to police, sustained interrogation of the arrested men revealed that they had an old dispute with both Arman and Altaf. Investigators are now probing the nature of this rivalry and whether the attack was planned or the result of a sudden clash.

Police are also verifying whether alcohol consumption played a role in triggering the violence. Locals told officers that groups often gather at the park late at night, but such an extreme incident had not occurred earlier. Senior officers said multiple teams were formed soon after the crime to track down the attackers. Technical surveillance, CCTV footage, and local intelligence helped the police identify and arrest the accused within a short time, officials said. Arman's family members said they were devastated by the loss but expressed relief after learning that the accused had been arrested. Altaf continues to be under close medical observation, doctors said. The incident has raised concerns among residents about safety in the area, especially after dark. Some locals said they had earlier complained about frequent late-night arguments and drinking in and around the park. Police said further investigation is underway to recover the weapon used in the crime and to establish the exact sequence of events that led to the fatal attack.

Govt directs real-time reporting of data on adoption, child helplines

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi Government has directed all district child protection units and allied agencies to ensure accurate, complete and real-time update of data on adoption, foster care, sponsorship, institutional and non-institutional care, child helpline services and missing children on the Mission Vatsalya portal. In an advisory issued by the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD), officers and institutions have been directed to promptly strengthen reporting across all components under Mission Vatsalya — a centrally sponsored flagship scheme aimed at ensuring the care, protection, rehabilitation and overall well-being of children. The portal serves as the primary platform for monitoring child-related interventions and is used for policy formulation, review meetings and reporting to the Centre. According to the advisory, a recent review of the portal data for Delhi revealed variations in district-wise reporting, instances of nil or under-reporting under certain com-



ponents, delays in data update and the need for stronger coordination among agencies. The department has asked district officers to devote special focus to family-based care models such as sponsorship, foster care and adoption, and ensure that all such interventions are promptly reflected on the portal. "Districts reporting zeroes under components like foster care and aftercare have been directed to critically examine the reasons and document them for review," it stated. The advisory also emphasised regular coordination among district child protection units, childcare institutions, specialised adoption

agencies, open shelters, child helpline agencies, the police and child welfare committees to ensure that field-level action matches portal data. Data related to child helpline services and missing and found children must be periodically cross-verified with concerned agencies to maintain accuracy and uniformity, it said. Weekly and monthly reports highlighting key updates, variations, gaps and corrective measures will be submitted to senior officials, while district child protection officers will be personally responsible for the validation and completeness of data entries, the advisory read. The district child protection unit (HQ) and the State Child Protection Society have been tasked with providing technical guidance and supporting districts in addressing operational or system-related challenges, it said. As per the advisory, the director of the DWCD will oversee the implementation of these directions, with periodic departmental reviews and corrective action in cases of non-compliance, delayed reporting or data discrepancies.

Supply bottled water to city residents: BJP leader to Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Amid the drinking water supply scare caused by deaths in Indore, BJP leader and former MLA Sardar RP Singh has advised the Delhi Government to supply bottled water to the city residents. Singh said that he has written to the Delhi Government's Water Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh, urging him to consider his suggestion. He also sent a reminder to him in this regard. Singh, the BJP spokesperson and former MLA from Rajinder Nagar constituency in the national Capital, claimed that the free bottled water supply can be sponsored through advertisements on the bottles and an app for booking safe drinking water. "No matter how much attention is paid to repairing the water pipelines, contamination from sewer lines and other sources is always a strong possibility. Bottled water will ensure that the people receive drinking water safely," he said.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

1, Ayushi Raj Soni C/o Shri Shivam Raj Soni Resident of Flat No. 2401, Florentia Tower-2, Mahagon Mirabella, Sector-79, Noida, Distt- Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P.- 201301 do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that I have change my name Ayushi Verma to Ayushi Raj Soni for all future purposes.

PD(50)C
I, Kripa Meena, W/o-No.14847485W Nk/Mr Arvind Kumar Meena, R/o- Vill & PO-Entera, Teh- Laxmangarh, Dist-Alwar, Rajasthan- 301021, have changed my name from Kripa Meena to Krupa Devi Meena, vide affidavit dated 06/01/2026 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(51)C
I, Mayabai, Mother of No.4594540W Sep Nikam Raj Balwanti, R/o- Chinchkhede, PO- Deoli, Tal- Chalisgaon, Dist- Jalgaon, Maharashtra-424116, have changed my name from Mayabai to Mayabai Balwanti Nikam, vide affidavit dated 06/01/2026 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(52)C
I, Parvati Bhat, Mother of No.15734192N Sigm Vishal Bhat, R/o- Ward No. 11, Govt. School Ke Pass, Siroliya, Dist-Dewas, M.P. have changed my name from Parvati Bhat to Parvati Bai Bhat, vide affidavit dated 06/01/2026 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(53)C
I, No.15455021W Sep Sonu Kumar Yadav, Unit-Army Hospital R&R Delhi Cantt-110010, have changed my Mother's name in my Army service record from Shiv Kumari Yadav to Shivkumari Devi, vide affidavit dated 06/01/2026 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(54)C

PUBLIC NOTICE
SUB: Transfer of Ownership for Plot No. 972, Sector-40, Near Sector-40 Community Center, Gurgaon, Haryana upon the death of Rajnikant Agarwal as per records, died on 18.05.2017, leaving behind Usha Agrawal, Nibi Agrawal, Neha Jain and Abhishek Agrawal as his legal heirs by virtue of Surviving Member Certificate Dated 03.11.2025 duly registered in Tashil Wazirabad, Gurgaon, Haryana. Usha Agrawal, wife of Rajnikant Agarwal intends to apply for transfer of the said Plot in her favour and requests for re-allocation in the name of Usha Agrawal, H. No. 972, Sector-40, Near Sector-40 Community Center, Gurgaon, Haryana. If any person is having objection to the above transfer of the said plot, he/she can submit objections to the Estate officer 2, HUDA, Sector-34, Gurgaon along with Supporting documents within 30 days of publication of this notice, otherwise the estate officer may sanction mutation of the property as per HUDA policy and may not entertain subsequent claim in any.

Usha Agrawal (legal heir)
On behalf of Estate Office-2

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client i.e. Godrej Finance Ltd. that Mrs. Kamlesh Kaushtik is the owner of Property Plot of land area measuring 82 sq. yds., out of Kharsa No. 416/m, situated in the area of village Hoshigrapur, Pargana and Tahsil - Dabri, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar-U.P. by virtue of Gift Deed dated 15.10.2025, executed by Mr. Om Prakash Kaushtik, duly registered with SRO Noida, as Document No.13822. All persons are hereby informed that above owner wants to intend to obtain a loan from our client against the said property, if anybody has any objection upon the ownership of above owner over the said property, its sale, mortgage/lien, and any other objections, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 14 days of the present.

Kumar & Associates (Advocates & Counselors)
206, Ind. Fir. 23, Shivaji Marg, Moti Nagar, N.Delhi-15, legal@kumarlegal.com. Ph: 011-4112527-28

PUBLIC NOTICE
The General Public is hereby informed that my clients Shri Bhagwan Verma s/o Kanwar Bhan & his wife Sunila r/o 754/1, Bhagal Singh colony, Sonapat, Haryana have severed all his relations with their son Shivam Verma and his wife Nikita due to their bad conduct and intense ideological differences. My above named clients have also disowned and debarred their said son and his wife from their movable and immovable properties. Anybody dealing with Shivam Verma and Nikita will do so at their own risk and responsibility and my clients will not be responsible for any, act, deed or dealing done by Shivam Verma and Nikita.

Rajeev K. Manocha, Advocate D/9825/22

PUBLIC NOTICE
I, Naman Jaychand S/o Sanjay Kaushal R/o B-284/1, 4th Floor, Flat No.-7, Phase-2, Gali No.-1, Chhatrapur Enclave, Chhatrapur, Delhi-110074 hereby declare that my name as per my class 10th marksheet is Naman Jay Chand, as per my class 12th marksheet is Naman Jaychand and as per Graduation B.Com marksheet is Naman Jaychand all are the same person.

Public Notice
My Client Smt Geeta W/o Late Rajender Singh R/O H.NO. 317, Kangar Mohalla, Tughlakabad Village, New Delhi-110044 disown her son namely Chetan S/o Late, Rajender Singh and his wife Pooja D/o Sh. Sauraj from her entire moveable and immovable properties due to their misconduct, bad habits, threats, irresponsible behavior towards me and other family members. I am severing all relations with them effective immediately. I further declare that they shall not be entitled to any share in my moveable or immovable properties, ancestral or self-acquired, and will not have any claim to my inheritance or future assets. I am not responsible for any of his/her future acts, debts, or liabilities. Anybody deal with them at their own risk and cost.

Anis Mohammad (Advocate)
K-23-A, Basement Kalkaji, New Delhi-110010

PUBLIC NOTICE
Dated: 07/01/2026

FINAL INTIMATION FOR REFUND
(Former Allottees - "TDI City", Kundli, Sonapat, Haryana)

This is to inform the following former allottees that their plot allotments in "TDI City", Kundli, Sonapat, Haryana were cancelled due to non-payment of instalments despite repeated reminders. Refunds were offered subject to surrender of original allotment documents. Final letters dated 01.12.2025 were issued; however, no response has been received.

The following persons are hereby given a final and last opportunity to surrender original documents and collect their refund cheques within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice from the address mentioned below:

Sr.	Name of Former Allottee	Address	Customer ID	Unit No.
1	Mr. Rakesh Kumar Suneja	North Avenue Road, Punjabi Bagh, New Delhi	10103	F-257
2	Mrs. Kamala Devi	Village Nangal Kalan, Sonapat	KR2-2203	F-425
3	Mrs. Beena Devi Sundri & Mrs. Bharti Devi	421, Kohat Enclave, Shakur Basti, New Delhi	KR3-0387	F-81
4	Mr. Krishan Lal	H. No.-147, Kamasthan Mohala, Rohlak	KR2-3336	H-769
5	Mr. Anil Kumar Saliya	Gf-9, Surya Kiran Building, 19, K.G. Marg, New Delhi-01	KR2-2360	H-825
6	Mr. Sudershan Kumar Jain & Mr. Vikram Jain	775, Veer Appts., Sector-13, Rohini, Delhi	KR2-1426	H-963
7	Mrs. Alpina Sharma	6, Satya Niketan, Opp. S.V. Collage, New Delhi-21	KR2-052	K-542
8	Mr. Kavar Sain Jain	9/2208, Gali No.10, Kadam Nagar, Delhi-31	10058	L-112
9	Mr. Amit Aggarwal	AC-124, Salt Lake, Kolkata-700064	KR2-1226	L-12
10	Mr. Manveen Chhokra	DP-21, Maurya Enclave, Pilampura, Delhi	KR2-2799	L-53
11	Mr. Ajay Sharma	2324, Gali Choti Pahar Wali, Dhrampura, Delhi	KR2-2857	L-54
12	Mr. Ranbir Singh Chauhan	216, Dhakka Village, Kingsway Camp, Delhi-09	KR2-1929	L-71
13	Mr. Sanjeev Goel	B-3/297, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi	KR2-1353	L-75

Refund Collection Address:
TDI Infrastructure Ltd., 2nd Floor, Mahindra Tower, Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi-110066. (Timing: 10:30 AM to 5:30 PM (Mon-Fri, except holidays))

In case no response is received within the stipulated period, the Company shall not be responsible for any claim thereafter.

By Order of the Management
-TDI Infrastructure Ltd.

DMRC official, family killed in fire at flat



Pankaj Kumar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

A senior police officer said initial assessments suggest that the victims may have lost consciousness due to smoke inhalation before the fire spread. "It appears that the main electricity supply tripped during the short circuit, but the heater may have continued to burn, causing the flames to intensify in a short span of time," the officer said. Six fire tenders were rushed to the spot. The blaze, which involved household articles in a single room, was brought under control after several hours of firefighting and cooling operations. A firefighter sustained minor injuries during the operation. Residents said they heard loud noise and saw smoke coming out of the door and windows around 2.30 am. Neighbours knocked repeatedly and tried to break open the door but got no response. Someone then dialled the emergency helpline. Before fire tenders arrived, residents used the society's emergency firefighting equipment in an attempt to control the blaze. When the fire was finally doused, the bodies of the three occupants were found on the bed, completely charred.

A Delhi Metro Rail Corporation official, his wife and their 10-year-old daughter were killed after a fire broke out in their residence in northwest Delhi's Adarsh Nagar in the early hours of Tuesday. The incident occurred at Metro Apartments, a residential complex for Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) employees located opposite Majlis Park Metro Station in the Mukundpur area. Police received a PCR call at around 2.39 am regarding a major fire on the fifth floor of the building. Teams from the Delhi Police and Delhi Fire Services were sent to the spot. Preliminary findings suggest the fire was triggered by an electrical short circuit involving a room heater inside the family's one-bedroom flat, the officials said. The deceased have been identified as Ajay Vimal (45), an Assistant Section Engineer (Signalling and Telecom) with the DMRC, his wife Neelam (38), and their daughter Jahnvi, the officials said. Vimal joined the DMRC in 2006 and was posted at the Barakhamba Road Metro Station. He had been residing in the staff quarters since 2016.



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Prime Minister

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17-year-old beaten to death by group of minors in Trilokpuri

ABHINAV KUMAR JHA
New Delhi

A 17-year-old school student was beaten to death by a group of minors in east Delhi's Trilokpuri area, triggering panic and anger among local residents.

Police have detained six juveniles in connection with the brutal assault and registered a case of murder.

The victim, Mohit (17), a Class 11 student and a resident of Indra Camp, Trilokpuri, died late Monday night after succumbing to

severe injuries caused by repeated blows. The attack took place following a dispute with another minor, police said.

According to the police, information was received from Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital around 7.30 pm on January 5 that a teenage boy had been admitted in a critical condition after being badly beaten. Due to the seriousness of his injuries, Mohit was referred to GTB Hospital, where he later died during treatment.

A senior police officer said

Mohit was not in a condition to give a statement. "Doctors declared him unfit for questioning. He had suffered multiple injuries," the officer said.

Preliminary investigation revealed that Mohit had an ongoing dispute with one of the accused juveniles. On Monday evening, the two allegedly had a verbal altercation, which soon escalated into violence.

The argument reportedly took place near the victim's neighbourhood.

Eyewitnesses told the



police that Mohit was surrounded by several minors and was mercilessly beaten with fists and kicks. Even after he fell to the ground, the attackers allegedly continued the assault. When one of Mohit's friends tried to intervene, he was also assaulted.

"The beating was extremely violent. Mohit lost consciousness at the spot," a police source said, citing statements recorded during the probe.

The police said the attackers fled after leaving Mohit

critically injured. Locals later informed his family, following which he was rushed to the hospital. Despite medical efforts, he could not be saved.

After the death was confirmed, police registered a case under sections related to murder and initiated a detailed investigation. A crime team and forensic experts visited the spot and collected evidence, including possible CCTV footage from the surrounding area.

Based on initial leads and local inputs, police identified

and detained six minors allegedly involved in the assault. All are being questioned, and further legal action will be taken under the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act.

"The role of each juvenile is being examined carefully," a police officer said. "We are reconstructing the sequence of events to determine who initiated the attack and how it escalated."

Mohit's family members alleged that the attack was premeditated and demanded strict action. "Our child

was beaten to death by a group. This should never happen to any family," a relative said.

The incident has caused fear and outrage in the area. Residents said such group violence involving minors is becoming increasingly common. Some locals demanded stricter monitoring and better policing in the neighbourhood, especially in the evenings.

Police said further investigation is underway and more details will emerge as questioning continues.

City records first cold day of year

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi recorded its first cold day of the year on Tuesday as maximum temperatures dipped sharply, bringing a noticeable chill to the national capital. Similar conditions are likely to persist on Wednesday.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said maximum temperatures were observed in the range of 13 degrees Celsius to 16 degrees Celsius, with cold day conditions recorded at Palam and Lodhi Road. According to the IMD, cold day conditions are declared when the maximum temperature remains 4.5 degrees Celsius to 6.4 degrees Celsius below normal.

The maximum temperature in the national capital on Tuesday was recorded at 15.7 degrees Celsius, which was 3.3 notches below the seasonal average, while the minimum temperature settled at 7.6 degrees Celsius, 0.7 notches above normal. Station-wise data showed



A passenger looks through a window on a cold winter morning in New Delhi

that the maximum temperature at Safdarjung was 15.7 degrees Celsius, 3.3 notches below normal, while Palam logged a maximum of 13 degrees Celsius, 5.7 notches below normal. Lodhi Road recorded 15.8 degrees Celsius, 5.2 notches below normal, Ridge 14.9 degrees Celsius, 1.6 notches below normal, and Ayanagar 14 degrees Celsius, 2.9 notches below normal, the IMD said.

The minimum temperature in the national capital stood at 7.6 degrees Celsius at Safdarjung, Lodhi Road, Ridge and Ayanagar, while Palam recorded a slightly lower minimum temperature of 6.5 degrees Celsius during the morning hours. The minimum temperature at Safdarjung was 0.7 notches above normal. Relative humidity levels remained high, with humidity recorded at 100 per cent in the morning and 91 per

cent in the evening, according to IMD data. For residents, the chill wind factor was felt sharply on the streets. "Even two layers are not enough. The cold is cutting through," said Vinayak, a daily commuter waiting for a bus near Kashmere Gate, wrapped in a shawl and jacket. Officegoers and students were seen huddling near tea stalls, blowing into their hands to keep warm.

The weather office has forecast dense fog during the morning hours on Wednesday and issued a yellow alert. The maximum and minimum temperatures on Wednesday are expected to be around 16 degrees Celsius and 7 degrees Celsius, respectively, with cold day conditions likely to continue.

Meanwhile, Delhi's air quality deteriorated further, with the 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) slipping to 310, placing it in the 'very poor' category, worsening from 244 recorded on Monday.

Phansi Ghar row: Assembly panel recommends action against Kejriwal, three others for skipping hearings

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi Assembly's Privileges Committee has recommended the House to take appropriate action against four AAP leaders, including ex-chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, for not appearing before it in a matter related to the authenticity of a 'Phansi Ghar' on the Assembly premises.

In its report, the Committee said that Kejriwal, former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, ex-speaker Ram Niwas Goel and former deputy speaker Rakhi Birla "deliberately" and "wilfully" chose to stay away from its proceedings in the matter.

The 'Phansi Ghar' (execution room) row is a dispute between the AAP and the BJP over a renovated section in the Delhi Assembly, which the AAP claims to be a British-era gallows chamber, while the BJP claims it was a tiffin room.

"The Committee recommends that the House may take proper action as deemed fit against Shri Arvind Kejriwal, Shri Ram Niwas Goel, Shri Manish Sisodia and Smt. Rakhi Birla for their wilful absence from the sittings of the Committee of Privileges which were scheduled for 13th November 2025 and 20th November 2025 without just cause or permission of the Committee," the Privileges Committee chairperson Parduymn Singh Rajput said in the report.

"As regards the main matter which was referred to the Committee by the Hon'ble Speaker, regarding the authenticity of the existence of 'faansi ghar', the Committee shall continue its examination of the parties and witnesses and submit a report in the next session," the report said.

The structure was renovated and inaugurated in 2022 by then chief minister Kejriwal as part of a 'Phansi



Ghar' in the presence of Sisodia, Rakhi Birla and Goel. During the Monsoon Session of the Assembly in August this year, the BJP reiterated its claim that people were misled to believe that the "Phansi Ghar" was a historic monument, while in reality it was a "tiffin room" in the British-era Assembly building.

However, the four AAP leaders in their replies challenged the jurisdiction of the Committee, claiming that there was no breach of privilege, the report said. Later, Kejriwal and Sisodia filed a writ petition in the Delhi High Court seeking quashing of the Committee's letter, notice and summons.

The AAP leaders also did not appear before the Committee on November 13 and November 20, 2025, the report said.

It said that as former members of the Assembly, the AAP leaders were well aware of the events leading to the opening of the 'Phansi Ghar', and it was their bounden duty to appear before the panel and assist it in ascertaining the veracity of the claim related to the structure. The action of the four AAP leaders to opt not to appear before the Committee constituted contempt of the House and its Committee, the report said.

Assembly adjourned twice as BJP, AAP spar over teachers counting dogs claims

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi Assembly was adjourned two times on the second day of the Winter Session on Tuesday, with the ruling BJP MLAs seeking an apology from the AAP members for "spreading lies" that directions were issued for the counting of stray dogs by the Government school teachers.

Speaker Vijender Gupta had a hard time controlling the protesting legislators before adjourning the House for 30 minutes, soon after the sitting started around 11 am.

During the first half session, the ruling party legislators reached outside the Assembly premises to mark their protest. The BJP MLAs criticised Aam Aadmi Party



Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta conducts proceedings during the Winter session of the Legislative Assembly in New Delhi

National Convener Arvind Kejriwal for his remarks alleging that the city Government school teachers were being engaged to count the stray dogs in the national capital. Meanwhile, protest was also witnessed by the Aam Aadmi Party MLAs over the issue during the ongoing session. The BJP MLAs gathered outside the Delhi Assembly, holding banners

and raising slogans against the AAP chief and demanding an apology for his remarks.

The ruling party targeted the opposition over the dog-counting allegation, while the AAP continued its attack on the Rekha Gupta Government over air pollution in the national capital.

The ruling party legislators accused the AAP and Kejriwal of "insulting" teachers and "misleading" the people of Delhi by spreading what he called "false claims" that the Delhi government had deployed teachers for counting dogs.

"This is an outright lie. BJP MLAs demand that they apologise immediately, both on the floor of the House and to the nation. That is why we staged the protest," they said during the protest.

Speaker Vijender refutes Atishi's mask expulsion claims

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta, on Tuesday, strongly refuted claims by Leader of Opposition Atishi that Members of the House were expelled merely for wearing masks. He called the allegation "factually incorrect" and a deliberate attempt to mislead the Assembly and the public.

In a detailed statement, the Speaker clarified that four Aam Aadmi Party MLAs, Sanjeev Jha, Som Dutt, Kuldeep Kumar, and Jarnail Singh, were suspended solely for disrupting the proceedings of the House and not for wearing masks, as had been alleged. He said the action was taken strictly to maintain order, dignity, and authority of the Assembly.

"The assertion that members were expelled

merely for wearing masks does not reflect the actual proceedings of the House. At no point was any member expelled on this ground," the Speaker said, dismissing the opposition's charge as a misrepresentation of facts.

According to the Speaker, the suspension followed repeated and deliberate attempts by the members to disrupt the scheduled business of the House, despite warnings from the Chair. He said the decision was taken in full conformity with the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of the Delhi Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker also said that the conduct of the suspended members amounted to contempt of the House, following which the matter has been referred to the Committee of Privileges under Rule 82. This rule empowers the Speaker to



Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta conducts proceedings during the Winter session of the Legislative Assembly in New Delhi

refer any issue involving privilege or contempt for examination, investigation, and report, while keeping the House informed.

He further pointed out

that under Rule 221, the Committee of Privileges has the authority to examine the evidence and circumstances of the case, determine whether a breach of

privilege or contempt has occurred, and recommend appropriate action. "The reference has been made strictly within the scope and intent of the rules," the Speaker said.

Gupta said the disruption occurred when Atishi attempted to raise the issue of pollution in Delhi during the sitting, even though the matter had already been formally listed on the Assembly agenda for discussion on January 7, 2026. He said the Chair had clearly informed members that the issue would be taken up at the scheduled time.

"Despite this clear position, there was an attempt to raise the matter in advance of the listed business. This was viewed as a calculated effort to interrupt proceedings and disturb the orderly conduct of the House," the Speaker said.

Operation Clean Air yields positive results with low or no visible dust in Noida: CAQM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Operation Clean Air to tackle pollution in the National Capital Region (NCR) is yielding positive results with low or no visible dust in Noida, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) said on Tuesday after inspection of roads.

Giving details, the CAQM said, as part of Operation Clean Air, it inspected 142 road stretches maintained by the Noida Authority on Monday. It said the majority of stretches were found with

low or no visible dust. The findings of the inspection indicated an encouraging overall scenario. Out of the 142 road stretches inspected, only four stretches exhibited high visible dust levels, while 24 stretches showed moderate dust, 66 stretches recorded low dust intensity and 48 stretches were found to have no visible dust.

The limited stretches exhibiting high visible dust were, in certain cases, associated with accumulation of MSW and/or C&D waste, particularly at locations such as

under flyovers, metro corridors and specific arterial road segments.

These observations highlight the need for focused attention on identified hotspots to prevent re-accumulation of dust and waste and to ensure targeted sweeping and dust suppression actions across all road stretches, the CAQM said.

The Commission emphasised that sustained and intensified efforts are required, especially at vulnerable locations, through regular mechanical sweeping, prompt lifting and scientific disposal of collected dust



and waste, effective water sprinkling and strict prevention of waste dumping and open burning.

"As part of its continuous monitoring, review and enforcement actions under the statutory framework of the extant Graded Response

Action Plan (GRAP), the Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas (CAQM) conducted an inspection drive on 05.01.2026 in Noida to assess the status of road-cleaning, mechanical sweeping operations and overall upkeep of road stretches maintained by the Noida Authority.

The inspection was carried out under 'Operation Clean Air' with the objective of evaluating on-ground implementation of dust mitigation measures and identifying issues related to visible road dust, accumulation of Municipal

Solid Waste (MSW), Construction and Demolition (C&D) waste and instances of open burning" the CAQM statement said.

For the inspection, a total of 10 inspection teams, comprising officers from the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board (UPPCB) and CAQM Flying Squad, were deployed. The teams inspected 142 road stretches under the jurisdiction of the Noida Authority.

Geo-tagged and time-stamped photographic evidence was collected during the inspections and submitted to the Commission as part

of the consolidated inspection report.

The inspection and enforcement drives under 'Operation Clean Air' will continue to be undertaken regularly across the NCR to ensure strict compliance with its Statutory Directions and GRAP measures for dust mitigation and prevention of open burning.

The CAQM remains committed to working on a war-footing with all concerned agencies in NCR to ensure clean, green, dust-free and well-maintained road stretches in the region.

IN FOCUS



A Naga sadhu of the Niranjani Akhara amid dense fog on the banks of the Sangam during the Magh Mela in Prayagraj

Yogi slams congress on MGNREGA claims

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Lucknow

Launching a sharp attack on the Congress and the INDIA bloc over its opposition to the VB GRAM G law, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday said those who "plundered" the country's resources for decades and pushed the poor into hunger were now questioning a transparent reform aimed at strengthening rural India.

Addressing what he described as an important press conference of the NDA Government here, Adityanath said the briefing was convened to explain the newly enacted Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G), 2025, which has replaced the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with state Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya during a press conference at Lok Bhawan in Lucknow

Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). "The VB-G RAM G Act will prove to be a milestone for India's workers, farmers and rural development, and the Uttar Pradesh Government fully supports it and is committed to its effective implementation," he said. The event was attended by Deputy Chief Ministers Brajesh Pathak and Keshav Prasad Maurya, and ministers from NDA allies, including the Nishad Party, SBSP and Apna Dal (S).

Slamming the Congress and "INDI alliance", Adityanath said, "those who plundered the country's resources for decades and pushed the poor and youth into hunger and migration are now questioning a trans-

parent reform aimed at strengthening rural India." "This law (VB GRAM G) has been brought to take forward Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat. It will guarantee employment, ensure livelihoods and create permanent infrastructure in rural areas," Adityanath said, calling the legislation a milestone for village-centric development. The chief minister said the press conference was necessary as those opposing the law feared that support for such transparent reforms would expose their past failures. "If the public starts asking why these steps were not taken when they were in power, their reality will be laid bare," he said. Adityanath alleged that MGNREGA had failed to create durable assets and

was plagued by fake job cards, bogus attendance, delayed wage payments, weak social audits and widespread corruption. He said workers were often denied timely employment and payments, while farmers faced acute labour shortages during sowing and harvesting seasons. Highlighting key provisions of the new law, Adityanath said the employment guarantee has been increased from 100 to 125 days, with weekly payments to workers and mandatory compensation in case of delays. He added that the unemployment allowance has now been made a legal right if work is not provided on demand. To ensure availability of farm labour, he said, the law provides for a 60-day pause in scheme work

during peak agricultural seasons, while ensuring the 125-day employment guarantee across the year. Welcoming the enactment, Adityanath expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Modi and the NDA, saying the reform would strengthen the rural economy, empower farmers and workers, and lay a strong foundation for a developed India. Adityanath further said the new law guarantees security for farmers and labourers, adding that those whose interests were affected by the discontinuation of "dig-and-fill" works were naturally uneasy with the reform. Explaining the framework of the law, the chief minister said four categories of works have been identified, which village heads will be able to select locally.

Parts of border sealed as tensions grip Nepal

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Communal tension has escalated in parts of southern Nepal following the vandalism of a mosque and the circulation of an allegedly offensive video on social media, prompting authorities to impose strict security measures and seal sections of the India-Nepal border. The unrest began in Birgunj, a key town in Parsa district, after a video containing alleged religiously offensive remarks went viral online. The content, reportedly shared by two men from Kamala Municipality in Dhanusha district, quickly sparked anger among different communities and led to protests in multiple locations. According to local authorities, the two individuals were later detained and handed over to police by residents concerned that the video could disrupt communal harmony. However, tensions intensified after a mosque was vandalised in the Sakhuwa Maran area of Kamala, an incident that further inflamed public sentiment and triggered widespread demonstrations. As protests grew, several Hindu groups claimed that the viral content included derogatory references to their religious beliefs, adding to the already volatile situation. Demonstrations soon turned violent in Birgunj, with protesters allegedly throwing stones at law enforcement personnel and damaging a local police station.

Permission to SMVDIME withdrawn for MBBS course

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

The Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB) of the National Medical Commission (NMC) has withdrawn the Letter of Permission (LoP) granted to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence (SMVDIME), Kakryal, Reasi (Jammu & Kashmir), for conducting the MBBS course with an intake of 50 seats for the academic year 2025-26. The decision, issued on 6 January 2026, came into effect immediately. It follows serious deficiencies and non-compliance with minimum standards observed during a surprise inspection carried out by the Board. NMC officials stated that, to safeguard the interests of students already admitted



for the academic year 2025-26, the State/UT authorities have been authorised to accommodate these students in other medical institutions within the Union Territory as supernumerary seats, in accordance with applicable norms. Earlier in the day, seeking immediate closure of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Sciences (SMVDIMS), Katra, Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday demanded that the students admitted there be accommodated in one of the government-run medical colleges in the Union Territory to end the stalemate. Ever since the admission process was completed, the newly opened Medical college, affiliated with the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU), has

come under scrutiny after it admitted 42 Muslim candidates, mostly from Kashmir, seven Hindu students from Jammu, and one Sikh candidate in its inaugural batch. Interacting with the media in Jammu on Tuesday, Omar lost his cool when he was asked to comment on protests organised by members of the Sangarsh Samiti, which is demanding allocation of seats in the Shrine Board-run medical college for students belonging to the Hindu community. "Why are they protesting? The students worked hard and were admitted there based on their merit. No one extended any favour to them. Neither the University nor I in person extended any favour to these students. They passed the entrance examination and

were admitted based on their merit. If you don't want them to study there, then you have to transfer them to any other Medical College". In the same vein, Omar added, "I don't think these students want to study there under the prevailing circumstances. If I were their guardian, even I would have hesitated before sending them to study in the same college. I urge the Government of India and the Ministry of Health to accommodate these students in any one of the medical colleges in Jammu and Kashmir so that we can provide them with medical education. "We don't want them to study there as politics is going on over their admissions on the campus. Shut down the same medical college.

2.89 crore names deleted in UP's electoral roll...

He said the exercise would have been smooth had more time been allotted to it and alleged that the rights of the people of UP had been violated. Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav warned the Election Commission about the draft roll in Mainpuri, the Lok Sabha constituency of his wife Dimple Yadav. In a post on X, the Kannauj MP and former UP chief minister said, "Before the anger of the voters turns into agitation, the Election Commission should correct the voter list by taking cognisance of the valid names cut from the SIR in Mainpuri." Earlier Chief Electoral Officer of Uttar Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said that the draft electoral roll is likely to include 12.55 crore voters. This would mean the deletion of around 2.89 crore names compared to the pre-SIR tally. Those whose names are excluded will have an opportunity to challenge the removal after the draft rolls are released. Most of the deletions were reported from major urban centres, including Lucknow, Ghaziabad, Prayagraj, and Kanpur. "The window for claims and objection opened from Tuesday (January 6, 2026) and will remain till February 6, 2026," he said. According to the data shared by the EC, Lucknow, has lost the maximum number of voters. When the SIR was announced, Lucknow had 39.9 lakh electors, which has now come down to 27.9 lakh - a reduction of 30 per cent. Similarly, in Lalitpur, 9.5 lakh electors were registered as of September 27, 2025, which has reduced to 8.6 lakh - down by 10%. Gorakhpur which is a constituency of UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had earlier 36,66,533 voters. Now only 30,20,908 voters remain. This means about 17.61 percent voters have been removed. Ayodhya seat remained the most discussed after the defeat in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Earlier, there were 19,07,800 voters here. Now the number has come down to 15,70,258. This means about 17.69 percent voters have been reduced. Prayagraj earlier had 46,92,860 voters, which has now come down to 35,36,554. This means about 24.64 percent voters have been reduced. In the last Assembly elections, Varanasi earlier had 31,53,705 voters. Now the number stands at 25,80,500, meaning about 18.18 percent voters have been removed. Mathura earlier had 19,47,368 voters. Now only 15,73,574 voters remain. In percentage terms, about 19.20 percent voters have been removed. Rinwa said even among the names on the draft list, mapping could not be done for 8.5%. "Such people will start receiving notices from today. The notice will contain a list of documents that they can submit for inclusion in the final list," he said. While the exercise was originally scheduled to end on December 11, the state sought an additional 15 days after noticing that the names of a large number of voters, nearly 2.97 crore, were getting excluded from the draft list. Consequently, the enumeration phase was extended till December 26. Rinwa said December 31 was initially fixed as the publication date of the draft roll, but parallel fieldwork and EC instructions to rationalise polling stations led to a delay. "The Commission has capped voters per polling station at 1,200 instead of the earlier norm of 1,500. To meet this requirement, around 15,030 new polling stations were created across the state," he said, adding that approval for the exer-

CAQM failing in its duty: SC slams pollution...

The court said the first step is the identification of causes of pollution and refused to grant the request. "Have you been able to identify the causes of pollution? During all these days, a lot of material is coming in public domain, experts are writing articles, people are having opinions (and) they keep on sending to us on mail," the bench said. "Heavy vehicles are contributing a large part, so the first question is how do we address that... By holding a meeting on January 2 and telling us that we will come after two months, that is not acceptable to us. The CAQM is failing in its duty," the bench observed orally. It said it will not adjourn the matter beyond two weeks and it will deal with the pollution issue on a continuous basis. The court said that instead of coming up with a solution, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has filed an affidavit defending the toll plazas as its source of income. The Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority has also jumped into this and moved an application seeking direction of apportionment of 50 per cent of the environment compensation charge generated at various places in Gurugram, it said. "... Instead of bringing any concrete plan or proposal for some visible long-term remedial measures, (the CAQM) has given a status report which unfortunately does not reflect any seriousness on the part of the authority, which unfortunately is silent on most of the issues raised by this court," the bench said. "The CAQM appears to be in no hurry... To either identify the causes of the worsening AQI or the long-term solutions. We are therefore compelled to issue directions necessary to expedite the identification of causes as well as long-term solutions," it said. The court said there cannot be a one-go decision like introduction of electric vehicles without first examining the consequences that may fall upon the public exchequer. However, with a long-term plan, better alternatives can follow and be implemented in a phased manner, it added. The bench listed the PIL filed by environmentalist MC Mehta for further direction on January 21. During the December 17 hearing, the court described the pollution crisis as an "annual feature" and called for pragmatic and practical solutions to tackle the menace. It modified its own interim order of August 12 and permitted the authorities to take coercive action against older vehicles that do not meet Bharat Stage-IV (BS-IV) emission standards.

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Justice. Indian authorities, however, have rejected claims that the suspects crossed into India, saying there is no evidence of illegal border movement. The protesters further demanded that alleged collaborators within the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence be identified, arrested and brought to justice, alleging that certain individuals within the security apparatus may have aided those responsible for the killing. Sharif Osman Hadi, 32, rose to national prominence during the July-August 2024 mass protests that led to the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government. He was shot in the head on December 12 while campaigning in Dhaka as a candidate for the upcoming parliamentary elections. After being airlifted to Singapore for advanced treatment, he died on December 18. Hadi's killing has triggered renewed political unrest in Bangladesh and contributed to tensions in Bangladesh-India relations, following allegations of an Indian link to the crime. New Delhi has strongly denied the accusations, calling them false and misleading, while reiterating its support for peace and stability in Bangladesh and calling for a thorough investigation. Despite official denials from Indian security agencies, the case continues to resonate in Bangladesh's political arena, with opposition groups warning that unresolved questions surrounding the murder could further destabilise the country ahead of the national polls. **JNU protest sparks political row** The varsity said that while freedom of speech and expression is a fundamental right, universities are centres of learning and innovation and cannot be allowed to become spaces for hatred. Any form of violence, unlawful conduct or activities that undermine national unity would not be tolerated, it asserted. The administration said students involved in the incident would face disciplinary action, which could include immediate suspension, expulsion, or permanent debarment. The University also ordered an internal inquiry, as BJP leaders, including Union and Delhi ministers, expressed anger over the incident, alleging that the slogans reflected the "Urban Naxal mindset that is supported by Rahul Gandhi and the Congress". The University has named several students, including current Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) president Aditi Mishra, and said they were identified during the programme. It claimed that the slogans were "deliberate", "repeated" and had the "potential to seriously disrupt public order, campus harmony and security". Earlier, the varsity in a statement stated that it had taken serious cognisance of videos from a protest in which the students' union raised "highly objectionable, provocative, and inflammatory" slogans, asserting that such actions demonstrate a "wilful disrespect for constitutional institutions". It has requested the police to register an FIR after slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah were raised during a programme on Monday night. According to the letter, the University's Security Department said the programme was organised around 10 pm by students linked to the JNUSU. A group of JNU students, including the Democratic Students' Federation (DSF), All India

Students' Association (AISA) and Students' Federation of India (SFI) gathered near the 'Guerrilla Dhaba' inside the campus. According to a purported video of the protest, which was held on Monday night, slogans condemning Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah were raised. The protests took place hours after the Supreme Court denied bail to former JNU students Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 Delhi riots case. Meanwhile BJP leaders have accused Left-wing groups of promoting anti-India ideology on campus. In a post on X, Union Minister Kiren Rijju said. "Modi-Shah Ki Kabar Khudegi ?? In a safe and free India, these people keep abusing the prime minister but seek freedom. INDIA will be free from such sick people!" "We live in a country where the prime minister is openly abused... Yet these mentally ill people demand freedom." Delhi ministers Kapil Mishra, Manjinder Singh Sirsa and Ashish Sood on Tuesday criticised the raising of controversial slogans at JNU against Prime Minister Narendra Modi following the Supreme Court's decision to deny bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 Delhi riots conspiracy case. Law Minister Kapil Mishra said, "Snakes are being crushed and the snakelets are screaming. Those who are chanting slogans in support of criminals, Naxalites, and terrorists have now become frustrated because their evil plans are being shattered one by one. Those supporting these criminals should be given severe punishment." Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said protesting against a Supreme Court order is unacceptable. "If people start opposing court verdicts, the system will collapse," he said, alleging that some groups wanted to weaken the country. Delhi Education Minister Ashish Sood said such activities fall within the ambit of sedition, and I condemn them in the strongest possible terms. He said people were free to protest against government policies, including those related to education, water, security or farmers, but there should be decorum in political discourse and no activity should go against the nation. The JNU administration, in a letter addressed to the SHO of Vasant Kunj (North), said a programme, "A Night of Resistance with Guerrilla Dhaba," was organised around 10 pm by students linked to the JNUSU. The gathering initially appeared limited to commemorating the January 5, 2020 incident, with around 30 to 35 students present. However, the nature of the event changed following a judicial verdict on the bail pleas of Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, after which some participants allegedly raised "inflammatory and objectionable" slogans, it read. "Such act reflects a wilful disrespect for constitutional institutions and established norms of civil and democratic discourse. All stakeholders must understand the clear distinction between dissent, abuse and hate speech which leads to public disorder," the statement issued by university registrar said. The university states that certain students raised "highly objectionable, provocative and inflammatory" slogans and are in direct contempt of the Supreme Court. The university urged the stakeholders to desist from indulging in any "such unwarranted activities" and cooperate in maintaining peace and harmony on the campus failing which strict action will be taken as per rules. "JNU administration has taken very serious cognisance of the videos being circulated of the

protest organised at Sabarmati premises yesterday (Monday) wherein a group of students from JNUSU raised highly objectionable, provocative and inflammatory slogans," the statement read. "The Competent Authority has taken serious note of the incident and Security Branch has been asked cooperate with the police in the investigation," it added. **TN hilltop temple lamp lighting gets HC nod** "... Nor is it the case of the management or the Government that lighting lamp is not a custom prevailing in Thiruparankundram Hill," said the Division Bench, upholding Justice GR Swaminathan's Order. Last month, Justice Swaminathan allowed the petition filed by Rama Ravikumar to light the lamp in the temple hills, near a Dargah. "It is ridiculous and hard to believe the fear of the mighty State that by allowing representatives of the Devasthanam to light the lamp at the stone pillar near the top of the hill located within its territory of Devasthanam land, on a particular day in a year, will cause disturbance to public peace. Of course, it may happen only if such a disturbance is sponsored by the State itself. We pray no State should stoop to that level to achieve their political agenda," the bench said. Advocate MR Venkatesh argued for the petitioner. After this judgment, Opposition parties led by Congress and DMK filed Impeachment against Justice Swaminathan in Lok Sabha for "violating secularist principles". Justice Swaminathan initiated contempt charges against the officials for not adhering his orders in lighting lamp in the temple hills. **Highway, telecom authority come...** "Detailed information on these locations has been compiled and formally shared with the Department of Telecommunications and TRAI for necessary action," said a senior NHA official. As the National Highway corridors traverse through remote and rural areas, absence of dependable mobile network coverage on these sections adversely impacts National Highway operations, emergency response mechanism and delivery of technology-enabled public services. In addition, NHA has requested TRAI to issue necessary directions to telecom operators for dissemination of proactive SMS or Flash SMS alerts at geo-mapped accident-prone locations, including stretches affected by stray cattle movement and other identified hazards. "These alerts are intended to reach road users prior to their arrival at such locations, enabling timely caution and safer driving behavior. A list of accident-prone stretches frequently impacted by stray cattle has also been shared with TRAI," added the official. By seeking intervention to address mobile network connectivity gaps and enhancing safety along National Highways, NHA said its commitment is to working in close coordination with all concerned stakeholders to ensure that National Highway network is not only physically well-connected but is also digitally enabled. "These efforts align with NHA's broader objective of delivering safe, efficient and user-centric Highway infrastructure for cit-

Hadi's death sparks protest, demands...

The group warned that if India refuses to hand them over, the Bangladeshi government should pursue the matter at the International Court of

Andhra CM Naidu approves ₹19,000 cr investments



Andhra Pradesh's 14th State Investment Promotion Board meeting, chaired by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday, approved investment proposals worth over ₹19,000 crore with the potential to generate nearly 12,000 jobs. Proposals cleared include Tata Power's ₹6,675 crore investment, Shirdi Sai Electricals' ₹5,571 crore project among others.

Uttarakhand Govt following divide and rule policy: MA Baby

CPI(M) General Secretary MA Baby on Tuesday accused the BJP-led Uttarakhand Government of following the 'divide and rule' policy by considering a ban on entry of non-Hindus on ghats in Haridwar. CPI(M) reaction comes amid media reports claiming that the Uttarakhand Government will hold discussions over declaring Ganga ghats in Haridwar a restricted zone for non-Hindus before the Ardh Kumbh in 2027.



TNCC is firm on its alliance with DMK: Selvaperunthagai



Tamil Nadu Congress is firm on its alliance with the DMK, and it would talk in a dignified manner and get the number of seats it requires to contest in the Assembly polls, TNCC President K Selvaperunthagai said on Tuesday. "There is no threat to our alliance with the DMK. We will discuss with them in a dignified manner to get the number of seats we require," he said.

Prakash Akolkar selected for lifetime achievement award

The Mantralaya and Vidhimandal Vartahar Sangh, an association of reporters covering the Maharashtra secretariat and legislature, on Tuesday announced the KP Samak Lifetime Achievement Award for 2025 for veteran journalist Prakash Akolkar. January 6 is celebrated as 'Prakr Din' in Maharashtra to honor Balshastri Jambhekar who launched the first Marathi newspaper, Darpan, on this date in 1832.



MAHARASHTRA CIVIC ELECTIONS

Accept money from parties, use it to bring toilets: Owaisi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Latur

AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi on Tuesday said voters can accept money being distributed by political parties during elections and use it for constructing toilets if they feel it is an unethical practice.



AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi

Addressing a rally for the upcoming Latur civic polls, Owaisi attacked the Narendra Modi Government over its foreign policy and also criticised the Waqf (amendment) Act.

"Rival political parties started distributing cash among voters only after the AIMIM entered the fray. Had we not fielded candidates, money wouldn't have been distributed... Take money and if you feel it is unethical and 'haram' (illegitimate), use it to build toilets," he said.

Owaisi called upon Muslims to build strong polit-

ical leadership, ruling that every community has political power except minorities.

Dalits and Muslims form a large section of the poor population, yet development has not reached their areas, he added.

"The BJP speaks of nationalism, but farmers are dying, youths are unemployed, and all they talk about is love jihad," he said.

taken loans worth ₹9.30 lakh crore. Who would repay the debt?" he asked.

He also targeted Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, stating that the person who didn't remain loyal to his uncle and political mentor Sharad Pawar, how could he be loyal to the people.

On the Waqf (Amendment) Act, Owaisi alleged that the law is being misused to lock mosques and challenge ownership of centuries-old dargahs.

"Under the amended Act, non-Muslims can become members of Muslim boards, but Muslims cannot be members of Hindu trust boards. What was Ajit Pawar doing when this bill was passed?" he questioned.

The Hyderabad MP questioned the circumstances surrounding the death of one of the convicts of the 2006 Mumbai train bombings in jail.

Owaisi further alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP remain silent about US President Donald Trump, "who says in an aeroplane that Modi takes decisions to please me."

The AIMIM chief claimed the Maharashtra Government's 'Mazi Ladki Bahin' scheme has seen a steady reduction in beneficiaries.

"The Government had

Karnataka home minister rejects claims of second autopsy in Ballari firing case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Bengaluru

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara on Tuesday rejected claims that the autopsy of the deceased in the Ballari incident was conducted twice, dismissing allegations made by Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy.

Kumaraswamy on Monday had alleged a "systematic conspiracy" by the Karnataka Government to cover up the recent Ballari firing incident and demanded a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the death of a Congress worker.

Speaking to reporters at his residence, Parameshwara cautioned political leaders against making statements without proper verification, saying uninformed remarks could have unintended social consequences.

"The doctors who conducted the post-mortem have clearly stated that it was not done twice. Those claiming that two post-mortems were conducted—have they even seen it?



G Parameshwara

When doctors have given a statement, whom should we believe? I accept the doctors' version that the post-mortem was not conducted twice," he said.

Congress worker Raja Shekhar was killed in the firing allegedly by private gunmen during violence between Congress and BJP workers over the installation of a banner near BJP MLA G Janardhana Reddy's residence in Ballari.

The banner was related to the unveiling of a statue of Maharshi Valmiki in Ballari on January 4. Responding

further to Kumaraswamy's remarks, Parameshwara said he was serving his third term as home minister and had 38 years of political experience, having handled several responsibilities in both the party and the Government.

He claimed that while Kumaraswamy, as a union minister, had access to nationwide information, it was not appropriate to draw conclusions about the entire system based on a single incident. "The police take decisions at their level to maintain law and order, and the government issues necessary directions and takes appropriate measures whenever such incidents occur," Parameshwara said.

The Home Minister also congratulated Siddaramaiah on equalling the late former chief minister D Devaraj Urs' record tenure of 2,792 days in office, saying such milestones were possible due to the Congress party's ideological commitment and long-term vision for development and social justice.

Congress opposing G RAM G as it has Lord Ram's name: Rajasthan BJP chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jaipur

Rajasthan BJP president Madan Rathore on Tuesday targeted the Congress for opposing the 'Viksit Bharat-Guarantee Rozgar Aur Aajeevika Mission Act' (VB-G RAM G Act), claiming that the party has an objection to the name of Lord Ram.

Speaking to reporters at the party office, Rathore said the Congress was raising unnecessary controversy over the nomenclature of the employment and livelihood mission. "The Congress has a problem with the name Ram," he alleged.



Rajasthan president Madan Rathore

Rathore said there should be no objection if the BJP Government has enacted a new law by linking employment and livelihood schemes with the vision of a 'Viksit Bharat'. He accused the Congress of repeatedly renaming welfare schemes in the past to please members of a single family.

Citing examples, Rathore said the National Rural Employment Programme was renamed as the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana during former PM Rajiv Gandhi's tenure and later rechristened as NREGA and MGNREGA under the Manmohan Singh Government.

State Govt ready for any probe in Ankita Bhandari case, says CM Dhami

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Dehradun

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Tuesday said the Uttarakhand Government is prepared for any investigation into the Ankita Bhandari murder case, adding that a final decision would be taken only after consulting her parents and following their wishes. Opposition parties have been holding protests, demanding a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the matter.

Speaking to reporters, Dhami noted that the people of the State have expressed

their views with sensitivity, and Ankita's parents remain the most affected.

"I will speak with her parents as the chief servant of the state. After discussing the matter with them and studying the legal aspects, we will proceed in accordance with their wishes to ensure justice for their daughter," the Chief Minister said.

The Congress and various social organisations have been demanding a CBI inquiry to identify a 'VIP' allegedly linked to the case.

In 2022, 19-year-old Ankita, a receptionist at the Vanantra Resort in Pauri district, was

murdered. The resort owner, Pulkit Arya, and two employees, Saurabh Bhaskar and Ankit Gupta were subsequently arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment by a sessions court for the crime.

The case returned to spotlight recently after actress Urmila Sanawar, who claims to be the wife of former MLA Suresh Rathore, shared audio recordings on social media. In the clips, Sanawar alleged that the 'VIP' mentioned in the case is a BJP leader known as 'Gattu'. She disclosed the full name of the person in a video, sparking a political row in the State.



Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami addressing a press conference regarding probe into the Ankita Bhandari murder case on Tuesday PTI

Congress seeks CBI probe into Anikta Bhandari murder

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Congress on Tuesday demanded a CBI probe into the Ankita Bhandari murder case in Uttarakhand, saying the BJP cannot hide the truth anymore, and the names of those involved should come out.

Congress spokesperson and social media in-charge Supriya Shrinete said the slogan of "Give justice to Ankita Bhandari" is echoing across Uttarakhand.

She claimed that great injustice had been done to the daughter of the hills, as she was pressured to indulge in immoral acts, and when she refused, she was brutally murdered.

To hide all the evidence in



Congress spokesperson and social media in-charge Supriya Shrinete

this case, a bulldozer was immediately run over that hotel because a BJP leader was involved. "Now the truth is coming to light that this entire rape and murder incident reaches up to a senior BJP functionary. Along with the entire Uttarakhand, BJP people are

also hoping for justice in the case," Shrinete said.

She also alleged that the Uttarakhand Government cannot deliver justice to Ankita Bhandari because it is in slumber. "Therefore, we demand that the investigation into the Ankita Bhandari case be handed over to the CBI. Ankita must get justice at any cost, and that will happen only when the CBI investigates the case," she said.

Mahila Congress president Alka Lamba said people across the country, including Uttarakhand, are taking to the streets demanding justice in the Ankita Bhandari murder case. "We have been consistently demanding a CBI investigation in this matter, so that it can be ascertained who that VIP

was. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami will have to accept the demand for a CBI investigation; he can no longer evade it," she said.

Lamba alleged that the BJP Government only raises the slogan of "Save the Daughter", but in reality, it is constantly engaged in protecting the criminal. The Congress will no longer allow this, Lamba said.

In a social media post, the Opposition party said the entire nation is shaken and outraged by Ankita Bhandari's murder in Uttarakhand. Instead of ensuring justice, the BJP Governments in the State and at the Centre are evading a fair and transparent investigation to protect the culprits, the Congress said.

Pradhan releases 55 literary works in classical languages

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Indian languages are a unifying force and have stood the test of time despite attempts of destroying them, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Tuesday. Pradhan made the comments while releasing 55 scholarly volumes in classical Indian languages, including an interpretation of Tirukkural in Sign Language.

"Our languages are a unifying force. Indian languages have stood the test of time despite the attempts to destroy them. India is the mother of democracy and also a country of immense linguistic diversity. It should be our responsibility to ensure that our historical, cultural and literary wealth is preserved and future generations made aware of," he said.

The minister noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasised that all Indian languages are national languages.

Pradhan released 41 literary works developed by the Centres of Excellence for Classical Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam and Odia. He also released 13 books along with a 45-episode Sign Language interpretation series of the Tirukkural by the Central Institute of Classical Tamil (CICT).

"These literary works in Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, Odia, Tamil and Sign Language are a part of our larger national effort to place India's lin-



guistic heritage at the centre of education, research and cultural pride.

"From including more languages in the scheduled list to translation of classical texts in

Indian languages to encouraging education in Indian languages, our Government has worked extensively to strengthen and promote all Indian languages," Pradhan said.

BJP hails HC order allowing lighting lamp atop Thirupparankundram hill

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The BJP on Tuesday welcomed a Madras High Court order upholding a single judge's directive allowing the lighting of a lamp at a stone pillar atop the Thirupparankundram hill in Madurai, and described the DMK, Congress and the opposition 'INDI alliance' as "anti-Hindu" and "anti-Sanatani". The party also vowed to fight any attempt to divide people along the lines of caste or religion.

Addressing a press conference after the division bench of Justices G Jayachandran and KK Ramakrishnan delivered the judgment, senior BJP leader and Union Minister

Piyush Goyal termed the order a "slap on the face of the appeasement policy" of the Opposition bloc and "victory of the Hindu religion". "The two judges have given conclusive direction that this is an age-old practice. This is a matter of the Hindu religion and the sentiments of the local people. The practice has been going on for centuries.

"This order has clearly lifted the veil of the DMK Government (in Tamil Nadu), Chief Minister MK Stalin, his son and deputy chief minister Udhayanidhi Stalin, Congress and all the INDI alliance members," Goyal said at the BJP headquarters.

The high court bench slammed the DMK

Government, which had submitted that there was no evidence to establish that the pillar was a *deepathoon*, saying "we pray no State should stoop to that level to achieve their political agenda".

The bench also made it clear that the spot on which the stone pillar (*deepathoon*) is located belongs to the Sri Subramania Swamy temple.

The Tamil Nadu Government indicated that it would appeal against the order in the Supreme Court. "Strongly condemning" the leaders of the DMK, Congress and their allies for their alleged anti-Hindu statements, Goyal said the BJP will always fight for maintaining the secular fabric of the



Union Minister Piyush Goyal addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi PANKAJ KUMAR

nation, and against the "appeasement policy".

"We will not tolerate any attempt to divide people along the lines of caste and religion. The country will not

accept the appeasement policy of the INDI alliance. This country respects all religions equally," he said.

Goyal, who is the BJP's election in-charge for Tamil Nadu,

said people of the southern state would give the DMK and its allies a befitting reply in every single opportunity, recalling the "overwhelming" victory of the NDA in the recent Bihar elections and in the local body polls in Maharashtra.

Goyal also slammed the Opposition members for moving an impeachment motion against Madras High Court judge Justice GR Swaminathan, who first held that the Arulmighu Subramania Swamy temple was duty-bound to light the lamp at the *deepathoon*, in addition to the customary lighting near the Uchi Pillaiyar Mandapam.

The BJP leader claimed that the DMK took the initiative for

the impeachment motion, which was signed by Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi, Samajwadi Party's Dharmendra Yadav, NCP's Supriya Sule, and Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Arvind Sawant, among others. "They are intimidating the judiciary and levelling false charges against the honourable judge," Goyal claimed, terming the allegations "extremely unfortunate".

He also claimed that this shows the "bias" and "anti-Hindu mindset" of the Opposition leaders, accusing the ruling DMK of indulging in "appeasement politics to curry favour to a small dargah" located nearby. "Their reality has been exposed," Goyal said.

The BJP leader also said the court dismissed the state Government's argument that allowing the lighting of the lamp may create a law and order situation by maintaining that it was an "imaginary ghost" apprehended by the State authority.

"This clearly shows that the State Government and the INDI alliance might themselves sponsor disturbance to support their anti-Hindu agenda," he said.

Terming the high court order a "wake-up" call for the people of Tamil Nadu and the country, Goyal cautioned people against the "mindset" of the opposition parties such as the DMK, Congress and Trinamool Congress, among others.

States Focus

Omar Abdullah seeks closure of SMVDIMS amid admission row

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

Seeking immediate closure of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Sciences (SMVDIMS), Katra, Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday demanded that the students admitted there be accommodated in one of the government-run medical colleges in the Union Territory to end the stalemate.

Ever since the admission process was completed, the newly opened Medical college, affiliated with the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU), has come under scrutiny after it admitted 42 Muslim candidates, mostly from Kashmir, seven Hindu students from Jammu, and one Sikh candidate in its inaugural batch.

Interacting with the media in Jammu on Tuesday, Omar lost his cool when he was asked to comment on protests organised by members of the Sangarsh Samiti, which is demanding allocation of seats in the



Police personnel keep vigil during a demonstration, organised by Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Sangharsh Samiti, demanding revocation of the MBBS admission list of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi, outside Civil Secretariat, in Jammu on Tuesday

Shrine Board-run medical college for students belonging to the Hindu community. "Why are they protesting? The students worked hard and were admitted there based on their merit. No one extended any favour to them. Neither the University nor I in person extended any favour to these students. They passed

the entrance examination and were admitted based on their merit. If you don't want them to study there, then you have to transfer them to any other Medical College.

In the same vein, Omar added, "I don't think these students want to study there under the prevailing circumstances. If I were their

guardian, even I would have hesitated before sending them to study in the same college. I urge the Government of India and the Ministry of Health to accommodate these students in any one of the medical colleges in Jammu and Kashmir so that we can provide them with medical education.



RAJASTHAN CM SHARMA LAUNCHES AI-ML POLICY 2026

Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma on Tuesday launched the Rajasthan Artificial Intelligence-Machine Learning (AI-ML) Policy 2026 and the National AI Literacy Programme. The policies were launched at the inaugural of the Rajasthan Regional AI Impact Conference-2026 at the Jaipur Exhibition and Convention Centre (JECC). Sharma also unveiled the iStart Learning Management System, Rajasthan AVGC-XR Portal, and the Rajasthan AI Portal, aimed at boosting AI-driven education, startups, research, skill development and digital governance in the state. "The effective use of technology is the basis of future growth. Rajasthan is rapidly moving towards becoming a leading centre for innovation, investment and good governance in the field of artificial intelligence," Sharma said.



HIMACHAL'S KANGRA DISTRICT BANS TREKKING ABOVE 3,000M

The administration of Kangra district in Himachal Pradesh has imposed a complete ban on all trekking activities above 3000 meters in the district, officials said on Tuesday. Issuing the directions, Deputy Commissioner Kangra Hemraj Bairwa said that orders regarding trekking are issued from time to time, keeping in mind the safety of tourists, and the District Disaster Management Authority has issued orders imposing a complete ban on all trekking activities above 3000 meters. Special instructions have also been issued regarding trekking activities, and prior permission from the office of the Superintendent of Police, Kangra, has been made mandatory for trekking on the Kareri, Triund, and Adi Himani Chamunda routes.

Himachal leads in IT use for transparent governance: CM Sukhu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Shimla

Himachal Pradesh has emerged as a forerunner in the effective use of information technology (IT) to make public services accessible, transparent and time-bound, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has said.

Addressing the general house meeting of the Society for Promotion of IT and e-Governance in Himachal Pradesh (SITEG) on Monday evening, he said even in the most remote and tribal areas of the state, most Government services are now available at the click of a mouse, which he hailed as a milestone in the



direction of good governance, a statement issued here on Tuesday said.

The chief minister reviewed various IT-based applications and software developed by the department and directed

officers to make these systems more citizen-friendly, secure and effective.

Reviewing the 'Him Upasthiti' application, developed to ensure attendance of employees working in

various Government departments, Sukhu directed to further enhance its efficiency, transparency and reliability.

He also directed that registration of all state Government staff on the 'Him Access Portal' be made mandatory and instructed that all employees must complete their registration within one month.

Launching the Asset Mapping Application, the chief minister said this initiative would provide comprehensive and updated information related to citizens' properties, which would support infrastructure development, effective policy formulation and improved resource management.

According to the state-

ment, an artificial intelligence-based document verification system is being integrated into the Him Seva Portal for more efficient delivery of revenue services.

At present, revenue service's involve manual verification of applications, placing an excessive workload on officers. Minor errors in documents often lead to rejection of applications. As a result, officers spend substantial time on preliminary checks, and citizens are compelled to make repeated visits to Government offices, the statement noted.

The AI-based system will automatically scan documents at the time of upload

and identify whether they are clear, correctly formatted, and complete with all required details.

It will also cross-verify personal information entered in the application and flag any discrepancies. In case of deficiencies, applicants will receive immediate feedback before submission, enabling them to rectify errors in real time, it added.

The chief minister also directed that comprehensive mapping under the Him Pariwar Portal be ensured down to the panchayat level, with inclusion of socio-economic data and integration with all welfare schemes of the state Government.

Gehlot calls Bangladesh atrocities against Hindus a blot on humanity

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Jaipur

Senior Congress leader Ashok Gehlot on Tuesday termed the atrocities against Hindu minorities in Bangladesh a blot on humanity and said the neighbouring country's actions against India are a diplomatic failure of the Centre.

It is a matter of concern that a country whose creation India was supported by India has not turned against it, the former Rajasthan chief minister said in a statement. There has been a spate of violent incidents against the Hindu community members in Bangladesh, with five men killed since early December.

"Reports of brutality against Hindu minorities in Bangladesh are disturbing. The killing of five Hindus in just 19 days and the atrocities being committed against women there are a blot on humanity," Gehlot said.

Recalling the 1971 war,



which led to the liberation of Bangladesh, Gehlot said the memories remain fresh of a period when India under the leadership of then prime minister Indira Gandhi demonstrated strong diplomatic resolve and firm political will and changed both history and geography.

He said India did not hesitate even in the face of pressure from major global powers, including the United States, which had deployed its Seventh Fleet against the country at the time.

It is a matter of concern

that a country whose creation was supported by India is now acting against India, Gehlot said, describing it as a diplomatic failure of the BJP-led central Government.

"The Centre should move beyond ritualistic statements expressing 'deep concern' and take concrete steps. Protecting the lives, dignity and honour of minorities in a neighbouring country is our moral and diplomatic responsibility," he said.

"History bears witness that innocent lives are saved not by hollow slogans but through decisive leadership. The prime minister should intervene in the matter and exert effective pressure on Bangladesh's interim Government," Gehlot said.

On January 4, a Hindu businessman, who was also the acting editor of a newspaper, was fatally shot in the head by unidentified men in Jessore district of Bangladesh.

TMC Govt neglecting tea workers, aims to end industry: Suwendu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kolkata

BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari on Tuesday attacked the Trinamool Congress Government of West Bengal, accusing Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of neglecting the interests of indigenous communities and tea garden labourers, while protecting illegal immigrants.

Alleging that workers of a few tea gardens did not get salaries for the past few months, he claimed that several tribal communities, such as Rajbanshis, were consistently ignored by the TMC Government, as they did not form the ruling party's political support base.

Painting a grim picture of the tea industry in north Bengal, which is a strong-hold of the BJP, Adhikari alleged that it had been "completely destroyed" during the TMC regime.

"In several gardens, workers had not received

THE CHIEF MINISTER WROTE LETTERS THREE TIMES TO KEEP BANGLADESHI MUSLIM INFILTRATORS AND ROHINGYAS ON THE VOTER LIST, BUT SHE DID NOT RAISE THIS DEMAND EVEN ONCE FOR THE TEA GARDEN WORKERS



BJP LEADER SUWENDU ADHIKARI

salaries for the past four to five months. Gardens like Bhatkawa and Madhu are closed, while many others are in a critical condition," the leader of the Opposition in the state assembly claimed.

Adhikari said that the Union labour minister had recently visited Siliguri to assess the situation, but asserted that the primary responsibility lay with the state Government.

Mamata alleges ECI using BJP IT-cell apps illegally for SIR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Gangasagar (WB)

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday escalated her confrontation with the Election Commission of India (ECI), alleging that the poll panel was illegally using mobile applications developed by the BJP's IT cell to conduct the ongoing SIR of electoral rolls in the state.

The BJP rejected the charge as baseless and politically motivated. Speaking to reporters before concluding her two-day visit to Sagar Island in South 24 Parganas district to review preparations for the annual Gangasagar Mela, Banerjee accused the ECI of adopting what she described as "wrong, unconstitutional and undemocratic" methods in carrying out the revision exercise ahead of next year's Assembly elections. "The ECI is resorting to all



CM Mamata Banerjee before leaving for Kolkata after her visit to Sagar Island in South 24 Parganas district, West Bengal

kinds of wrong moves for conducting the SIR. It is marking eligible voters as dead, and forcing the elderly, ill and indisposed to attend hearings. It is making use of mobile apps developed by the BJP's IT cell for the exercise. This is illegal, unconstitutional and undemocratic. This cannot go on," the CM alleged.

Malaysia's Penang keen to partner Karnataka on quantum tech: Boseraju

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bengaluru

Karnataka Minister NS Boseraju on Tuesday said a high-level delegation from Malaysia's Penang has expressed keen interest in partnering with the state Government for the development of quantum technology. It draws on the principles of quantum mechanics and enables new ways of processing information.

The state science and technology minister shared the information after meeting the delegation, led by Penang Deputy Chief Minister Jagdeep Singh Deo, at Vikas Soudha earlier in the day. Following the discussions, Deo extended an official invitation to Boseraju to visit Malaysia and Penang, officials said.

According to a statement, Boseraju, during the interaction, highlighted Karnataka's innovations in the minor irri-



gation sector and its 'waste to wealth' initiatives, including the KC Valley (Koramangala-Challaghatta) and HN Valley (Hebbal-Nagawara) projects.

The KC Valley project is a state Government initiative that uses secondary treated wastewater from Bengaluru's sewage plants to replenish rain-fed tanks and recharge groundwater in the drought-prone Kolar and Chikkaballapur districts.

The HN Valley project is a similar initiative that uses treated wastewater from

Bengaluru to replenish lakes and recharge groundwater in Chikkaballapur and Bengaluru Urban and Rural districts.

"By treating sewage water and filling tanks in drought-prone districts, we have recharged groundwater levels and supported agriculture. This is a model of sustainable development," Boseraju told the delegation. Deo appreciated the Karnataka Government's initiatives in science and technology and elaborated on

Penang's development model.

"Though Penang is geographically small, it has emerged as a global powerhouse in the semiconductor sector. The primary reason for this success is strong industry-research collaboration, in which Penang University has played a key role," he said.

Deo explained how the university helped build a research ecosystem that directly supports industry, and suggested expanding such collaboration between Karnataka and Penang.

The invitation to Boseraju includes a visit to Penang's university research facilities and its semiconductor ecosystem to better understand the collaborative framework and to finalise a proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on human resource development.

The minister's office said both leaders noted that while

Bengaluru is at the forefront of the electronics sector, Penang is witnessing rapid growth in the semiconductor industry.

They agreed that synergy between the two ecosystems would create significant opportunities for both regions.

The Penang delegation also commended the state Government's efforts to nurture quantum technology and promote scientific temper among the youth.

Significantly, the delegation expressed interest in becoming part of Karnataka's 'quantum action plan'. The key components of the plan include integrating quantum education at various levels of the academic ecosystem. It also envisages the establishment of cutting-edge research infrastructure in collaboration with institutions such as the Indian Institute of Science (IISc).

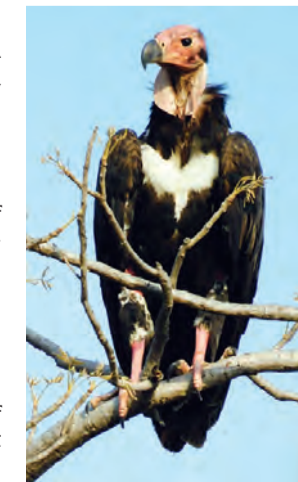
BNHS releases 15 endangered Indian vultures in Melghat Tiger Reserve

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has released 15 critically endangered Indian vultures at the Melghat Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra as part of its ongoing vulture conservation programme, officials said.

The scavenger birds were translocated from the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre at Pinjore to the Somthana Range of Melghat in Amravati district on April 23 last year and were subsequently kept in a pre-release aviary to help them acclimatise to the local conditions, they said.

All the vultures were fitted with GSM and satellite tags on December 19, 2025, to enable scientists to track their movement, and survival after release into



the wild. The soft release process began on January 2, when the aviary gates were opened remotely and food was placed outside the enclosure to encourage the birds to emerge naturally.

The programme faced challenges, such as limited

food availability, the absence of a resident vulture population to guide the captive-bred birds and the continued presence of harmful veterinary drugs in the landscape, BNHS conservation biologist Bhaskar Das said in a statement.

"These challenges were addressed by establishing feeding stations and sourcing safe cattle carcasses through active partnerships with *gaushalas*," he said.

The release was carried out by BNHS director Kishor Rithe along with Somthana range forest officer Vinil Hatwar in the presence of assistant conservator of forests Ganesh Tekade, with support from BNHS staff members. "Melghat has been a stronghold of long-billed vultures. We hope the birds will learn to live here again," Rithe said.

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Order Order

CCI directs two firms to stop collusive bidding in defence tender

Fair trade regulator CCI has directed two Ludhiana-based firms to cease and desist from anti-competitive practices after finding them guilty of collusive bidding in a defence procurement tender.

The proceedings came from a reference filed by the CP Cell of the Master General of Ordnance Branch, Directorate General of Ordnance Services, under Section 19(1)(b) of the Act.

The reference alleged that Ludhiana-based firms – KKK Mills and Sankeshwar Synthetics Pvt Ltd – entered into an agreement resulting in collusive bidding in the tender for procurement of underpart wooden.

“Based on the evidence on record the Commission found that the quotation of identical prices, timing of submission of financial/commercial bids and similar prior conduct support the conclusion of concerted action which violates Section 3(3)(d) read with Section 3(1) of the Act,” according to a release on Monday.

KKK Mills is a partnership firm while Sankeshwar Synthetics is a private limited company. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) further held that the partner of KKK Mills and the director of Sankeshwar Synthetics were also liable under Section 48 of the Act. The CCI passed the order on January 2, 2026, under Section 27 of the Competition Act, 2002, and directed the two firms to cease and desist from anti-competitive conduct.



SC adjourns hearing on Gujarat journalist's plea in money-laundering case

The Supreme Court on Tuesday adjourned by three months the hearing on a plea filed by journalist Mahesh Langa in a money-laundering case linked to an alleged financial fraud lodged by the Enforcement Directorate in Ahmedabad. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi deferred the matter to April 7 after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Enforcement Directorate (ED), informed the court that the trial was proceeding in the matter and sought time.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing Langa, informed the court that the journalist was cooperating with the special court. The top court on December 15 granted interim bail to Langa, ordered a day-to-day trial in the case and imposed certain conditions on the journalist, including asking him not to write any article in any media outlet about his sub-judice case and seek any adjournments before the special court. The charges are yet to be framed in the case, in which the ED has named nine witnesses.



Sonia Gandhi

Court grants time to Sonia in plea on name in electoral roll

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

A Delhi court on Tuesday granted time till February 7 to Congress leader Sonia Gandhi to file her reply on a plea challenging a magistrate's order refusing to probe the allegation that she was included in the electoral rolls three years before acquiring Indian citizenship in 1983.

On December 9, Judge Gogne had issued notice to Gandhi and the Delhi Police seeking their response on the plea.

When the matter was taken up on Tuesday, the counsel for Gandhi sought more time to file the response following which the court granted time till February 7, the next date of hearing. The September 11 Magisterial order had dismissed the complaint filed by advocate Vikas Tripathi, vice president of the Central Delhi Court Bar Association of the Rouse Avenue courts.

The court had said the complaint was “fashioned with the object of clothing

the court with jurisdiction through allegations which are legally untenable, deficient in substance, and beyond the scope of this forum's authority”.

Tripathi's counsel, senior advocate Pavan Narang, had alleged before the magisterial court that in January 1980, Gandhi's name was added as a voter of the New Delhi constituency when she was not an Indian citizen. He had claimed “some forgery” and a public authority being “cheated”.

The Magistrate, however, had dismissed the plea seeking a probe by holding that the complainant sought to set the criminal law in motion by persuading the court to assume jurisdiction, which did not vest in it legally. The Magistrate had observed that “mere bald assertions, unaccompanied by the essential particulars required to attract the statutory elements of cheating or forgery”, cannot substitute a legally sustainable accusation.



When institutions collide: Democracy, Lokpal and judicial power

No constitutional power is absolute, and constitutional courts operate within clearly defined limits



RANJIT KUMAR SINHA

There is no dispute that judicial review forms an inseparable part of the Constitution's basic structure, as settled since the landmark Kesavananda Bharati case. High Courts under Article 226 and the Supreme Court under Article 32 unquestionably possess the authority to examine the legality, procedural fairness and constitutional compliance of all statutory bodies, including the Jan Lokpal. This power acts as a vital safeguard against arbitrariness and illegality. However, judicial review was never intended to evolve into judicial substitution, nor was it meant to neutralise institutions created specifically to address systemic governance failures.

In practice, constitutional courts have frequently stayed Lokpal proceedings at preliminary stages, expansively questioned their jurisdiction and subjected their internal decisions to intense scrutiny — often before investigations have matured into findings. Such early-stage intervention has had a chilling effect on the institution's functioning.

When courts step in prematurely, the consequence is not merely the protection of individual rights; it often paralyses an anti-corruption process that is inherently time-sensitive and evidence-dependent. Corruption thrives on delay: files go missing, witnesses turn hostile and public memory fades. Excessive judicial intervention, however well-intentioned, risks serving the very interests the Lokpal was created to confront.

A useful contrast lies in Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), widely regarded as a global benchmark in anti-graft architecture. Established in 1974, the ICAC was deliberately structured to operate outside conventional executive hierarchies and policing frameworks. Reporting directly to the Chief Executive, it follows a three-pronged strategy of investigation, prevention and public education. This design ensured that



anti-corruption enforcement did not remain confined to prosecutions alone but evolved into a sustained institutional and societal movement.

The ICAC's experience highlights institutional lessons worth reflecting upon. Its autonomy is embedded in its founding ordinance and reinforced by Hong Kong's Basic Law, which mandates that the Commission function independently. The 1997 ICAC Policy Programme recognised that deep-rooted corruption cannot be defeated by prosecutions alone and placed equal emphasis on preventive education, systemic reform and institutional deterrence.

It promoted advanced intelligence analysis, advisory roles for public and private institutions, expanded undercover operations and inter-agency cooperation, alongside sustained public outreach to reshape social attitudes toward corruption. By contrast, the Lokpal's evolution has been shaped largely through adversarial judicial scrutiny even before investigations reach fruition, leaving it without comparable insulation or a sustained public-facing strategy. This imbalance becomes sharper when viewed against the broader paradox of judicial transparency in India.

While the judiciary commands immense moral authority and public trust, it remains one of the

least transparent institutions within the constitutional framework. Allegations of judicial corruption, although infrequent, are not unfounded, and the absence of a credible external accountability mechanism for judges has been a topic of intense debate for decades.

It is in this context that the Lokpal's recent initiative to examine corruption allegations involving members of the higher judiciary assumes constitutional significance. The move signals that no constitutional office should be exempt from scrutiny when corruption is alleged. Predictably, resistance has followed, often justified in the language of judicial independence. Yet independence does not mean immunity. The doctrine protects judges from executive interference, not from accountability under the law. Legally, High Courts and the Supreme Court do possess the power to intervene in Lokpal orders, but only on limited grounds such as lack of jurisdiction, violation of natural justice, manifest arbitrariness or constitutional invalidity. What is increasingly visible, however, is intervention on merits, re-appreciation of facts and substitution of judicial opinion for that of the Lokpal.

This exceeds the traditional contours of judicial review. A full-bench Lokpal order, passed after due deliberation, deserves institutional deference akin to that accorded to

tribunals and constitutional authorities. Routine stays and intrusive scrutiny risk reducing the Lokpal to a subordinate body rather than an independent watchdog.

At its core, the Lokpal represents a statutory expression of popular sovereignty, born out of mass public mobilisation against corruption. Courts draw legitimacy from the Constitution, but the Constitution itself flows from the will of the people. When constitutional courts repeatedly override an anti-corruption mechanism created through popular demand, a democratic paradox emerges. Strengthening the Lokpal is not an act against the judiciary; it is an act for constitutional integrity. Unless Parliament reasserts its will and restores the balance between judicial review and institutional autonomy, India risks relegating its most powerful anti-corruption instrument to yet another symbol of unfinished reform.

The Jan Lokpal was not conceived in the corridors of power; it was born on the streets, shaped by public anguish, and forged by a collective demand for clean governance. It is an institution created of the people, by the people, for the people, to confront a deep rooted corruption crisis that had hollowed out faith in the State.

Any unnecessary or excessive intervention by constitutional courts into its functioning, therefore,

strikes at the very spirit of the anti-corruption movement that gave the Jan Lokpal its moral legitimacy.

Judicial oversight is indispensable in a constitutional democracy, but when oversight hardens into persistent interference, it risks diluting the very purpose of an institution meant to operate independently and fearlessly. Corruption does not wait for procedural perfection; it flourishes in delay, uncertainty, and institutional hesitation. Repeated judicial interruptions, particularly at preliminary stages, are increasingly perceived not as safeguards of justice, but as obstacles to an urgent national mission.

It must also be acknowledged, however uncomfortable the truth may be, that courts are not entirely immune to the malaise of corruption. Allegations against members of the higher judiciary, have shaken public confidence in the belief that any institution can remain permanently insulated from moral decay. In such a climate, frequent judicial intervention in Lokpal proceedings is bound to invite public suspicion fair or otherwise, that the fight against corruption is being slackened rather than strengthened.

This argument, however, cannot justify the concentration of unchecked authority in any single institution including the office of Lokpal. History repeatedly warns that absolute power inevitably carries the seeds of abuse.

The Jan Lokpal must therefore remain accountable to law, guided by constitutional principles, and subject to judicial review — yet not stifled by it. At the same time, constitutional courts must retain the authority to intervene where credible allegations of corruption arise within the Lokpal itself, or where its actions infringe upon the fundamental rights of public servants.

“The real constitutional test is balance, judicial review must protect rights without stalling reform, and institutional autonomy must enable vigilance without excess. Only then can the Jan Lokpal remain the Republic's conscience, not a captive of the very system it was meant to cleanse. In a democracy, no power can override the will of the people.”

The writer is senior journalist covering legal affairs

EC tells SC it is competent to undertake SIR of electoral rolls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Election Commission (EC) told the Supreme Court on Tuesday that it has the power and competence to undertake a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls, besides there is a constitutional duty to ensure that no foreigners are registered as voters.

The submissions were made by senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi on behalf of the EC before a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi.

The bench resumed final hearings on a batch of petitions challenging the EC's decision to undertake the SIR exercise in several States, including Bihar, raising significant constitutional questions on the scope of the poll panel's powers, citizenship

and the right to vote. Dwivedi pointed out that all key constitutional functionaries across the three organs of the State must be Indian citizens, citing provisions such as Article 124(3) of the Constitution relating to the appointment of Supreme Court and High Court judges.

He said one of the key conditions for the appointment of top constitutional functionaries like the president, the vice president and the prime minister is that the person has to be an Indian citizen.

“All vital appointments... No appointments can be made unless the person is a citizen, so our Constitution is citizen-centric predominantly,” Dwivedi said.

Referring to constitutional schemes, he said, “The (constitutional) article, when it says citizens, that is



something which has to be inquired by the competent authority.

What should be the nature, summary etc, that is a different question... There is a constitutional duty to ensure that on the electoral roll, there should not be any foreigners.”

The poll panel is not supposed to respond to political parties' rhetoric, the senior advocate said.

“I am not commenting on the political parties, as the Election Commission, our duty is that no foreigner should be there... It is to be seen that the power is there

and the competence is there,” he added. Resuming his arguments, Dwivedi posed a central constitutional question and asked “whether Article 324 of the Constitution, which vests the Election Commission with powers of superintendence, direction and control over elections, is entirely displaced by statutory provisions, or whether its application must be examined on a case-to-case basis”.

He said Articles 324, 325 and 326 of the Constitution, read with section 16 of the Representation of the People Act, do not foreclose the EC's authority in the field of revision of electoral rolls.

“The field is not totally foreclosed,” Dwivedi submitted, asserting that the EC retains constitutional competence to ensure the purity of the electoral rolls.

UP Excise dept arrests activist Harjeet Singh after ED tip-off

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Uttar Pradesh Excise Department arrested renowned climate activist Harjeet Singh for keeping “excess” liquor at home on Tuesday, a day after the ED searched him in a foreign exchange violation case related to alleged misuse of Six crore funds received from abroad and narrative-building on behalf of foreign influencer groups, the agency said. It added that Singh's visits to Pakistan and Bangladesh during 2025 and its funding were under scanner.

The federal probe agency had searched the premises of Singh, a leading climate activist whose voice found space at various news and other platforms, and his wife Jyoti Awasthi apart from that of their company Satat Sampada Pvt Ltd (SSPL) in Delhi and Ghaziabad, UP on Monday under the provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

The ED said it found Indian liquor and IMFL (Indian Made Foreign Liquor) “beyond permissible limits”



Harjeet Singh

(about 45 litres) during the Monday searches at his residence in Ghaziabad as it shared pictures of brands like Chivas 12 and Glenmorangie in the press statement. It said the information was shared with local excise authorities who seized the excess liquor and arrested Singh for “contravention” of the UP state excise laws. Singh and Awasthi are co-founders of organic food company Satat Sampada.

The ED said its probe found that while SSPL “projects” itself as an agro-based company engaged in promoting organic farming and marketing organic produce, it was just a “front” activity. “The company's

primary activity appears to be channelling foreign funds to run narratives furthering the FF-NPT (the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty) cause in India on behalf of foreign influencer groups,” the ED claimed. The FF-NPT is a proposed international treaty aiming to phase out fossil fuel production.

Post-2021, coinciding with the receipt of over ₹6.5 crore in foreign remittances, SSPL turned profitable by booking these funds as revenue from “consultancy services” and “agro-product sales.” The shareholders of SSPL, Harjeet Singh and Jyoti Awasthi, “diverted” funds received from foreign NGOs to their personal accounts for private use, the federal probe agency said.

The ED said while FF-NPT is presented as a climate initiative, its adoption could expose India to legal challenges in international forums like the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and severely compromise the nation's energy security and economic development. It was also alleged by the ED that the ₹6 crore remittances were received by SSPL between 2021-25 in the garb of

“consultancy” charges from foreign entities including Climate Action Network (CAN) and STAND.EARTH etc, which have in-turn received huge funds from prior reference category NGOs like Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors. However, cross-verification of filings made by the remitters abroad indicates that the funds were actually intended to promote the agenda of the FF-NPT within India, it said.

The ED said the couple, previously engaged with Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSAs), used SSPL to “advance” their activism. The agency said it was investigating Singh's visit to Pakistan in February 2025 for the ‘Breathe Pakistan Summit’ and the various persons he met there. It added that he also travelled to Bangladesh in December 2025 when “anti-India” protests were being held in the neighbouring country and delivered a lecture at the Sher-e-Bangla University without any official invitation and met various individuals “unconnected” to the stated purpose. The funding for these trips is also under scrutiny, the ED said.

Fraud: ED attaches assets of Gurugram realty group

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The ED has attached a villa, a hotel, and a resort, besides land parcels and deposits worth over ₹50 crore, in connection with a homebuyers' fraud” linked money laundering probe against Gurugram-based realty firm Ocean Seven Buildtech Pvt Ltd (OSBPL).

The Enforcement Directorate, in a statement, said that the promoter and key decision-maker of the company, Swaraj Singh Yadav, played a “central role” in orchestrating the scheme and in deliberately diverting funds collected from homebuyers for the construction of houses.



Yadav was arrested by the central probe agency in November as part of the investigation.

The attached assets include a villa, a hotel and resort, several office spaces, and multiple land parcels located in Gurugram (Haryana), Himachal Pradesh, and Maharashtra, totalling ₹49.79 crore in value.

The agency also seized ₹1.78 crore in cash and deposits held in bank accounts of Yadav, the real estate company, and related entities. The total value of these assets is ₹51.57 crore, the agency said.



Editor's TAKE

India, as the rice bowl of the world

India has overtaken China as the world's largest rice producer — a powerful symbol of national strength and agricultural resilience

There is a silent revolution taking place in India — not in the realm of space technology or IT, which are now ubiquitous, but in the fields of rural India. Yes, we are now the world's largest producer of rice, and Basmati has become a brand that represents India in 172 countries where our world-famous Basmati rice is imported.

As of 2026, India's rice reaches more than 172 countries. India remains the world's largest rice exporter, accounting for approximately 40 per cent of the global rice trade.

This is no mean achievement. There was a time when India was dependent on food imports and food sovereignty seemed a distant dream. As the most populous country in the world, food security is our primary concern. With the Green Revolution, things changed forever: India became self-reliant in foodgrain production — mainly wheat and rice — and, over time, thanks to research and development in agriculture, we have reached a stage where we can not only feed our own people but are also net exporters, earning precious foreign exchange. For decades, China held the top position, backed by scale, technology, and state-led planning. That India has now surpassed it is a testament to sustained policy focus, farmer resilience, and the quiet but transformative role of agricultural science. Rice is the staple food for a majority of India's population and the backbone of rural livelihoods across vast regions. To lead the world in its production is, therefore, both symbolically and materially significant.

This feat reflects the cumulative impact of investments made since the Green Revolution — and their constant upgrading. It has not happened overnight. Persistent efforts — high-yielding seed varieties, improved irrigation coverage, mechanisation, and assured procurement through the Minimum Support Price system — have created a stable production ecosystem. The recent release of 184 new crop varieties by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research — many of them climate-resilient and pest-resistant — is proof that India is adapting to contemporary challenges rather than resting on past successes. The fact that over 3,200 high-yielding varieties have been notified in the last decade alone highlights the momentum behind this transformation.

From a food security perspective, the implications are profound. Adequate foodgrain stocks provide a buffer against global supply shocks, climate-induced crop failures, and geopolitical disruptions. Domestic food self-sufficiency is a strategic asset, not merely a welfare concern. However, there is still a long road ahead to true food sovereignty. India's food basket remains skewed. Pulses and oilseeds — critical for nutritional security and import reduction — continue to lag behind.

Self-reliance in food production cannot be measured by volume alone; it must encompass diversity, nutrition, sustainability, and farmer incomes. We now need a second-generation Green Revolution — one that is more environmentally friendly and sustainable.

Nepal elections: Litmus test for Gen Z

Nepal's streets continue to reverberate with slogans of revolt, even as doubts persist over whether the forthcoming elections will mend the deep fractures left by months of upheaval, arson and political vacuum



ASHOK K MEHTA

Nepal is moving full steam ahead towards the March 5, elections, which are a referendum on the performance of traditional parties and the key outcome of Nepal's fifth revolution (Jan Andolan) last September. Elections are due a month earlier in Bangladesh after its fourth revolution, where violence is manifest between the old and new guard. In Nepal, too, cadres of the ousted KP Oli - CPN (UML) — government have clashed with Gen Z (Z) revolutionaries; 120 days on, graffiti across Nepal still reads 'No to Oli.'

I spent all of December in Kathmandu, Pokhara, and villages near Pokhara, where people are asking how their lives will change after elections — especially after the arson and vandalism during the protests cost \$5 billion (the government's estimate is \$572 million). On September 9, all state institutions had collapsed, forcing Oli to resign; in the prolonged vacuum that ensued, the Army was unable to protect government property. The Army, in its response to the government enquiry, has said it had to make a choice between protecting people (leaders and officials) and property. The Gen Z protests were "not all that spontaneous", as initially reported; I found sufficient anecdotal information and documented evidence that the US stirred the pot — something Oli hinted at recently in a party convention speech. Further, some doubt lingers about the likelihood of elections being held on time, though interim PM Shukla Karki is confident there will be no delay.

Gen Z protests were ostensibly against the internet ban, which escalated after police firing killed 17 protesters. That figure rose to 77 martyrs. I saw damaged iconic buildings in the Kathmandu Valley being restored. The people's uprising that piggy-backed on the Gen Z protests expanded the latter's demands from good governance, elimination of corruption, and job creation to constitutional amendments that would restore political stability and voting from abroad. Around 2,000 youth (7 lakh annually) leave the country every day for employment.

About the outcome of its Andolan, Gen Z says: "We'd gone to shoot a chicken but we killed a tiger." Gen Z is a collective of 49 disparate groups, whose public face is Sudan Gurung, a rock band musician turned head of a humanitarian organisation. He has signed at least three significant agreements with Karki, most notably the Ten-Point Agreement (akin to the July Charter in Bangladesh) in December, which includes constitutional amendments that, according to Nepali advocate Radhesham Adhikari, will be difficult to implement and may become a hurdle to timely elections.

After the agreement, Karki said: "My government was formed to address issues that arose from the



GEN Z PROTESTS WERE OSTENSIBLY AGAINST THE INTERNET BAN, WHICH ESCALATED AFTER POLICE FIRING KILLED 17 PROTESTORS. THAT FIGURE ROSE TO 77 MARTYRS. I SAW DAMAGED ICONIC BUILDINGS IN THE KATHMANDU VALLEY BEING RESTORED

The writer, a retired Major General, served as Commander, IPKF (South), Sri Lanka, and was a founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, now the Integrated Defence Staff

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Gen Z uprising; all political parties (126) must take a view that elections will be held on time. We are not enemies of political parties, though we are the result of the Gen Z uprising and their issues." Although the two biggest parties, Nepali Congress and CPN (UML), have filed writ petitions for restoration of Parliament, they will fight the elections. While Gen Z has not formed a political party, some members are joining Bibeksheel, Ujjyalo Nepal and Rashtriya Swatantra Party, the election symbols of the last two being the Bulb and Bell. Further, the enigmatic RSP President Rabi Lamichhane, jailed for fraud cases, has been released. Ujjyalo Nepal was formed by former Chairman of Nepal Electricity Board and serving minister, the dynamic Kulman Ghising, who rid Kathmandu of 18 hours of load-shedding. Bulb and Bell — the effervescent Mayor of Kathmandu, Balen Shah — struck the mother of mergers with Bell, with Shah as the PM face of RSP. Gen Z leaders such as Gurung and Purushottam Yadav are backing RSP, which will become formidable. Pre-pol alliances and mergers are the new normal, which even older parties (NC and UML) are reconsidering after the boost to RSP — precisely the virus of political instability Gen Z wanted to remove.

Despite being ousted from government, four-time PM Oli won a landslide third-term chairmanship of UML. Given his party's strong grassroots organisation and most government officials being his appointees, Oli could spring a surprise. While five-time PM and NC leader Deuba will step down as party president, he will fight elections an unprecedented eighth time. The party is divided: India-backed Shekhar Koirala; US-supported Gagan Thapa; and the Bimalendra Nidhi/KP Sitaula groups. Thapa has unilaterally ordered a special NC convention on 8 January to be elected President.

Four-time PM Prachanda, minus the Maoist tag,

remains the great survivor and coordinator of the reminted Nepal Communist Party, consisting of ten left parties. Except for the RSP, the new crop of parties will not make a significant dent in older parties, which are likely to return but with smaller vote-share and seats in Parliament. The royalist Rashtra Prajatantra Party, while saying the failed democratic system led to the Gen Z revolution, has not sought a referendum on restoration of monarchy but decided to wait until there is "broad political consensus". Yogi Adityanath's name resonates perennially over formation of a Hindu Rashtra and revival of monarchy. The outgoing Chinese Ambassador Chen Song met Karki and made the unusual diplomatic request to keep the Chinese company that built the USD 216 million Pokhara International Airport out of the commission investigating corruption. Oli's fall was a big setback for Beijing, given his nationalism (anti-Indianism) that resulted in his signing the BRI, the Transit Agreement, authenticating the One China policy, attending the last SCO summit, attending the PLA victory parade, calling Tibet Xizang, and endorsing the Global Security Initiative and Xi Jinping Thought. Still, the Left's 60 per cent majority in Parliament is expected to reduce to less than 50 per cent post-elections.

India has been quietly proactive, backing elections and providing assistance in electoral logistics. China's likely waning influence in Parliament is good for Delhi. Instead of the usual anti-India sentiment, China is bearing the brunt for encroachments in the North. Elections will be held on March 5, which could run in phases, otherwise the unknowns of a constitutional void will kick in. Koirala has said that if elections are not held, Parliament must be restored. Either way, nothing may change for ordinary Nepalis without constitutional amendments. It is unlikely to be a happy new year for Nepal.

The Pioneer SINCE 1865

PICTALK



Skaters glide across an ice rink on a winter morning in Shimla.

PHOTO: PTI

When dreams disturb us: Finding peace through faith



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

2ND OPINION THE PIONEER

Dreams are a familiar yet mysterious part of human experience. They are commonly defined as a series of thoughts, images, and sensations that arise in the mind during sleep. Unlike daydreams — which are conscious fantasies born of desire — dreams occur involuntarily and often feel vivid and real. Although dreams can appear at any stage of sleep, the most intense and memorable ones usually occur during REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep, when brain activity is high and the eyes move rapidly beneath closed lids.

Dreams tend to become more frequent and intense during periods of stress, anxiety, or emotional disturbance. Unfulfilled desires and unresolved concerns that

dominate our waking thoughts often surface in our dreams. Broadly, dreams can be divided into pleasant and unpleasant ones. Pleasant dreams are rarely remembered because they do not disturb the mind; they leave behind a fleeting sense of comfort or joy. Unpleasant or frightening dreams, however, linger in memory because they disrupt sleep and leave a residue of fear or unease. At times, one may wake up deeply unsettled. Children, too, often experience such dreams, and this has sometimes been cited — rightly or wrongly — to explain claims of memories from past lives, as young children have limited experiences in their present one. What, then, do dreams signify?

From personal experience, dreams often reflect one's inner state. When I am troubled, I tend to dream of being far from home, desperately trying to return but unable to find the way. At other times, I dream of inadequacy — such as appearing for an examination without sufficient preparation. These dreams surface when I am confronted with a problem for which I cannot find a solution. In contrast, my pleasant dreams usually place me in good company or in a temple. The surroundings and people feel partly familiar, though often unknown.

This brings us to the crucial question: how should one deal with truly disturbing dreams? Occasionally, such dreams may seem like ominous warnings of something

undesirable. While this possibility is rare and difficult to verify, the presence of familiar people or situations can lend such dreams an air of authenticity.

If we momentarily accept that a dream might indicate some future adversity, the question remains: what can we do about it? The most logical and comforting response is to take refuge in God. It is God alone who has the power to grant relief from the karmaphala — the fruits of past actions. True devotees do not live in fear; they are confident that divine grace will carry them through all difficulties. Rather than being shaken by bad dreams, they take them as reminders to deepen their surrender. After all, dreams themselves do not cause misfortune; it is past actions that bear fruit, and liberation from their adverse effects lies in divine grace. As Lord Krishna assures in the Bhagavad Gita: "Having taken refuge in Me, you shall, by My grace, overcome all obstacles" (18.58).

In conclusion, bad dreams should serve as a wake-up call — not to panic, but to strengthen one's spiritual shelter. Every individual has committed some errors in the past. By sincerely taking refuge in God, the future becomes secure, and the burden of past misdeeds is gently and compassionately lifted.

The writer is a spiritual teacher

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WHEN CLEAN CITIES HIDE DEADLY ADMINISTRATIVE FAILURES

The tragedy in Indore's Bhagirathpura area has revealed the dark side of an otherwise celebrated city. Sewage entered the drinking-water pipeline, contaminating the supply and causing widespread illness.

Hundreds of residents suffered severe diarrhoea, vomiting, and fever; more than 1,400 people fell ill, and over 200 required hospital care, with several admitted to intensive care units.

Official figures confirm at least six deaths, while the mayor has spoken of ten, and inquiries continue to reconcile the differing reports. That such a disaster could occur in a city repeatedly honoured as India's cleanest exposes a troubling gap between image and infrastructure. Authorities have cut or restricted water in affected neighbourhoods.

Pipelines are being inspected and flushed, and households have been advised to boil water before use. Proceedings have also begun against municipal officials whose neglect allegedly contributed to the crisis.

Indore is not an isolated case. When civic systems weaken, even cities that appear immaculate can become dangerous. Lives have already been lost, and many families remain anxious as loved ones recover. Cleanliness must be more than cosmetic. It should begin below the ground, with sound engineering, honest supervision, and a genuinely accountable administration that treats safe water as a fundamental right for every household, in every season and crisis.

DATTAPRASAD SHIRODKAR | MUMBAI

Please send your letter to the info@dailypioneer.com. In not more than 250 words. We appreciate your feedback.

Hard lessons from Venezuela crisis

America's recent military action in Venezuela forces an uncomfortable reconsideration of the global order, and for India the message is stark. When crises erupt, neither great powers nor multilateral bodies will arrive as rescuers. The UN lacks the will and capacity to restrain a determined power acting in what it claims is the national interest, and moral appeals seldom alter outcomes. In such a world, self-strengthening becomes the only credible insurance.

India must therefore deepen security and economic resilience. Defence spending of four to five per cent of GDP should be seen as prudent insurance, matched by technological self-reliance, strong diplomacy, and political consensus on national security. Venezuela ignored gathering signals. The American operation launched in September 2025 against alleged drug-linked vessels, followed by repeated maritime strikes, was not an isolated incident but an escalation. History shows that signals dismissed eventually become confrontations. What we now witness is less a rules-based order than a jungle logic in which might shapes outcomes. For India, the imperative is preparation, layered deterrence, and steady economic strength — the real guarantees of survival and influence in the decades ahead.

KV CHANDRA | MYSURU

Congress demands justice over water

The Congress in Madhya Pradesh has intensified its campaign against the BJP government, announcing a 'Nyay Yatra' in Indore on January 11, to demand accountability for the city's contaminated-water tragedy. The party seeks the resignation of Urban Administration Minister and local MLA Kailash Vijayvargiya, whom it holds directly responsible for the crisis in Bhagirathpura, one of the worst-affected localities. With another death reported this week, fatalities linked to polluted municipal water have reportedly reached thirty, while more than two hundred residents have been hospitalised after sewage is believed to have leaked into drinking-water pipelines. Thousands suffered severe diarrhoea and vomiting during the outbreak, exposing a shocking collapse of urban governance. Congress leaders argue that the episode amounts to premeditated neglect rather than mere administrative failure, and they have demanded criminal cases against those responsible for supplying unsafe water. The march is intended both to honour the victims and to insist on transparency, compensation, and credible remedial measures. Until responsibility is fixed, public trust will remain fragile — and the tragedy will stand as a grim warning of complacency's price.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Parole misuse undermines judicial trust

Recently, Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, head of Dera Sacha Sauda, convicted of rape and murder and serving a prison sentence, was granted parole for a record fifteenth time, this time for forty days. Why does our judicial system permit such apparent favouritism, which is then openly exploited by ruling political parties?

In a democracy, the judiciary is a central pillar of the Constitution, ensuring that law and order are upheld impartially. Yet repeated concessions to the powerful weaken credibility and public faith. When those with influence appear to receive leniency, the message to ordinary citizens is disheartening: justice bends for the wealthy, while the poor must endure the full weight of the law.

This perception is corrosive. It risks normalising the idea that punishment can be negotiated through political connections rather than determined by courts alone. To preserve trust, every parole decision must be transparent, reasoned, and clearly separated from political convenience.

Ultimately, democracy rests on the integrity of its institutions. Parliament, the Executive, and the Judiciary must act with independence and honesty if the spirit of justice is to survive.

JITESH MORI | GUJARAT

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



FIRST
Column

Why India cannot afford gender-blind trade policies any longer

In an economy where exports are expected to drive growth, jobs, and global relevance — and where female labour-force participation remains among the lowest in the G20 — the gender dimension of trade policy can no longer be treated as incidental



SHISHIR PRIYADARSHI

For much of its post-reform history, India's trade policy has been guided by a focus on growth, competitiveness, and market access. Questions of social inclusion, including gender, were largely addressed through parallel policy tracks—labour laws, welfare schemes, and social programmes—rather than through trade itself. This division was understandable when trade policy was viewed primarily as a technical instrument for expanding markets. Today, however, that separation has become increasingly difficult to sustain.

In an economy where exports are expected to drive growth, jobs, and global relevance — and where female labour-force participation remains among the lowest in the G20 — the gender dimension of trade policy can no longer be treated as incidental. Evidence from India and across the Global South shows clearly that trade affects women and men differently. Ignoring this reality does not make trade policy simpler or more efficient; it makes it less effective.

The Limits of Gender-Neutral Trade

The multilateral trading system was built on the assumption that trade rules apply uniformly to all economic actors. WTO agreements do not explicitly mention women or gender equality, reflecting the belief that markets would allocate opportunities efficiently and that distributional concerns lay outside trade policy's remit. India too broadly shared this worldview. During its early engagement with the WTO, India focused on safeguarding development space, agricultural interests, and equity between countries — not addressing inequalities within them.

Yet this neutrality has proved illusory. In India, women account for a significant share of employment in export-oriented sectors such as agriculture, textiles, garments, leather, and certain services. According to Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data, women constitute over 60 per cent of employment in apparel manufacturing and a large share of informal agricultural exports. Despite this, gender has



THE DEEPER CHALLENGE LIES NOT MERELY IN JOB CREATION, BUT IN VALUE CAPTURE. ACROSS INDIA AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH, WOMEN CONTRIBUTE A SUBSTANTIAL SHARE OF LABOUR EMBODIED IN EXPORTS YET CAPTURE A SMALLER SHARE OF DOMESTIC VALUE ADDED

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remained largely absent from trade strategy.

Firm-level and labour-market studies now show that trade outcomes are shaped by pre-existing inequalities — unequal access to land, skills, finance, technology, mobility, and time. Markets do not erase these constraints; they interact with and often magnify them. Trade policy, whether policymakers intend it or not, operates within these social structures.

How Trade Hurts and Helps — Women in India

The gendered impact of trade in India operates through several channels. Women are disproportionately concentrated in sectors that face higher trade barriers and intense competition. Agriculture and food processing encounter stringent sanitary standards; textiles and garments face tariff escalation in developed markets; leather exports confront regulatory and sustainability barriers. These constraints limit firms' ability to upgrade, thus keeping wages low and productivity gains uneven.

India's textile and apparel sector illustrates this clearly. While it employs millions of women, most remain confined to low-skill, labour-intensive roles. Tariff escalation discourages higher value-added exports, while better-paid functions — design, branding, logistics, and management — remain male-dominated.

As a result, women's employment expands without commensurate economic mobility.

Non-tariff measures further compound the problem. Certification requirements, customs procedures, and compliance costs impose fixed burdens that fall hardest on micro and small enterprises, where women are over-represented as entrepreneurs. Studies across South Asia suggest that women-owned firms experience longer border-clearance times and higher transaction costs even after controlling for firm size and sector. In India, where over 95 per cent of women-owned enterprises are micro-scale, these frictions prove decisive.

At the same time, trade has also been one of the most powerful engines of women's paid employment in the developing world. Exporting firms consistently employ a higher share of women than non-exporters — roughly one-third compared with one-quarter on average. Global value chains have created formal jobs for women in garments, electronics assembly, agri-processing, and IT-enabled services, often offering better wages and conditions than informal domestic work.

India's experience, however, reveals a paradox. Despite export growth, female labour-force participation fell from about 37 per cent in the mid-2000s to around 23 per cent by 2019, with only a modest recovery since. This decline

reflects broader structural constraints — care responsibilities, skill mismatches, safety concerns, and social norms — that trade alone cannot overcome.

Jobs Are Not Enough: The Question of Value

The deeper challenge lies not merely in job creation, but in value capture. Across India and the Global South, women contribute a substantial share of labour embodied in exports yet capture a smaller share of domestic value added. They remain concentrated in low-skill, low-wage tasks, while men dominate higher-value functions involving technology, management, and capital.

This pattern limits both equity and competitiveness. Evidence from India's manufacturing and services exports suggests that firms upgrading technologically tend to demand new skills — yet women are less likely to access training or promotion pathways. Global value chains can act as ladders into formal employment, but without deliberate policy support, women will continue to remain stuck on the lowest rungs.

An economy that systematically underutilises half of its talent pool cannot sustain productivity growth or move decisively up the value chain. Gender inequality in trade is therefore not a niche social issue; it is a structural economic constraint.

What India Must Do Now

The way forward does not lie in turning

trade policy into social policy, but in aligning trade more closely with labour-market realities. Export-oriented strategies have expanded women's access to formal employment, but this participation remains fragile. Trade reforms must therefore be complemented by domestic measures — skills development, access to finance, childcare infrastructure, safe mobility, and workplace standards — so that women can progress rather than stagnate within global markets.

Reducing the asymmetric trade costs faced by women-led enterprises is equally important. Simplifying customs procedures, digitising border processes, improving transparency, and easing access to trade finance can have a powerful gender-equalising effect without altering tariff schedules or negotiating mandates. In India's MSME-dominated export base, such reforms could unlock significant participation gains. Global value chains should be approached strategically. Evidence from India's apparel and electronics sectors suggests that technology upgrades and better logistics reduce informality and physical intensity, making factory employment more accessible to women. Trade policy that encourages upgrading — rather than pure cost competition — can quietly but decisively improve job quality. Finally, international cooperation must move beyond symbolic recognition. Investing in gender-disaggregated trade data, supporting women exporters through targeted capacity-building, and evaluating trade-facilitation reforms by who benefits — not just aggregate efficiency — will be critical. Inclusive trade is not achieved by rhetoric alone; it requires intentional design and accountability.

Trade Policy Must Catch Up with India's Reality

The debate on whether trade affects women differently is settled. The real question is whether India is willing to design trade policy for the economy it has. A trade strategy that ignores gender will underperform on exports, employment, and productivity. A trade strategy that integrates gender will be more competitive, more resilient, and more legitimate. Inclusive trade is not a moral indulgence; it is an economic necessity — one that India can no longer afford to postpone.



TS Eliot, Indian thought, and the philosophical horizons of the NEP 2020



GARIMA GUPTA



DUSHYANT KUMAR RAI

The National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 may well be described as a decisive moment in India's intellectual and cultural life. It is not merely an administrative blueprint for educational reform; it is a manifesto for the civilisational renewal of India. At a time when the world is grappling with the marvels and perils of artificial intelligence, the uncertainties of climate change, and the erosion of human values, education can no longer be confined to the acquisition of technical skills. It becomes, rather, a question of the soul and of consciousness: what kind of human being do we wish our young to become? In this context, the writings of TS Eliot acquire renewed relevance, for Eliot not only diagnosed the fragmented consciousness of modern civilisation but also sought its remedy in the philosophical depths of Indian thought. It also exemplifies how the NEP is not parochial, but rather an inclusive mindset that promotes Indic knowledge beyond spatio-temporal boundaries.

Eliot's intellectual journey stretched from the mechanical modernity of the West to the spiritual landscapes of India. He matured his childhood interest as he studied Sanskrit and Pali at Harvard, immersing himself in the Vedanta, the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, and the Buddhist canon. His engagement with these texts, unlike that of his contemporaries, was not an exercise in antiquarian curiosity or Orientalist fascination; he drew upon them as instruments to interpret and heal the ruptures of Western civilisation through holistic knowledge. The NEP, in its own way, seeks to address contemporary crises with a holistic vision wherein yoga, Ayurveda, the classical arts, and philosophy engage in dialogue with modern science and technology. The policy reminds us that the aim of education is not efficiency alone but self-realisation. Just as Eliot transformed his poetry and criticism through the assimilation of Indian philosophy, the NEP envisions the revitalisation of India's knowledge traditions as a medium of dialogue with the challenges of the future.

Eliot's 1922 masterpiece *The Waste Land* embodied a universal code for restoring balance to human life. Its climactic invocation — "Datta (Charity), Dayadhvam (Compassion),

Damyata (Self-restraint)" — is not a decorative citation but a shloka from the *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*, offered as an ethical prescription for a Europe scarred by the First World War. Here, Indian philosophy is not merely supplemental to Western modernity; it emerges as its guide. The urgency of this message grows sharper today. Artificial intelligence is reshaping work, thought, and communication at a staggering pace, pressing education towards narrowly technical training. Yet the real question remains: do we wish to cultivate "mechanical experts" capable of innovation but devoid of compassion and wisdom? Or do we aspire to form citizens who, while mastering technology, remain grounded in human dignity, ecological balance, and cultural dialogue? The NEP's answer is unambiguous: knowledge is meaningful only when bound to ethics, and education is complete only when it fashions individuals who are at once local and global. The climate crisis makes this imperative all the more pressing.

The NEP not only emphasises scientific research but also regards environmental consciousness, sustainability, and responsibility as integral to education. This echoes Eliot's *Four Quartets*, where the balance between nature and eternity discloses itself as a condition of human meaning. Just as Eliot wrote that "the significance of human life lies not only in the present moment, but in the capacity to go beyond it," so too education derives its meaning not from immediate utility but from the preservation of the future and the renewal of eternal values.

Eliot had warned that the true crisis of modernity was not material but spiritual. Machines and economics cannot provide direction to life. This truth is now revealed in the crises of climate and inequality. The NEP, therefore, insists that value education, the arts, yoga, and philosophy form essential components of learning. This is not merely an Indian prescription; it is a message from the Global South to the world: that development is not mere production and consumption, but balance and restraint.

In adopting Indian thought, Eliot did not abandon his Western heritage; he deepened it. He demonstrated that civilisations endure through dialogue. In his poetry, the *Upanishads* converse with Dante and the Gospels. Similarly, the NEP envisions Sanskrit texts conversing with artificial intelligence and environmental science. Such dialogue is neither narrowness nor imitation; it is creative redefinition.

The central insight of this dialogue is clear: knowledge severed from moral and cultural foundations becomes sterile, but nourished



by the wisdom of tradition, it becomes a power of renewal. Eliot transformed modern poetry through Indian philosophy; the NEP seeks to transform the future of Indian education through the same. At a time when the world does not seek fragmented specialists but integrated human beings, the shared message of Eliot and the NEP acquires new urgency. This has been successfully demonstrated by the "Design Your Degree" programme of the University of Jammu, which has envisioned education beyond the confining walls of separate disciplines. It also exemplifies the practicality of the implementation of the NEP: that, if adopted in its true essence, it can create responsible citizens who are not only a future-ready workforce but also understand the responsibility of belonging to a region and to the nation. Such learner-centric courses, like DYD of Jammu University, with revolutionary pedagogy that fosters the humility of knowing rather than the pride of knowledge, play out the true spirit of the NEP.

Eliot once wrote that "the little wisdom we may acquire is the wisdom of humility." In embracing Indian thought, he lived this humility. His works — *The Waste Land*, *Four Quartets*, *The Elder Statesman* — testify that the final fulfilment of life lies in the confluence of love, compassion, and eternal consciousness. This is the path NEP-2020 seeks to make the foundation of Indian education. Thus Eliot and the NEP remind us alike that civilisations endure not by wealth or power alone but by their capacity for wisdom, compassion, and restraint. These are the very values that resound from the *Upanishads* to the present journey of Indian education — reminding us that the path to the future lies at the confluence of past wisdom and present responsibility.

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How Indian consumers changed spending in 2025



MANDEEP SINGH

The year 2025 marked a significant turning point in how Indian consumers approached spending on everyday services. Insights from the start-up ecosystem suggest that the long-standing focus on finding the cheapest option began to give way to a more considered evaluation of value — one that prioritised reliability, transparency, and consistency over short-term savings. This shift reflects a maturing mindset among consumers, who are increasingly seeking meaningful experiences rather than merely low prices.

For much of the past decade, service consumption in India was largely driven by price discovery. Discounts, competitive undercutting, and one-time offers were central to influencing consumer choices. Consumers often selected services based primarily on cost, even when the overall experience was inconsistent. However, 2025 revealed a shift in priorities. While price remained a relevant factor, it was no longer the dominant criterion. Consumers demonstrated a willingness to pay a premium for services that delivered predictable, seamless, and high-quality experiences — services that met expectations without causing unnecessary friction or hassle.

Transparent Pricing Builds Trust

One of the most notable developments was the increasing importance of transparent pricing. Consumers began to prefer services that communicated costs openly and clearly, without hidden charges or ambiguous terms. Transparency emerged as a foundation of trust, fostering smoother interactions and setting accurate expectations.

Another emerging trend was the growing appeal of bundled services. Consumers appreciated solutions that simplified planning and reduced effort, particularly for recurring needs such as home maintenance, wellness, and lifestyle subscriptions. Bundled offerings provided continuity and convenience, reinforcing the perception of value beyond immediate cost considerations. These packages encouraged long-term relationships, positioning service providers as reliable partners in everyday life rather than one-off solutions.

Consistency Strengthens Customer Relationships

Reliability became a critical differentiator. Service providers who consistently delivered on promis-



es saw higher levels of consumer loyalty. Rather than switching providers frequently in search of cheaper options, consumers increasingly gravitated towards familiar, dependable providers. Decisions evolved from being purely transactional to being relationship-driven, with trust, positive past experiences, and service history guiding repeated engagement.

Digital adoption played a key role in this evolution. By the end of 2025, consumers were using online platforms more confidently to compare services, assess availability, and review track records. Reviews were interpreted with greater nuance, with attention given to patterns of responsiveness, reliability, and overall service quality rather than isolated incidents.

Collectively, these changes point to a steadily maturing service economy in India. Consumers demonstrated higher awareness, stronger preferences, and more deliberate decision-making. Price sensitivity coexisted with an appreciation for quality, trust, and dependability, fostering healthier expectations within the service ecosystem. Businesses responded by investing in training, technology, and process improvements to meet rising standards, creating interactions that were more predictable and collaborative.

Over time, this maturity strengthened confidence on both sides, paving the way for long-term relationships, innovation, and sustainable growth across India's expanding service landscape.

By the close of 2025, value was understood not merely as cost-effectiveness, but as consistent delivery, transparent communication, and dependable outcomes. Consumers increasingly chose services aligned with their expectations, lifestyle, and long-term needs. This shift marks a positive trajectory for India's service economy — anchored in trust, lasting relationships, and sustainable growth — reflecting the country's evolution from price-conscious consumption to value-driven decision-making.



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BLASÉ CAPITAL
CRUDE SHOCK



Nearly 30 minutes before the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) ended its trading session on Tuesday, the Sensex was down by nearly 450 points, or 0.5 per cent. The largest dragger of the index was Reliance Industries, which was down by ₹70, or more than four per cent. According to a media report, investors lost, more or less, ₹1,00,000 crore in a single day, or within a few hours, in a single stock. It was the worst single-session intra-day fall in the share price of Reliance Industries since June 2024. The stock "slipped below its 50-day moving average, even as it eroded the wealth and hopes of millions of people. Yet, among the 34 analyst reports, half of them recommended "strong buy," and another 14 a "buy." Only two wanted the investors to sell, and no one dared to suggest a "strong sell."

The immediate trigger for the fall was a report by a foreign news agency, which was categorically denied by Reliance Industries. The initial media report, which relied on data by the renowned Kpler, stated that three vessels full of Russian crude oil were headed towards the company's Jamnagar refinery. It suggested that despite the western sanctions, and the US President Donald Trump's railings over India's imports from Russia, the largest private player in the country was going ahead with the purchases. While it indicated a national defiance, i.e., India was unwilling to bow before the American dictates, it hinted at Reliance Industries strategy to pursue the cheapest oil sources despite the geopolitical turmoil. A few days earlier, other reports stated that the state-owned Indian refiners continued to buy Russia crude in December 2025.

Reliance Industries issued a categorical denial. "A news report... claiming 'three vessels laden with Russian Oil are heading for Reliance Industries Limited's Jamnagar refinery' is blatantly untrue. Reliance Industries' Jamnagar refinery has not received any cargo of Russian oil... in the past three weeks approximately, and is not expecting any Russian crude oil deliveries in January (2026). We are deeply pained that those claiming to be at the forefront of fair journalism chose to ignore the denial by RIL of buying any Russian oil... and published a wrong report tarnishing our image," the firm stated in a statement. Another news agency stated that with Reliance halting its Russian imports, India's oil purchases from Russia will decline further in January 2026. In December 2025, the oil flows fell to a three-year-low of just over a million barrels per day, or down by 40 per cent from the peaks in June 2025.

Obviously, the company's strong denial, and an admission that it will not buy Russian oil in January 2026 had an impact on investor sentiments. While Reliance wanted to dent geopolitical or political ramifications due to the initial news, the impact was felt on its stock. It was evident to the investors that the move to avoid Russian oil may have an impact on the balance sheet, and future profitability. Reliance, as was the case with the other private and state-owned refiners, was a huge beneficiary of cheap and discounted Russian oil, which boosted its refining margins in the years. With Russian oil out of the equation, Reliance will need to buy from the other more-expensive sources. This will dent the refining margins, which had boosted the overall corporate earnings in the recent past. Hence, the knee-jerk reactions, and bulk sales of the stock were expected.

In the past few months, however, analysts have calculated that the Russian crude oil was no longer lucrative for the Indian importers. First, the difference between the Russian prices, and global ones, had diluted from \$10-15 a barrel to around \$1-2. Given that the Russian oil comes via illegal and semi-legal channels, the associated costs are higher, either in terms of higher insurance, freight, and possible payments along the shipping routes. Although Russia manages and runs a well-oiled 'shadow fleet,' which includes old vessels run by criminals, smugglers, and syndicates, to help the importer-nations, the costs have increased due to greater western scrutiny. The modus operandi of the Russians, both for movements of oil, and transfers of payments, were tracked by the western media, and nations. Thus, it was more difficult to ship the Russian crude safely. The risks were too high, and there were geopolitical risk premiums to be paid.

Thus, weaning away from Russia, diversifying the import basket, and seeking fresh sources had become critical for the Indian refiners. Hence, the statement by Reliance Industries that it does not seek to import Russian oil in January 2026 is an intelligent strategy. India now buys more oil from America, as well as other sources. After the US action in Venezuela, the latter may become a crucial source, as it was several years ago before the western and American sanctions. But costs, or changing cost structures will be crucial. The Venezuelan oil, which too was available at huge discounts, may vanish once the American oil giants take over the industry. Global oil prices may perk up if the demand exceeds supplies. Most analysts accept the opposite view that oil prices may be lower, or move in a narrow band.



GDP decoupled from indices

Macro economy may have little to do with stock markets

It is an accepted norm. Unless a nation's GDP grows at a frenetic pace, double-digit or near-about the figure, the returns from its stock markets will never be decent. High growth equates higher returns from investments. This is why we get excited when India grows at seven-eight per cent a year. We assume that this will translate into higher corporate earnings due to higher volumes and profits, lower price-earning valuations of the stocks and, hence, opportunities for the stocks to rise in the future. In such cases, we expect the stock market rallies to be secular, i.e., almost each stock, whether large-cap, midcap, or small-cap, will rise in tandem with the GDP.

However, this may be a fallacy. In many cases, the stock rallies can either precede high GDP growths, or lag the latter. In effect, there is no cause-and-effect between the two, although a correlation, with time lags, may be there. According to data collated by DSP Mutual Fund, "Investors often assume that fast-growing economies will automatically generate high equity returns, but 30-year, inflation-adjusted data show several high-growth markets, including Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and China, where real equity returns have lagged real GDP growth or even turned negative."

The fact remains that stock prices, and stock indices reflect the strengths or weaknesses in corporate earnings, or the balance sheets of the firms, as well as how capital is allocated by them, along with issues related to business ethics, management, and corporate governance. In addition, stock prices reflect the future. Although current events influence the stock movements, like changes in interest rates, or corporate actions and decisions, the long-term, or medium-term

shifts are dictated by what is expected of corporate performances over the next 2-3 years. The past, as well as the future, is embedded in current stock prices, and indices.

Let us look at the stock prices and indices in India in 2025. During the second half of the calendar year, when the GDP growth rate for the first quarter of the fiscal year came in, it was an unexpected 7.8 per cent. Neither the stocks or indices reacted in September. In December, the second quarter growth was announced at a higher 8.2 per cent, or combined first half growth of eight per cent. By then, the stock prices and indices had inched forward. But this was due to GST 2.0 which slashed the tax rates, and reduced the layers. This boosted volumes, and expectations of higher profits despite low margins.

Hence, growth itself did not push up stocks. Other macro factors, which impacted corporate earnings more directly, and in a more meaningful way led to a mini-minor boom. By the end of the calendar year, the indices gave a decent return of 10 per cent. If one considers the returns between January and September 2025, it was near zero. The indices moved in a band, and finished almost where they started from. Similarly, growth is expected to slow down over the last two quarters of the ongoing fiscal year. This may be true in the first half of the next fiscal too. Yet, the consensus is that Indian indices and equities will boom in 2026, as corporate earnings perk up.

Yet another unquestioned axiom about the stock markets is that net inflows and outflows of the money in equities determines their movements. Earlier, from the 1990s to 2010s,

foreign flows were crucial. Since, the foreigners owned a substantial portion of the equities, the latter fell when the former withdrew the money, and went up when they pumped in huge amounts. In 2025, although the foreigners were net sellers in the secondary markets, domestic inflows through mutual funds, and SIPs ensured resilience, and the markets did go up in the last three months of the calendar year.

However, the analysis by the DSP Mutual Fund indicates that across the various caps, the fund flows "tend to surge after strong returns, and fade when performance weakens. Even with the massive cumulative FII and DII inflows in recent years, markets have often stalled or corrected, illustrating that flows generally follow returns rather than dictating them." In effect, the rise of the stocks pushes investors, both foreigners and Indians, to pump in more money, and vice versa. The opposite may or may not be true. It is like manufacturing capacities and investments, which tend to go up after demand is stretched, and supplies are unable to cope up.

Most economists, and policy-makers seem sure that India will become a \$30-trillion economy by 2050. Even senior ministers have boasted about it with aplomb and confidence. The whole objective of India@2047 is to reach such an unbelievable GDP target. But the DSP analysis debunks this myth. It states that for India to reach \$30 trillion, the GDP will need to grow by nearly nine per cent every year, for the next 25 years. This has never happened in the past. Except for China, and possibly the Asian Tigers for a decade or two, no nation has witnessed such growth for long periods.

A compounded growth rate of nine per cent is not impossible, but it is tough and unimaginable. "With long-term real growth closer to six per cent, and only one five-year period, ending FY-08, approaching the required trajectory," according to a media report, "DSP argues that a more plausible outcome is nearer to \$20 trillion even under optimistic doubling-every decade assumptions." Thus, reality is vastly different from beliefs, and expectations. However, the GDP size does not really matter. It is only for a pat on the back that we are the third, or second largest economy. What is crucial is the per capita income, and distribution of wealth to negate inequalities.

In its report that decimates 12 widely-accepted myths about stocks, GDP, and investments, DSP tackles several ones that have gained popularity in the recent past. One of them pertains to the widely-hyped thinking that gold is useless, and offers returns that are puny compared to equities in the long run. Several analyses prove that over 50 or 100 years, gold gives small returns. But, in India, only a quarter of the Nifty 500 stocks have "beaten gold on a market-cap-weighted basis" over the past 25 years. Similarly, to accept that due to gold's rise in the post-pandemic period, it is the game in town, is a fallacy. For long periods, gold remains unmoved before it takes off.

OUR TAKE



If one looks at what the Indian media states about Bangladesh, the overriding conclusion is that the real challenge for the interim ruler, Muhammad Yunus, is to control the extremist forces, and bring order to the ongoing political turmoil. The reality, however, is different. Today, Bangladesh faces an unprecedented economic crisis. Political stability, while welcome, will not solve the problems. Even if a political party wins a majority in the forthcoming elections (February 2026), the nation's economy may spin out of control.

A few days ago, media reports in Bangladesh indicated that exports, particularly merchandise exports, declined for the fifth consecutive month in December 2025. In services, the nation is a non-player, and has not much to boast about. It is dependent on merchandise exports, and repatriations to shore up foreign exchange reserves. Couple this with the fact that the GDP growth declined significantly to 3.7 per cent in the 2026 fiscal year, and the bad news magnifies. (In Bangladesh, the fiscal year is July to June.)



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Of course, it is easier to blame political developments for the economic trends. And, of course, politics and policy-making play a crucial role. But in the case of Bangladesh, political turmoil may not be an important factor. In fact, analysts and economists give undue importance to political stability, and consider it critical for economic growth. It may not always be true. Let us give two examples from India. Consider the case of West Bengal, which witnessed 34 years of continuous rule by the Left parties, followed by nearly 15 years by the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress.

Despite this solid and stable state's politics, West Bengal languished as an economy over the past six decades. Today, the state lags even Odisha, which was its poor country cousin till the beginning of this century. The message is clear for the developing economies. Political stability is helpful but may not be enough. Consider the flip side of the coin, and look at what happened at the national level. India had fragile governments between 1991 and 2014, including several wobbly and grand coalitions of dozens of parties. Even during the Vajpayee regimes, when

It is economics, not politics

The crisis in Bangladesh is more about its economy



the coalition partners were varied and numerous, and cut across ideologies and beliefs, there was minimal impact on GDP growth rates, or living standards. Indeed, the major reforms were initiated during Atal Behari Vajpayee's rule, especially in infrastructure. These were preceded by those related to manufacturing during the Narasimha Rao rule, which too was a minority one. There were protests and criticisms, but the eco took off, and left behind the 'Hindu' rate growth. Even when the Opposition accused the Manmohan Singh government of policy paralysis in the 2010s, the economic implications were not severe.

Let us return to Bangladesh. There are no doubts that the political turmoil, violence, and protests engulfed the nation in July 2024, after which Sheikh Hasina was deposed in early August 2025. The nation is ruled by an interim government led by Muhammad Yunus, a Nobel Prize winner. I am not interested in the atrocities being committed on minorities, but in the fate of the economy. For more than a decade or so, in the 2010s and early 2020s, Bangladesh outperformed Pakistan consistently in areas such as ready-made garment exports, growth rate, life expectancy, literacy, and other socio-economic indicators. Since the fall of the Sheikh Hasina regime,

there is a looming danger that the economy may face an extreme crisis, something like what Pakistan has grappled with for a decade. After all, it takes years, perhaps decades, to build institutions and chalk out a growth momentum. It takes only a few months, or a year to decimate an economy. The dilemma of the political economy in Bangladesh is best represented by one of the more reputed local media platforms, the Daily Star. It is the same media house that was attacked and torched by the violent mobs during Sheikh Hasina's exit.

On January 5, 2026, Daily Star reported that there was a positive churn in the export performance. This seemed like a shocker because the same article mentioned that exports declined for the fifth consecutive month. The prime reasons were uncertainties, high tariffs, and other external factors. The article did not focus on political uncertainty and violence in the country, and how they may have impacted the economy, and led to economic stress. Instead, the Daily Star wrote that "weakening global demand, US tariffs, intensifying competition, rising production costs, and ongoing geopolitical uncertainty created heavy external pressure."

Domestic challenges did play a role. Industry leaders in the country cited "volatile political conditions, and limited access to

bank financing as key constraints on exporters." Here too, the politics was clubbed with paucity of funds to augment private investments. One can always contend that bad politics leads to conservative and risk-free banking. But the latter is influenced by several factors. In fact, the Daily Star, in an earlier article on December 11, 2025, talked about the significant decline in the GDP growth rate, and seemed to blame the Sheikh Hasina regime for the economic troubles.

This is understandable, as in most nations, the mainstream media, especially the one loyal to the ruling regimes, tend to blame the previous governments for the present ills. "When the interim government was formed following the July 2024 uprising, macroeconomic stability was weak, with several major economic indicators performing poorly. The accumulated costs of governance failures, corruption, and prolonged financial mismanagement had undermined the economy's potential. Since then, the free fall of the economy has been halted, and some negative trends have been reversed. However, the economy now experiences slower growth, elevated inflation, weakened investment sentiment, and rising vulnerabilities in the financial sector," states the Daily Star.

Indeed, the financial and banking sector is in a state of distress. In the current fiscal, in September 2025, the non-performing loans, or bad debts, of the banks amounted to 35.7 per cent of the total loans disbursed. More than a third of the debt was in danger of default. This is an alarming trend, and can ruin the banks, and economy. The Daily Star, of course, blames the Hasina regime for it. Playing the blame game, however, is of little use when the chickens come home to roost for the Bangladesh economy. It will not solve the issues.

By November 2026, Bangladesh will not be categorised as a least-developed economy, and will transition to a low-income nation. It will lose the preferential trade terms it receives from the developed world. This is when the crisis will explode with a loud boom.

Grok content: Govt gives X time till Jan 7 to submit report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The government has given X an additional time till January 7 to submit a detailed Action Taken Report after it issued a stern warning to the Elon Musk-led social media platform over indecent and sexually-explicit content being generated through misuse of AI-based services like 'Grok' and other tools.

On Friday, the government directed X to immediately remove all vulgar, obscene and unlawful content, especially generated by Grok (X's built-in artificial intelligence interface) or face action under the law. The ministry had also asked the US-based social media firm to submit a detailed action taken report (ATR) within 72 hours of the directive (effectively by January 5).

Sources said X had sought more time, and now it has been asked to submit its report by January 7.

The IT Ministry, in its January 2 missive, said that Grok AI, developed by X and integrated on the

platform, is being misused by users to create fake accounts to host, generate, publish or share obscene images or videos of women in a derogatory or vulgar manner.

"Importantly, this is not limited to creation of fake accounts but also targets women who host or publish their images or videos, through prompts, image manipulation and synthetic outputs," the ministry said, asserting that such conduct reflects a serious failure of platform-level safeguards and enforcement mechanisms, and amounts to gross misuse of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in violation of stipulated laws.

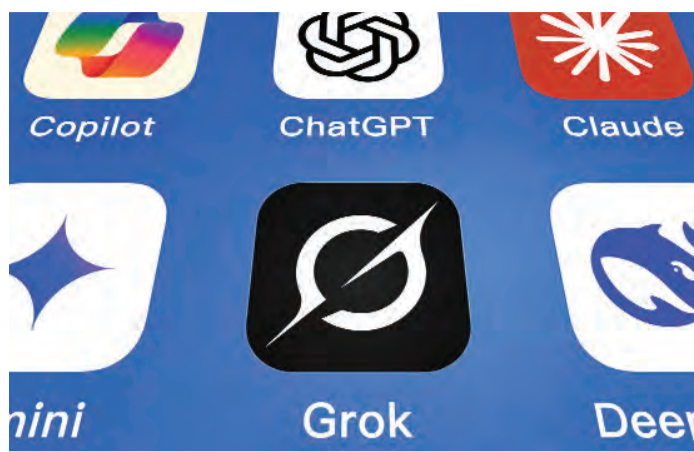
The ministry said the regulatory provisions under the IT Act and rules were being flouted by the platform, particularly in relation to obscene, indecent, vulgar, pornographic, paedophilic, or otherwise unlawful or harmful content.

"The aforesaid acts and omissions are viewed with grave concern, as they have the effect of

violating the dignity, privacy and safety of women and children, normalising sexual harassment and exploitation in digital spaces, and undermining the statutory due diligence framework applicable to intermediaries operating in India," the IT Ministry said, drawing attention to its December 29, 2025 advisory that had instructed all platforms to undertake an immediate review of their internal compliance frameworks, content moderation practices and user enforcement mechanisms, in order to ensure strict and continuous adherence to laws.

The government made it clear to X that compliance with the IT Act and rules is not optional, and that the statutory exemptions under section 79 of the IT Act (which deals with safe harbour and immunity from liability for online intermediaries) are conditional upon strict observance of due diligence obligations.

"Accordingly, you are advised to strictly desist from the hosting, displaying, uploading, publication,



transmission, storage, sharing of any content on your platform that is obscene, pornographic, vulgar, indecent, sexually explicit, paedophilic, or otherwise prohibited under any law for the time being in force in any manner whatsoever," the ministry said on January 2.

The government warned X in clear terms that any failure to observe due diligence obligations

shall result in the loss of the exemption from liability under section 79 of the IT Act, and that the platform will also be liable for consequential action under other laws, including the IT Act and Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

It directed X to immediately undertake a comprehensive technical, procedural and governance-level review of Grok, including its prompt-processing, output-gener-

ation (responses generated using Large Language Models or LLMs), image-handling and safety guardrails "so as to ensure that the application does not generate, promote or facilitate content which contains nudity, sexualisation, sexually explicit or otherwise unlawful content in any form".

It asked X to enforce user terms of service and AI usage restrictions, including ensuring strong deterrent measures such as suspension, termination and other enforcement actions against violating users and accounts.

X has also been asked to remove or disable access "without delay" to all content already generated or disseminated in violation of applicable laws, in strict compliance with the timelines prescribed under the IT Rules, 2021, without, as such, vitiating the evidence.

The ministry has asked X to submit a detailed Action Taken Report (ATR) within 72 hours of the date of issuance of the said letter.

The ATR, it said, must cover spe-

cific technical and organisational measures adopted or proposed in relation to the Grok application; the role and oversight exercised by the Chief Compliance Officer; actions taken against offending content, users and accounts; as well as mechanisms to ensure compliance with the mandatory reporting requirement under Indian laws.

"...Ensure ongoing, demonstrable and auditable compliance with all due diligence obligations under the IT Act and the IT Rules, 2021, failing which appropriate action may be initiated, including the loss of the exemption from liability under section 79 of the IT Act, and consequential action as provided under any law including the IT Act and the BNS," the ministry wrote.

On Sunday, X's Safety handle said it will act against illegal content by removing it, permanently suspending accounts that uploaded the material and working with local governments as required.

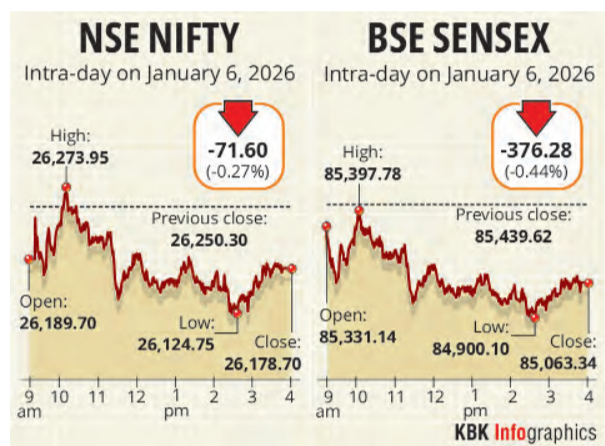
Sensex, Nifty log losses for 2nd day on geopolitical concerns

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined for the second consecutive day on Tuesday, tracking intense selling pressure in market heavyweights Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank amid geopolitical tensions and renewed concerns about potential US tariff hikes.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 376.28 points, or 0.44 per cent, to settle at 85,063.34. During the day, it tracked 539.52 points, or 0.63 per cent, to 84,900.10.

The 50-share NSE Nifty declined 71.60 points, or 0.27 per cent, to end at 26,178.70. "Domestic equities experienced a correction led by large-cap stocks, with selling in heavyweights like Reliance Industries and HDFC. The market reaction was influenced by uncertainties surrounding the Venezuela-US



crisis and Russian oil imports, coupled with anticipations regarding the upcoming Q3 results," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Trent tumbled 8.62 per cent after the Tata group's retail firm's revenue growth in the December quarter failed to cheer investors.

Reliance Industries cracked

4.42 per cent, while ITC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, InterGlobe Aviation, and HDFC Bank were also among the laggards. On the other hand, ICICI Bank, Sun Pharma, Hindustan Unilever, and State Bank of India were among the gainers.

"Indian equity markets declined for a second consecutive session, with the Nifty ending nearly 0.3 per cent

lower amid profit-booking in heavyweight stocks and renewed geopolitical concerns. Sentiment was weighed down by resurfacing trade worries after comments from the US President on potential tariff hikes on India linked to Russian oil purchases. "Stock-specific pressure added to the weakness, as Reliance Industries fell over 4 per cent, its steepest intra-day decline in more than eight months, while Trent declined 9 per cent, following its weak Q3 business update," Siddhartha Khemka - Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.39 per cent, and midcap dipped 0.24 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, energy tanked 1.71 per cent, oil & gas (1.22 per cent), services (1.07 per cent), capital goods (0.63 per cent), realty (0.28 per cent) and power (0.23 per cent).

Automobile retail sales up in 2025: FADA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Retail sales of vehicles across categories in India in 2025 grew by 7.71 per cent at 2,81,61,228 units as compared to 2,61,45,445 in 2024, with GST 2.0 helping overcome a subdued start to the year. Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations said on Tuesday. Passenger vehicle (PV) retail sales stood at 44,75,309 units in 2025 as against 40,79,532 units in 2024, a growth of 9.7 per cent, Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) said in a statement.

Similarly, two-wheeler (2W) sales also grew by 7.24 per cent at 2,02,95,650 units last year as compared to 1,89,24,815 units in 2024.



In 2025, three-wheeler retail sales were at 13,09,953 units as compared to 12,21,886 units in 2024, up 7.21 per cent.

Commercial vehicles (CV) retail also witnessed a growth of 6.71 per cent at 10,09,654 units in 2025 as against 9,46,190 units in 2024.

Commenting on the performance, FADA President CS Vigneshwar said 2025 was a tale of two halves—January to August remained subdued despite supportive macro cues such as direct-tax relief in the Union Budget and RBI's cumulative rate easing through 2025.

During this phase, customers stayed value-conscious and financier approvals remained selective in pockets, resulting in uneven conversions across markets.

Pragati Portal: A Game Changer in Accelerating India's Dedicated Freight Corridor Project



RK JAIN

Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) Project is one of the most ambitious rail infrastructure initiatives undertaken since Independence. Designed to provide a high-capacity, technology-enabled rail corridor for freight transportation, the DFC aims to help Indian Railways regain its freight market share by offering faster, safer, more reliable and cost-effective logistics solutions. The project is also expected to catalyse the development of multimodal logistics parks, thereby reducing logistics costs and improving efficiency across the supply chain.

With an estimated cost of over ₹1.2 lakh crore and a total length of 2843 km, the DFC has two major arms:

Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC): 1337 km stretching from Sahnewal (Ludhiana) in Punjab to Sonnagar in Bihar, the corridor passes through Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC): 1506 km stretching from Dadri in Uttar Pradesh to Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) near Mumbai, it traverses Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.

Together, the DFC alignment passes through 7 states and 56 districts, cutting across forest areas, wildlife sanctuaries, mangrove stretches and creek zones - making project execution inherently complex.

Challenges That Threatened Timely Completion: Although the project was initiated in 2008, progress was hampered for several years due to multiple bottlenecks:

- Acquisition of about 11,000 hectares of land, including removal of structures and encroachments.
- Obtaining statutory clearances for forest land, wildlife sanctuaries, mangroves, tree cutting, creek crossings, etc.
- Elimination of over 900 level crossings through construction of Road Over Bridges (ROBs) and Road Under Bridges (RUBs), each requiring joint GAD approvals and land acquisition for approaches.

- Shifting of high-tension electric lines, gas and oil pipelines.
- Approvals from Defence authorities, NHAI, state highways, irrigation departments for canal crossings, and permissions for earth borrowing.
- Post-COVID financial stress on contractors, leading to poor cash flows.

- Inter-ministerial and inter-state coordination through a single window Within DFC, a similar internal monitoring framework was institutionalised. Weekly reviews of major contracts, intensive site visits and continuous tracking of committed milestones became the norm. Since all timelines placed on the portal were on



The absence of encumbrance-free land severely impacted construction schedules and exposed the project to potential claims.

record, it also instilled a sense of responsibility within the project team to honour its commitments.

Pragati Portal - The Turning Point: The launch of the Pragati Portal by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) proved to be a watershed moment for the DFC Project.

Through the portal, unresolved issues were uploaded with detailed documentation by DFC officials. What made Pragati truly powerful was the visibility and accountability it created: concerned ministries, state governments and authorities knew that progress was being monitored at the highest level, including by the Hon'ble Prime Minister himself.

Issues that had remained pending for years despite relentless follow-ups were resolved within weeks—sometimes even days. In cases where immediate compliance was not feasible, authorities committed to firm target dates, which were then rigorously adhered to.

A New Culture of Governance and Accountability

The Pragati Portal emerged as a highly effective platform for:

- Real-time project monitoring
- Escalation of issues across multiple tiers simultaneously

Tangible Impact on Project Execution:

The faster resolution of complex issues significantly boosted construction progress and safeguarded the organisation from potential claims arising out of delays in providing encumbrance-free land. More importantly, Pragati transformed the overall governance culture by embedding transparency, responsiveness and accountability into day-to-day project management.

Conclusion

The Pragati Portal stands today as a live example of effective digital governance in action. For a mega project like the Dedicated Freight Corridor—cutting across multiple states, departments and regulatory jurisdictions - Pragati proved to be not just a monitoring tool, but a catalyst for change.

By ensuring faster decision-making, reducing inter-departmental friction, and enforcing accountability at every level, Pragati has played a decisive role in steering the DFC Project towards successful and timely completion, while setting a benchmark for future infrastructure programmes in India.

The writer is former MD, DFCCIL

SC to examine plea for SOP on freezing and de-freezing bank accounts in cybercrime cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to examine a plea seeking directions to the Centre and the Reserve Bank of India to formulate a uniform Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) governing freezing and de-freezing of bank accounts during cybercrime investigations.

A bench of Justices Pankaj Mithal and SVN Bhatti asked the copy of the petition to be served on the Centre within three days, and listed the matter next week.

The plea also sought the issuance of appropriate guidelines to all investigating agencies, including cyber cells across the country, to ensure that no bank account is frozen without a written, reasoned order and intimation to the account holder within 24 hours of such

action.

The plea filed by petitioner Vivek Varshney, through advocate Tushar Manohar Khairam, that he was aggrieved by the "arbitrary freezing/holding" of his bank account(s) by the Cyber Cell of Tamil Nadu police allegedly without any prior notice, communication or judicial approval, thereby violating his fundamental rights under Articles 19(1)(g) and 21 of the Constitution of India.

"Direct the respondent Union of India and the Reserve Bank of India to formulate a uniform Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) governing freezing and de-freezing of bank accounts during cybercrime investigations, so as to prevent arbitrary action and ensure procedural fairness nationwide," the plea said.

The petitioner claimed that the freezing order in his case



has resulted in complete financial paralysis, restricting him from carrying out his professional and personal obligations, including payment of essential expenses, taxes and liabilities.

"It is respectfully submitted that Section 106(3) of BNSS/102(3) of the Cr.P.C. Mandates that any seizure or freezing of property must be forthwith reported to the jurisdictional magistrate. However, in the instant case, no such compliance has been made. The

action of the respondents is, therefore, without jurisdiction, arbitrary, and unconstitutional," it said.

The plea highlighted that there is currently no uniform procedure or Standard Operating Protocol (SOP) governing the freezing and unfreezing of bank accounts during cybercrime or financial investigations.

"Consequently, citizens across different states are subjected to inconsistent practices, prolonged freezing periods, and deprivation of their financial rights without due process.

"Hence, this court's indulgence is sought to (i) direct the immediate defreezing of the petitioner's account(s); and (ii) frame uniform guidelines to ensure procedural safeguards, proportionality, and accountability in all future actions of this nature," it said.

Tighter risk framework strengthening India's bank operating environment: Fitch

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Indian banks are set to benefit from enhanced oversight by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and a more robust supervisory toolkit, which should reduce systemic risks and improve the operating environment, a report said.

These shifts, paired with strong economic growth prospects and reduced inflation risks, are credit positive for the sector, global rating agency Fitch said in a report.

"We believe regulatory responses to stress events, frameworks for monitoring risks and recovery of impaired loans have improved in recent years. Consequently, weaknesses that contributed to the last non-performing loan spike between the financial year ended March 2016 (FY16) and FY18 have been significantly

reduced," it said. Banking system metrics are the strongest in years. However, some more recent reforms have not been

in FY18). The common equity Tier 1 ratio has risen to 14.8 per cent, from estimates of 9.3 per cent in FY14.

The sector's return on

per cent in recent years, it said.

"We believe the implementation of an ECL framework should contribute to reduced volatility by helping to smooth earnings over the cycle," it said.

Over the medium term, the country's robust economic growth - above 6 per cent over the next two years - should continue to offer banks ample opportunities for profitable lending growth, it said.

"We estimate the banking sector credit/GDP ratio at 59 per cent in 2025, which remains below the peer average of 101 per cent, suggesting there is headroom for lending growth to exceed nominal GDP growth moderately over the medium term without posing major risks to systemic stability, if underwriting standards hold up," it said.



tested in a down cycle, it said, adding that the sector non-performing loan ratio fell to 2.2 per cent in 1HFY26 (from a peak of 11.2 per cent

assets is also comparable with peer banking systems in the Asia-Pacific region, with a 'bbb' category operating environment, at around 1.3

FROM THE WORLD

CENTRAL AFRICA President Touadéra re-elected

Central Africa Republic President Faustin Archange Touadéra won a third term in last month's election, provisional results showed. The major opposition coalition boycotted the vote after a referendum allowed the removal of term limits. Touadéra, 68, faced challenges from six candidates, but the main opposition coalition did not participate after denouncing what it called an unequal political environment. He won 76.15 per cent of the votes, according to the provisional results the election authority released late Monday. Some 2.4 million Central Africans were registered to vote in a first-of-its-kind election in the country, where citizens voted simultaneously for all tiers of government, including presidential, legislative, regional and municipal seats.

UK Jail term extended for smuggler

A drug smuggler jailed as the gang leader behind the import of heroin from Pakistan to Britain had his prison sentence extended on Tuesday after the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA) dismantled his "cynical" firearms plot to trick the authorities. Ameran Zeb Khan, 47, was found to have conspired with members of the Birmingham-based gang he controlled to acquire a self-loading handgun and ammunition. The NCA investigation discovered that Khan had hoped to buy up to 20 firearms as part of a plot devised from prison in the hope of cutting down his 22-year prison term.

Israel strikes multiple sites in Lebanon

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Sidon

Israel's air force struck areas in southern and eastern Lebanon on Monday and early Tuesday, including in the country's third-largest city. A strike around 1 am Tuesday leveled a three-story commercial building in the southern coastal city of Sidon, a few days before Lebanon's army commander is scheduled to brief the Government on its mission of disarming militant group Hezbollah in areas along the border with Israel.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun in a statement Tuesday condemned the attacks as counter to both international efforts to deescalate hostilities and Lebanon's efforts to extend the Government's authority into areas long dominated by Hezbollah and to disarm militants.

An Associated Press photographer at the scene in Sidon said the area was in a commercial district containing workshops and mechanic shops and the building was uninhabited.

At least one person was transported by ambulance and rescue teams were searching the site for others, but no deaths have been reported. Israel's military said on Tuesday they targeted weapons storage sites and infrastructure belonging to the militant groups



People looking through the rubble of a destroyed building that was hit by an Israeli airstrike at a commercial district in the southern port city of Sidon, Lebanon

Hezbollah and Hamas. They acknowledged the sites were located in civilian areas but blamed the groups for operating there.

The strikes were the latest in near-daily Israeli military action since a ceasefire signed more than a year ago that included a Lebanese pledge to disarm militant groups, which Israel says has not been fulfilled.

They took place nearly two hours after Israel's military Arabic language spokesman Avichay Adraee posted warnings on X that the military would strike targets in two villages in the eastern Bekaa Valley and two others in southern Lebanon. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said a home struck in the village of Manara in the

Bekaa Valley belonged to Sharhabil al-Sayed, a Hamas military commander who was killed in an Israeli drone strike in May 2024.

The areas were evacuated after Israel's warning. There were no reports of casualties in those strikes. Earlier Monday, Lebanon's Health Ministry said a drone strike on a car in the southern village of Braikeh earlier

Monday wounded two people. The Israeli military said the strike targeted two Hezbollah members.

The Lebanese army last year began the disarmament process of Palestinian groups while the Government has said that by the end of 2025 all the areas close to the border with Israel - known as the south Litani area - will be clear of Hezbollah's armed presence. The Lebanese Government is scheduled to discuss Hezbollah's disarmament during a meeting Thursday that will be attended by army commander Gen. Rudolph Haikal.

Monday's airstrikes were in villages north of the Litani river and far from the border with Israel.

The disarmament of Hezbollah and other Palestinian groups by the Lebanese Government came after a 14-month war between Israel and Hezbollah in which much of the political and military leadership of the Iran-backed group was killed.

The latest Israel-Hezbollah war began October 8, 2023, a day after Hamas attacked southern Israel, when Hezbollah fired rockets into Israel in solidarity with Hamas. Israel launched a widespread bombardment of Lebanon in September 2024 that severely weakened Hezbollah, followed by a ground invasion.

Hindu grocery shop owner killed in Bangladesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

A 40-year-old grocery shop owner was fatally attacked with sharp weapons by unidentified assailants in Palash upazila of Narsingdi district late Monday night, authorities confirmed.

The victim, identified as Moni Chakraborty (also referred to in some reports as Mani or Sarat Chakraborty Moni), operated a long-standing grocery store at Charsindur Bazaar. According to police and local accounts, the attack occurred as he was heading home after closing his shop around 9-11 p.m. Assailants struck him with locally made sharp weapons, causing severe injuries. He collapsed at the scene, and residents quickly transported him to Palash Upazila Health Complex, where doctors pronounced him dead on arrival.

Palash Police Station Officer-in-Charge Shahed Al Mamun stated that officers promptly responded to the incident, recovered the body, and sent it to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy. "We are actively investigating to determine the motive and apprehend the perpetrators," Mamun said. Family sources described Chakraborty as the son of Madan Chakraborty (or Madan Thakur in some



Moni Chakraborty

accounts) from a nearby village in Shibpur upazila.

The killing has sparked outrage among local traders, who formed a human chain in Charsindur Bazaar on Tuesday demanding swift justice. Community leaders noted that Chakraborty was well-respected and had no known enemies or disputes.

This incident occurred on the same day as another fatal attack on a Hindu businessman in Jessore district. Earlier Monday evening, 38-year-old Rana Pratap Bairagi, owner of an ice factory and acting editor of a local newspaper, was shot multiple times in the head and had his throat slit at Kopalita Bazaar in Monirampur upazila. Police are probing possible links to internal feuds, though details remain unclear. These two deaths mark a troubling escalation in violence, coming amid reports of several targeted attacks on members of Bangladesh's Hindu minority in recent weeks.

Jamaat-e-Islami questions fairness of upcoming Bangladesh elections

ASHOKE RAJ
New Delhi

Bangladesh's largest Islamist political party, Jamaat-e-Islami, has expressed doubts over whether the country is ready to hold a free and impartial national election, alleging that sections of the interim administration are acting in favour of a particular political party.

The concerns were raised during a meeting of Jamaat-e-Islami's Central Executive Council held in Dhaka on Monday, at a time when the country's political environment remains highly fluid ahead of the February 12 general election.

In a statement released after the meeting, chaired by



Jamaat-e-Islami party leader speaks at rally in Bangladesh

FILE PHOTO

Jamaat chief Dr Shafiqur Rahman, the party said it had reviewed the overall political situation surrounding

the upcoming polls. According to the statement, Jamaat leaders have received complaints from

different parts of the country claiming that certain government officials are working to benefit a "specific political

party," though no group was named. The comments come as Bangladesh prepares for a high-stakes election following major political changes.

The Awami League, led by former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, has been barred from contesting under the Anti-Terrorism Act, significantly reshaping the electoral field. In this context, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), headed by former prime minister Khaleda Zia, is widely viewed as the leading contender to form the next government.

Jamaat-e-Islami, which was once a key ally of the BNP during its 2001-2006 rule, is now positioning itself as a major rival in the race, further intensifying competition among opposition forces.

The party also voiced serious concern over what it described as the ongoing killing of political leaders and activists in various parts of the country, sometimes occurring in public

view. Jamaat leaders warned that such incidents are undermining public confidence and creating an atmosphere of fear ahead of the election.

Stating that conditions for a free, fair, and neutral election have yet to be ensured, Jamaat urged the Election Commission and law enforcement agencies to carry out their responsibilities with "complete neutrality."

The party also called on the government to maintain law and order so that voters can participate without intimidation. Referring indirectly to the mass uprising that led to the collapse of the Hasina-led Government in August 2024, Jamaat said what it termed "fascism" had been removed after a 16-year struggle.

It warned that the "new Bangladesh," achieved at the cost of about 1,500 lives and tens of thousands of injuries, must not be undermined by any conspiracy.

Slovenia to hold parliamentary election on March 22



Natasa Pirc Musar

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Ljubljana (Slovenia)

Slovenia's president on Tuesday set a parliamentary election in the European Union country for March 22.

"I want the election to be conducted fairly, and I will pay attention to disinformation and manipulation, including from abroad," President Nataša Pirc Musar said. The vote for the 90-member assembly is seen as a test for the liberal Government that is facing a challenge from populist right-wing parties.

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE						
SR NO.	NAME OF Department	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE Department	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	PWD B&R, KARNAL	REWIRING AND PDG. ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES AT JTI PURKHASH DISTT. SONIPAT. + 2 WORKS	06.01.2026 12.01.2026	23.56 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01842265696 pwd-eeed-karnal@hry.nic.in
2	PWD B&R, KARNAL	CONSTRUCTION OF 100 BEDDED MCH BUILDING IN THE CAMPUS OF CIVIL HOSPITAL IN SONIPAT (PDG. ESTATE EI AND ELV SERVICES)	06.01.2026 15.01.2026	263.65 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01842265696 pwd-eeed-karnal@hry.nic.in
3	PWD B&R, HISAR	4 LANNING OF HISAR BALSAMAND ROAD (MDR-107) FROM HISAR BYPASS TO VILLAGE HINDIWAR MOR RD 3.700 TO 11.000 IN HISAR DISTRICT (ROAD ID- 4873) (NALWA CONSTITUENCY) (DIGGING OF PIT OF RCC ROAD IN CENTER VERGE CHANDAN NAGAR SIDE) BALANCE WORK + 1 WORKS	02.01.2026 08.01.2026	8.10 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01662225651 pwd-eeed-hissar@hry.nic.in
4	PWD B&R, HISAR	ESTIMATE FOR THE WORK CONSTRUCTION OF NEW MINI SECT. AT CHARKHI DADR (PDG. STREET LIGHT AND 400 KVA DG SET)	02.01.2026 08.01.2026	74.54 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01662225651 pwd-eeed-hissar@hry.nic.in
5	DIRECTORATE OF STATE TRANSPORT HARYANA, CHANDIGARH	ONLINE TENDER FOR DEVELOPMENT OF BUS DEPOT AT SECTOR 12, REWARI, HARYANA FOR CITY BUS SERVICE.	07.01.2026 28.01.2026	13.96 CRORE	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01722710371 dtcpndhr@gmail.com
6	DIRECTORATE OF STATE TRANSPORT HARYANA, CHANDIGARH	TENDER NOTICE FOR TWO YEARS RATE CONTRACT FOR PRINTING OF 5.00 CRORE (APPROXIMATE) MANUAL BUS TICKETS TO BE REQUIRED IN THE DEPOTS OF HARYANA ROADWAYS.	12.01.2026 11.02.2026	30 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	0172-2709809 dtcstoc-dst@hry.gov.in
7	PUBLIC HEALTH ENGINEERING, HANSI	DESIGNING, PROVIDING, FIXING, TESTING AND COMMISSIONING OF ONLINE ANALYZER, VACUUM OPERATED AUTOMATIC SWITCHOVER, DRY MEDIA SCRUBBER, AUTOMATIC SHUT OFF VALVE AND ALL OTHER WORKS CONTINGENT THERETO, AT VARIOUS INSTALLATIONS, WITH THREE MONTHS TRIAL RUN, ONE YEAR DEFECT LIABILITY PERIOD AND COMPREHENSIVE MAINTENANCE FOR FIVE YEARS THEREAFTER COMPLETE IN ALL RESPECT AT VARIOUS STATIONS UNDER PHESD NO.1 HANSI (HANSI-1 BLOCK)	04.01.2026 19.01.2026	991.30 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01663256145 eehansi@gmail.com
8	FOREST DEPARTMENT, SIRSA	RAISING OF NURSERY WORKS IN VARIOUS BLOCKS + 1 OTHER WORK	CLOSING DATE 12.01.2026	26.25 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9416029545 forest_sirsa@yahoo.com
9	PANCHAYATI RAJ, KARNAL	BALANCE WORK OF HATHLANA LAYING OF RCC PIPE LINE AND DEVELOPMENT OF POND AT VILLAGE HATHLANA (NGT SCHEME) + 1 WORKS	03.01.2026 13.01.2026	98.29 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01842262916 prexeeng_xrl@hry.nic.in
10	PANCHAYATI RAJ, ROHTAK	CONSTRUCTION OF BPHU AT VILLAGE LAKHAN MAJRA	02.01.2026 08.01.2026	42.02 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9813604629 prexeeng_rth@hry.nic.in
11	HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT HARYANA, PANCHKULA	SUPPLY OF TISSUE CULTURE DATEPALM PLANTS FEMALE MALE AT CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR DATE PALM BARWALA HISAR	08.01.2026 10.02.2026	EMD 2 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9414790174 hiteshagarwal.hort@hry.gov.in
12	HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT HARYANA, PANCHKULA	SUPPLY AND ERECTION OF MIST CHAMBER AT CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR LITCHI NABIPIUR AMBALA	08.01.2026 10.02.2026	EMD 1 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9414790174 hiteshagarwal.hort@hry.gov.in
13	HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT HARYANA, PANCHKULA	SUPPLY & INSTALLATION OF AUTOMATION UNIT AND MICRO IRRIGATION SYSTEM AT CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR BERRIES CHHACHRAULI YAMUNANAGAR	08.01.2026 10.02.2026	EMD 1 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9414790174 hiteshagarwal.hort@hry.gov.in
14	HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT HARYANA, PANCHKULA	SUPPLY & INSTALLATION OF AUTOMATION UNIT AND MICRO IRRIGATION SYSTEM AT CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR LITCHI NABIPIUR AMBALA	08.01.2026 10.02.2026	EMD 1 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9414790174 hiteshagarwal.hort@hry.gov.in
15	HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT HARYANA, PANCHKULA	SUPPLY INSTALLATION OF AUTOMATION UNIT AND MICRO IRRIGATION SYSTEM AT CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR VERTICAL & MULTILAYER FARMING CHEEKA KATHAL	08.01.2026 10.02.2026	EMD 1 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9414790174 hiteshagarwal.hort@hry.gov.in
16	HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT HARYANA, PANCHKULA	SUPPLY AND ERECTION OF POLY NET HOUSE AT CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR DATE PALM BARWALA HISAR	08.01.2026 10.02.2026	EMD 2 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9414790174 hiteshagarwal.hort@hry.gov.in
17	HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT HARYANA, PANCHKULA	SUPPLY OF TISSUE CULTURE BERRIES PLANTS AT CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR BERRIES CHHACHRAULI YAMUNANAGAR	08.01.2026 10.02.2026	EMD 1 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9414790174 hiteshagarwal.hort@hry.gov.in
18	HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT HARYANA, PANCHKULA	SUPPLY AND ERECTION OF SHADE NET HOUSE AT CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR LITCHI NABIPIUR AMBALA	08.01.2026 10.02.2026	EMD 2 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9414790174 hiteshagarwal.hort@hry.gov.in
19	HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT HARYANA, PANCHKULA	SUPPLY ERECTION OF PROTECTED STRUCTURES AT CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR BERRIES CHHACHRAULI YAMUNANAGAR	08.01.2026 10.02.2026	EMD 2 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9414790174 hiteshagarwal.hort@hry.gov.in
20	HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT HARYANA, PANCHKULA	SUPPLY AND ERECTION OF PROTECTED STRUCTURES AT CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR VERTICAL AND MULTI LAYER FARMING CHEEKA KATHAL	08.01.2026 10.02.2026	EMD 2 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9414790174 hiteshagarwal.hort@hry.gov.in
21	SHM GOVT MEDICAL COLLEGE, NALHAR, NUH	TENDER FOR CMC OF ELECTRICAL AND FIRE FIGHTING SYSTEM	09.01.2026 27.01.2026	EMD 4.80 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01267282007 dirshkmmh.med-hry@gov.in

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT www.etenders.hry.nic.in

RO 41804-I-27-7

GOVT. OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER::KAMRUP METRO W. R. DIVISION
GUWAHATI-08

No. GED/NIT-NIQ/M&R/81

SHORT NIT NO 81

Sealed tenders in prescribed form to be eventually drawn up in A.P.W.D. F-2 form affixing non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight & twenty five paise) only are hereby invited from the registered contractor of W.R. Dept for the year 2025-26 for the scheme "M&R to Flood Drill for the year 2025-26 (Ph-II)" for Rs. 19.95L. The tender will be received by the undersigned up to 2.00PM of 12.01.2026 and will be opened on the same day. In case the date fixed declare as Holiday/Bondh, the tender will be received on next working day up to 2.00PM and will be open on the same date, time and place. The tenderer or their authorized agent may remain present at the time of opening tenders.

Detail NIT, specification, terms & conditions for the work may be seen in the office of the undersigned during office hours on all working day up to 1.00 PM of 12.01.2026. Tender paper may be obtained on payment of Rs. 100/- (Rupees One Hundred) only per group through IPO drawn in favour of the undersigned.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Kamrup Metro W.R. Division
Guwahati-08.

DIPR/C/PIO/740/7-Jan-26

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER: PWD: BUILDING: ASSAM
CHANDMARI: GUWAHATI-3.

No.Tech-I(H&E)/38/2025/14

PRESS NOTICE

The Chief Engineer, Health & Education, P.W. (H & E) D. Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3 on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites bids through Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Mode-III of contract (Single stage two-part bidding system) from eligible contractors / firms having experience in similar nature of work for the following work:

Sl. No.	State/Package	Name of Work	Approx. Value of Work (Including GST @18%) (Rs. in Lakhs)	Time of completion	E.M.D.	Tender Cost (Rs.)
1.	IIM (Hostel)	Construction of Pre-Fabricated (A.T Single Roof) Hostel for Transit Camp of IIM at Tech City, Bongora, Guwahati	Rs.1540.85 Lakh	4 months	(2% for General, and 1% for Reserved category)	20,000/-

Note :-
1. NIT value may be changed during uploading of tender in the website, which may be seen in Detailed NIT of the bid document.
2. The bidders must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in
3. Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement website i.e. www.assamtenders.gov.in.
4. All terms and conditions will be as per the Bidding Documents. The Press Notice will be a part of the Bidding Documents.
5. The work will be allotted only after receipt of A/A from the competent authority.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer, Health & Education,
P/W. (H&E), Chandmari, Guwahati-03.

DIPR/C/PIO/743/7-Jan-26

35 people killed, 1,200 detained in Iran's economic protests

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Dubai

The death toll in violence surrounding protests in Iran has risen to at least 35 people, activists said Tuesday, as the country's theocracy acknowledged the unrest in one western province where security forces reportedly raided a hospital.

The figure came from the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which said more than 1,200 people have been detained in the protests, which have been ongoing for more than a week. It said 29 protesters, four children and two members of Iran's security forces have been killed. Demonstrations have reached over 250 locations in 27 of Iran's 31 provinces.

The group, which relies on an activist network inside Iran for its reporting, has been accurate in the past unrest. The semi-official Fars news agency, believed close to Iran's paramilitary



Shops are closed during protests in Tehran's centuries-old main bazaar, Iran

Revolutionary Guard, reported late Monday that some 250 police officers and 45 members of the Guard's all-volunteer Basij force have been hurt in the demonstrations. However, Iran's government has offered no overall statistics or information about the unrest.

Late Monday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian assigned the country's interior ministry to form a special team for a "full-fledged investigation" of what had been happening in Ilam province. Malekshahi County in Iran's Ilam province, some 515 kilometres (320 miles) south-west of Iran's capital, Tehran, has seen protesters killed as online videos purported to show security forces firing on civilians. The presidency also acknowledged an "incident in a hospital in the city of Ilam." Online video showed security forces wearing riot gear raiding a hospital, where activists said they were seeking demonstrators. The hospital assault drew

criticism from the US State Department, which, in Iran's Farsi language, called the incident "a crime." "Storming the wards, beating medical staff and attacking the wounded with tear gas and ammunition is a clear crime against humanity," a post on the social platform X read. "Hospitals are not battlefields."

A report by Fars earlier alleged, without offering evidence, that demonstrators carried firearms and grenades. Firearms are more prevalent in western Iran, along the border with Iraq, but there's been no clear evidence provided by the government to support allegations of demonstrators being armed. Ilam has hundreds of kilometres (miles) of border with Iraq.

Iran's rural Ilam province is mainly home to the country's Kurdish and Lur ethnic groups and faces severe economic hardship. The growing death toll carries with it the chance of

American intervention. US President Donald Trump warned Iran on Friday that if Tehran "violently kills peaceful protesters," the United States "will come to their rescue." While it remains unclear how and if Trump will intervene, his comments sparked an immediate, angry response, with officials within the theocracy threatening to target American troops in the Mideast.

The comments took on new importance after the US military on Saturday captured Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, a longtime ally of Tehran. The protests have become the biggest in Iran since 2022, when the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in police custody triggered nationwide demonstrations. However, the protests have yet to be as widespread and intense as those surrounding the death of Amini, who was detained over not wearing her hijab, or headscarf, to the liking of authorities. Iran has faced

rounds of nationwide protests in recent years. As sanctions tightened and Iran struggled after a 12-day war with Israel, its rial currency collapsed in December, reaching 1.4 million to \$1. Protests began soon after, with demonstrators chanting against Iran's theocracy. On Tuesday, \$1 traded at 1.46 million rials. Understanding the scale of this latest round of protests has been difficult. Iranian state media has provided little information about the demonstrations. Online videos offer only brief, shaky glimpses of people in the streets or the sound of gunfire. Journalists in Iran also face limits on reporting in general, such as requiring permission to travel around the country, as well as the threat of harassment or arrest by authorities.

But the protests do not appear to be stopping, even after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Saturday said Iranian must be put in their place.

Maduro pleads not guilty to drug trafficking charges

ASSOCIATED PRESS
New York

A defiant Nicolás Maduro declared himself "the president of my country" as he protested his capture and pleaded not guilty on Monday to the federal drug trafficking charges that the Trump administration used to justify removing him from power in Venezuela.

"I was captured," Maduro said in Spanish as translated by a courtroom reporter before being cut off by the judge. Asked later for his plea to the charges, he stated: "I'm innocent. I am not guilty. I am a decent man, the president of my country."

The courtroom appearance, Maduro's first since he and his wife were seized from their home in a stunning middle-of-the-night military operation, kicks off the US government's most conse-



Nicolas Maduro being escorted to board a helicopter for transport to Manhattan Federal Court

quential prosecution in decades of a foreign head of state. The criminal case in Manhattan is unfolding against a broader diplomatic backdrop of an audacious US-engineered regime change that President Donald Trump has said will enable his administration to "run" the South American country. Maduro was led into court along with his co-defendant wife just before noon for the

brief legal proceeding. Both put on headsets to hear the English-language proceeding as it was translated into Spanish.

The couple was transported to the Manhattan courthouse under armed guard early Monday from the Brooklyn jail where they've been detained since arriving in the US on Saturday.

As a criminal defendant in the US legal system, Maduro

will have the same rights as any other person accused of a crime - including the right to a trial by a jury of regular New Yorkers. But he'll also be nearly - but not quite - unique. The stakes were made clear from the outset as Maduro, who took copious notes throughout the proceedings and wished a Happy New Year to reporters in court, repeatedly pressed his case that he had been unlawfully abducted.

"I am here kidnapped," Maduro said. "I was captured at my home in Caracas." US District Judge Alvin Hellerstein, a 92-year-old Clinton appointee, interrupted him, saying: "There will be time and place to go through all of this." Hellerstein added that Maduro's attorney could do so later. "At this time, I just want to know if you are Nicolás Maduro Moros," which Maduro confirmed

that he was.

Maduro's lawyers are expected to contest the legality of his arrest, arguing that he is immune from prosecution as head of state. Barry Pollack, a prominent Washington lawyer whose clients have included WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, said Maduro is "head of a sovereign state and entitled to the privilege" that the status ensures. He also said the defence would raise "questions about the legality of his military abduction."

Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega unsuccessfully tried the same immunity defence after the US captured him in a similar military invasion in 1990.

But the US doesn't recognise Maduro as Venezuela's legitimate head of state - particularly after a much-disputed 2024 reelection.

Snow, ice wreak havoc across Europe, causing deadly accidents

ASSOCIATED PRESS
The Hague

Snow, ice and freezing temperatures hit parts of Europe on Tuesday, causing treacherous traffic conditions that left at least five people dead in France and forcing the cancellation of hundreds of flights from one of the continent's busiest airports.

Authorities in the Les Landes region of south-western France reported three dead in accidents, and at least two more people were reportedly killed in the Ile-de-France region around Paris, where authorities ordered trucks off the road as snowfall caused huge traffic jams on Monday.

Paris awoke Tuesday to a blanket of snow on its famous rooftops and sites, and children whose schools couldn't hold classes delighted in an unexpected day off.

Air travelers were less happy, as heavy snowfall forced the closure of six airports in the north and west of France. As snow fell across the Netherlands, Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport reported that some



400 flights were grounded as crews worked to clear runways and de-ice planes waiting to depart. Hundreds of flights were also cancelled Monday in Amsterdam and more snow was forecast for the rest of the week.

Just getting to and from the airport outside the Dutch capital was a struggle with frozen points and an early morning software glitch throwing the Netherlands' rail system into turmoil. Limited rail services resumed later in the morning but routes around Amsterdam remained largely closed because of the icy conditions, national railway

company NS said on its website. It urged commuters to "only travel if it's absolutely necessary."

Commuters forced to drive to work also faced time-consuming journeys as a combination of the snow and ice snarled traffic on some highways.

In Rome, weeks of rain that have swollen the Tiber River over its banks again muted Pope Leo XIV's Christmas-time celebrations. St Peter's Square was only partially full Tuesday as a few thousand people crowded under colourful umbrellas to hear Leo deliver his Epiphany blessing from the loggia St. Peter's Basilica.

China bans exports of dual-use goods to Japan

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Beijing

China on Tuesday banned exports of dual-use goods that can serve military purposes to Japan, a move that comes at time of heightened tensions between the two countries over Taiwan, a self-ruled island Beijing

claims as its sovereign territory. The Chinese commerce ministry said in a statement that exports of such items, which can serve both civilian and military purposes, to Japanese military users and all other end-users that could help enhance Japanese military power are prohibited.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given on behalf of SMT. KANTA AGGARWAL AND SMT. PRIYANKA GUPTA who are owners of Freehold Residential Plot No. 36, Situated at Amriti Nagar, Kottla Mubarak Pur, New Delhi-110003, having actual total plot measuring area 50sq. yards (i.e. 41.8 sq. mtrs), vide Sale Deed dated 23.11.2020 bearing Document No. 3737 Book No. 1 Volume No. 1501, Page Nos. 95-112, Dated 23.11.2020 (SRC-VII) New Delhi) now SHRI SHAMBHU DAVAL ROSEHAN LAL, SMT. KANTA AGGARWAL AND SMT. PRIYANKA GUPTA intend to mortgage the subject property for the financial assistance from CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED. That Sale Deed dated 28.12.1999 (document No. 2175), Resignation Deed dated 12/10/2020 (document No. 3118), Death Certificate of Late Prakash Wanti dated 27/03/2006 and SMC of Late Prakash Wanti has been lost/misplaced/irrevocable etc. To comply the requirements of BANK/NFCC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim/right/interest/claiming mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 07 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all types of Encumbrances, lien etc. Lucam Legal LLP N-161, Ground Floor, Saira Tower, Gautam Nagar Near Yusuf Sarai Community Centre, New Delhi-110045 Contact # 011-40065116 & 41657372

PUBLIC NOTICE
My Clients, Mr Kamlesh Chander Jain S/O Late Shri Prem Chand Jain, and Mr Saurabh Jain S/O Mr Kamlesh Chander Jain, both resident of H-501 Lagoon Apartments, Ambience Island, DLF Phase 3, Sector-24, Gurugram, Haryana-122002 do hereby notify for Public at large that late Mrs. Sudha Jain W/O Mr Kamlesh Chander Jain expired on 13th September, 2024, leaving behind Mr Kamlesh Chander Jain (Husband) and Saurabh Jain (Son) as her only Legal Heirs and only claimant of Property, Apartment No. M-0908 in the Group Housing Scheme, Ridge Residency Sector 135, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, built by Today Homes Noida Pvt. Ltd. and no one else has any Right, Title or Interest in the Same. (Vishal Garg) Advocate 859, Lawyers' Chamber Dwarka Court, Sector-10 New Delhi-110075. Mob. 9810171302

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Invitation of Tenders through E-procurement System
Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites through e-procurement system for the supply of the following items:-

S. No.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing Date
1.	16250664	Bearing Assy	320 Set	30.01.2026
2.	19255050A	Scavenger Blower To TM/OIL Cooling Unit	184 Nos.	31.01.2026
3.	08245719	Integrated Power Supply System (IPS)	170 Nos.	02.02.2026
4.	04240043	Inhibited Mineral Insulating Transformer Oil	102270 Ltr.	02.02.2026
5.	07255017A	Supply, Installation & Commissioning of Pressurized Flushing System	400 Set	04.02.2026
6.	16250382	Parking Brake Cylinder Drg	312 Nos.	05.02.2026
7.	07251080A	Over Hauling Kit For Distributor Valve	1058 Set	12.02.2026
8.	07253466	Sealed Glass Unit for LHB Fixed Window	13482 Nos.	13.02.2026
9.	07250316	Distributor Valve KE1PKSL With Pressure Converter	288 Nos.	24.02.2026
10.	07252020	Double Brake Indicator	568 Nos.	25.02.2026
11.	07250473	Foot Step Complete for LHB Coaches	4860 Nos.	16.03.2026
12.	07250472	Emergency Brake Accelerator EB3 SIL With Bracket	319 Nos.	23.03.2026
13.	07251000	Water Tank Assembly (L.H.) (390 Liters)	143 Nos.	01.04.2026
14.	07250287	Set of Pressure Gauges 80x10	299 Nos.	01.04.2026

Note: 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details. 2. No manual offer will be entertained.
Tender Notice No.: 77/2025-2026 Dated: 06.01.2026 52/2026
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

US takeover of Greenland would mark end of NATO: Danish PM

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Copenhagen

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said on Monday an American takeover of Greenland would amount to the end of the NATO military alliance.

Her comments came in response to US President Donald Trump's renewed call for the strategic, mineral-rich Arctic island to come under US control in the aftermath of the weekend military operation in Venezuela.

The dead-of-night opera-



Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen

tion by US forces in Caracas to capture leader Nicolás Maduro and his wife early Saturday left the world stunned, and heightened concerns in Denmark and

Greenland, which is a semi-autonomous territory of the Danish kingdom and thus part of NATO.

Frederiksen and her Greenlandic counterpart, Jens Frederik Nielsen, blasted the president's comments and warned of catastrophic consequences. Numerous European leaders expressed solidarity with them.

"If the United States chooses to attack another NATO country militarily, then everything stops," Frederiksen told Danish broadcaster TV2 on Monday.

PUBLIC NOTICE
The General Public is hereby informed that my client has entered into an Agreement to Sell Mr. Ramesh Kumar Agarwal, of the Plot/Property bearing No.XL.09/04, Forest Lane, land measuring 650 Sq. Yds. (13 Biswas), comprised in Kharsa No.421, situated in Revenue Estate of Village Neb Sarai, Tehsil (Mehtauli), New Delhi, which is bounded as under:-
East: Plot of Shri R.V. Singh
West: Road 18 Feet Wide
North: Property of Shri Rohit Kohli
South: Property of Shri Nitin Kohli (hereinafter called the said Property).
Before completing the said transaction, any person(s) or authority having any right, title, interest, claim, lien, charge, mortgage, loan, inheritance, litigation, agreement, or objection whatsoever in respect of the above-mentioned property is hereby called upon to submit their claim/objection in writing along with documentary proof to the undersigned within 15 (fifteen) days from the date of publication of this notice. If no claim or objection is received within the stipulated period, it shall be presumed that the property is free from all encumbrances, and the purchaser shall proceed with the transaction. Any claim raised thereafter shall not be entertained.
Shard Chaturvedi (Advocate)
Office: A-7, First Floor, Jawahar Park, Devli Road, Khanpur, New Delhi-110080, Mob. No: +91 98997 10079

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER :: DHUBRI DIVISION :: DHUBRI ::
No. B/DBR/FOR/MAHAL/27/46 :: dfo.t.dhubri@gmail.com

Short e-Auction Notice
Under the provisions of Rule 32, 33, 34, 35, 36 & 37 of the Assam Minor Mineral Concession Rules, 2013 (amended) bids are invited online by the undersigned as per Schedule - A of the Bidding Document from Registered Companies / Firms / Societies / Individuals, etc for the award of Lease / Contract for the Minor Mineral Concession area namely Tokrabandha Hill Stone Quarry located within the Tokrabandha PRF under the Range Office, Salkocha Range, Salkocha under Dhubri Forest Division.
Details of e-Auction will be available on <https://www.assamforestonline.in> portal from 09/01/2026.
Divisional Forest Officer
Dhubri Division
DIPR/C/PIO/742/7-Jan-26

NORTHERN RAILWAY
(E-Auction Notice)
The Sr.Divisional Commercial Manager/PS, Northern Railway, Delhi Division, New Delhi invites e-Auction through IREPS (<http://ireps.gov.in>) for allotment of contracts of Multipurpose Stall/Special Minor Units (SMUs)/General Minor Units (GMUs) at following railway stations/locations:

E-Catalogue No	Type of Units	Station and Reserved for category	Date & Time for e-auction
CTG-JAN-01-26	Multi Purpose Stalls (MPS) & General Minor Units (GMUs)	(01) Multi Purpose Stalls (MPS) & (01) Special Minor Units (SMUs) at New Delhi Railway Stations at Delhi Division.	Start: 20.01.2026 at 11:00 hrs

Website particulars where complete details of E-Auction can be seen <https://ireps.gov.in/> (E- Auction-Leasing)
No. 23 AC/CTG/MPS Policy-2017 Dated: 06.01.2026 60/2026
Serving Customers With A Smile

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD (ROADS)
ASSAM, CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI-03
No. CE/Commn/192/PD/NA/2025-26/21
PRESS NOTICE INVITING RE-TENDER
The Chief Engineer, P.W.D (Roads), Assam on behalf of the Governor of Assam invites Re- Bid from approved and eligible contractors registered with Assam PWD (Roads) for 4 (Four) nos. of project amounting to Rs 558.51 Lakh (approx.) for Reconstruction & Recovery Window (Assam Flood and Landslides 2022) NDRF(PD/NA- 2022) for the year 2025-26 in Morigaon and Dhubri district of Assam.
Schemes are not yet sanctioned by the competent authority. In the event of non- sanction of the schemes, the bids may be cancelled and no claim what so ever on this account shall be entertained from the bidders.
Details along with Schemes for the works may be seen at website www.assamtenders.gov.in and also at the office of the undersigned in the "Communication branch". Amendment I Addendum to the SBD, if any, and further notifications shall appear in this website and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours. The contractor / bidder must be registered with the Electronic Tendering System (ETS) of PWRD, Assam website www.assamtenders.gov.in.
Note: NIT Value is inclusive of GST, Labour Cess etc.
Sd/-
Chief Engineer, PWD(Roads),
Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3.
DIPR/C/PIO/745/7-Jan-26

Hungarian director Béla Tarr dies at 70
ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Budapest
The Hungarian filmmaker Béla Tarr, director of such works as "Sátántangó" and "The Turin Horse" and the recipient of numerous awards for his long and often darkly comic films, has died at 70. During a career spanning more than four decades, Tarr's films were awarded prizes at festivals around Europe and Asia, and he received honorary professorships at universities in China. In a statement on Tuesday, the Hungarian Filmmakers' Association confirmed Tarr's death, writing that "with deep sorrow we announce that, after a long and serious illness, film director Béla Tarr passed away early this morning." Tarr's films, the longest of which, "Sátántangó", clocks in at 439 minutes, were often shot in black and white and used stark imagery to depict despair and social decay.

PROSPECT

Adani raises ₹1,000 cr, bond issue sold out in 45 minutes

Adani Enterprises Limited's (AEL) ₹1,000 crore public issue of non-convertible debentures (NCDs) was lapped up within 45 minutes of opening, according to stock exchange data. The base issue of ₹500 crore was snapped in just 10 minutes and subscription crossed ₹1,000 crore – after including the greenshoe option - in under an hour. The issue, which opened on Tuesday, closes on January 19, 2026, with allotment on a first-come, first-served basis. It offers an effective yield of up to 8.90 per cent per annum, according to the company. The base size is ₹500 crore, with a green shoe option of an additional ₹500 crore. NCDs are proposed to be listed on BSE and NSE and will be allotted on a first-come, first-served basis. Rated 'AA-' with a stable outlook by ICRA and CARE Ratings, the NCDs offer competitive yields compared to similarly rated debt and fixed deposits, giving retail investors an opportunity to participate in India's infrastructure growth. AEL's second NCD issuance of ₹1,000 crore in July 2025 was fully subscribed in just three hours on the first day, reflecting strong investor confidence. Proceeds from at least 75 per cent of the issue will be used to repay existing debt, while the balance may be deployed for general corporate purposes, the Statement said.

Kerala launches CM's mega quiz; 5,00,000 students set to participate

The Government of Kerala is set to launch the "Vijnana Yathra - Chief Minister's Mega Quiz," a massive Statewide knowledge initiative beginning January 12. As a first-of-its-kind initiative by a State Government, the competition focuses on Kerala's vibrant history of social progress, the renaissance movement, and its modern developmental achievements. The program features a total prize pool of ₹16 lakh. Organised by the Information Public Relations Department (IPRD) in collaboration with the General Education and Higher Education Departments, the quiz aims to instill social awareness and historical knowledge in the younger generation. The competition offers substantial prize money across two distinct categories: School Category (Classes 8 to 12): The first-prize winner will receive ₹5,00,000, while the second and third-place winners will be awarded ₹3,00,000 and ₹2,00,000, respectively. College and University Category: The first prize is set at ₹3,00,000, followed by ₹2,00,000 for second place and ₹1,00,000 for third place. In addition to the cash awards, all winners will be honored with official mementos and certificates of merit. The quiz is designed with a multi-tier format to ensure inclusive participation from across the State: School Level: Competitions will progress through School, Educational District, Revenue District, and State levels. While initial rounds are individual-based, the competition transitions to a team format starting from the Educational District level. College Level: Rounds will be held at the College, District, and State levels. Similar to the school category, these will transition from individual participation to team-based challenges, culminating in a Grand Finale. To encourage mass participation, every student who takes part will receive an online participation certificate. District-level winners will also be recognised with mementos and certificates. The event is designed to be highly interactive; starting at the district level, the quiz will actively involve the audience, offering prizes to spectators for correct answers. With an expected turnout of five lakh students, the Chief Minister's Mega Quiz is poised to become a landmark festival of learning, uniting the State through the power of knowledge. For more information and registration details, please visit: www.prd.kerala.gov.in.

Focus CSR spending on malnutrition: Goyal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Union Commerce and Industries Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday called upon corporates to direct their CSR spending towards combating malnutrition, describing it as crucial for India's future and their own business interests. Speaking at the National CSR Conclave on "Role of Corporate Social Responsibility in Nutrition Security and Malnutrition Mitigation", organised by the NDDDB Foundation, Goyal said a malnutrition-free India is essential for achieving Viksit Bharat by 2047. "A holistic approach is required to make the country free from malnutrition. Malnutrition can be prevented during pregnancy and the child growth stage itself," he said, highlighting the scope of CSR work in this area. The minister emphasised that CSR activities focused on preventing malnutrition would yield better returns on investment. "It is not charity, you are invest-



Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal with National Dairy Development Board Chairman Meenesh Shah during the National Conclave on the Role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Nutrition Security and Malnutrition Eradication in New Delhi on Tuesday

ing in future profits of your company. If you link your activities with malnutrition, you are doing good for yourself. Corporates are helping themselves, creating new markets, new labour, new employ-

ees, and new consumers of the future," he said. Goyal urged companies to view the 2 per cent CSR spending mandate not as a binding obligation but as an opportunity. He also called on corporates to extend their activities beyond cities to remote areas. Two CSR initiatives were launched at the event — the Giftmilk Programme of SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant and the Shishu Sanjeevani Programme of IDBI Bank. Under the Giftmilk Programme, about 4,000 children studying in Government schools in mining areas of Bhilai Steel Plant, Chhattisgarh, will receive flavoured milk fortified with Vitamins A and D, supplied through the Chhattisgarh Milk Federation managed by NDDDB. The Shishu Sanjeevani Programme provides nutritional support to around 3,000 children at anganwadi centres in rural areas of Nagpur district, Maharashtra. The programme involves an energy-dense, semi-solid, ready-to-eat fortified nutritional supplement developed by NDDDB and manufactured by the Bhandara Milk Union. Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Rajiv Ranjan Singh lauded the initiatives, saying balanced nutrition

during childhood and pregnancy is the only solution to tackle malnutrition. He noted that milk and dairy products can ensure 25-35 per cent protein intake, crucial for overall child development. India is the world's leading milk producer with per capita consumption at around 450 grams. "If we can ensure dairy products to children, their health will be fit. These children are tomorrow's future," Singh said. He stressed the need for Government, corporates, NGOs, and cooperative societies to work together holistically to fulfill the Prime Minister's vision of a malnutrition-free India. Union Ministers Annapurna Devi, Krishan Pal Gurjar, S P Singh Baghel, and George Kurian were present at the event, along with senior officials, including Cooperation Secretary Ashish Kumar Bhatnagar, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Secretary Naresh Pal Gangwar, Women and Child Development Secretary Anil Malik, and NDDDB Chairman Meenesh Shah.

Reliance says not received any Russian oil in three weeks, none expected in January

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Mumbai

Mukesh Ambani led Reliance Industries Ltd, the operator of the world's largest single site oil refining complex and till recently India's biggest buyer of Russian oil, on Tuesday said it has not received any Russian barrels in almost three weeks and none are expected in January. On November 20, 2025, Reliance had said it has halted the use of Russian crude at its export-only refinery in Jamnagar, Gujarat, as the company moves to comply with European Union sanctions. Prior to that, Reliance was India's largest buyer of Russian oil, which it processes and turns into fuel, such as petrol and diesel, at its giant oil refining complex at Jamnagar. The complex is made up of two refineries — one SEZ unit from which fuels are exported to the European Union, the US, and other markets, and an older unit that primarily caters to the domestic market. The European Union — a big market for Reliance — has imposed wide-ranging sanctions targeting Russia's energy revenues, including measures that restrict the import and sale of fuels produced from Russian crude oil. To comply with these, Reliance had stopped processing Russian crude oil at its only-for-export (SEZ) refinery. On Tuesday, it called a Bloomberg report claiming



"three vessels laden with Russian oil are headed for Reliance's Jamnagar refinery as 'blatantly untrue'." "Reliance Industries' Jamnagar refinery has not received any cargo of Russian oil at its refinery in the past three weeks approx. And is not expecting any Russian crude oil deliveries in January," the company said in a statement. The Bloomberg report had cited data analytics firm Kpler to say at least three tankers, laden with nearly 2.2 million barrels of urals (a grade of Russian crude), were headed towards the Sikka port — through which Jamnagar refining complex sources a bulk of its crude imports. However, Sikka is also the port that is used by non-Reliance companies. Industry sources said the three cargoes cited in the report were probably for Bina refinery of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and not Reliance. "We have stopped import-

IT industry major pillar of national economy: Vaishnaw

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Jaipur

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Tuesday said India's IT industry is a significant pillar of the national economy, and States like Rajasthan are playing an essential role in promoting innovation-driven growth. Addressing the Rajasthan Regional AI Impact Conference virtually at the conclusion of the Rajasthan DigiFest TIE Global Summit, Vaishnaw said a programme to train 10 lakh youth in AI skills has been launched in Rajasthan, benefiting young people across the country. The union electronics and IT minister also announced training for 5,000 youth in electronics manufacturing in collaboration with industry bodies and said a data centre would be set up in Jaipur soon. "Artificial intelligence is developing rapidly across the world. It is a proud moment for India that the Stanford AI Index has placed the country among the top three globally," he said. He further added that the ranking was a matter of national pride and reflected India's growing strength in technology and innovation. Vaishnaw further noted that work was underway on new railway connectivity in border areas, including the Bikaner-Jaisalmer-Bhildi rail line.



Ashwini Vaishnaw

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma said AI was the next phase of India's digital journey and that the State's newly introduced AI and Machine Learning Policy would help accelerate public service delivery, make it more transparent, and make it citizen-centric. He said Rajasthan was working to position itself as an emerging technology hub through innovation, skilling and investment-led growth. Sharma said artificial intelligence was "writing a new language for humanity in this century" and marked the next phase of the country's digital journey. He said the State Government was making sustained efforts to build a strong technology startup ecosystem. "Rajasthan is moving beyond e-governance and digital inclusion towards becoming a leader in AI," Sharma said. The chief minister said the State has implemented an Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning Policy that would make public service delivery faster, more transparent and citizen-centric, improve administrative efficiency, and streamline cybercrime reporting and resolution. He also announced plans to set up an AI Centre of Excellence, promote AI education in schools, colleges, ITIs and polytechnics, and establish advanced skilling centres to prepare youth for new technology-driven opportunities.

Healthcare reforms at AHPI's landmark West UP Summit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The West UP Chapter of the Association of Healthcare Providers India (AHPI) called for the establishment of a 'CIBIL-like' rating framework for insurers and TPAs so as to bring transparency and accountability in the healthcare sector. Dr Anurag Mehrotra, President of the AHPI West UP Chapter, said, "In bank and non-banking financial space, tools like CIBIL scores provide a clear benchmark for transparency and accountability. Healthcare deserves an equivalent framework. The current behavior of Insurance companies and TPA remains largely opaque; a standardised rating system will empower patients to make informed choices and ensure hospitals are treated as fair partners in care delivery. Such a mechanism will also benefit patients immensely." Addressing the Inaugural Summit of the AHPI West UP Chapter, Aunjaneya Kumar Singh, Commissioner, Moradabad Division, called upon hospitals to align institutional data with local administrative insights, noting that the integration of hospital-level information with district planning is central to

effective policy formulation including improvements in various schemes of the Government. Dr Girdhar Gyani, Director General, AHPI, reflected on AHPI's evolution into a credible, evidence-driven platform, highlighting its work on previously unexamined data sets such as accurate national bed capacity. Drawing attention to India's low beds-per-1,000 population ratio, he emphasised the need for capacity expansion, particularly in underserved regions, and stressed that regular, predictable payouts under schemes like Ayushman Bharat are essential for hospital sustainability. It is pertinent to mention here that in recent times, hospitals and insurance companies have been in conflict with each other primarily over reimbursement rates, non-transparent claim deductions as well as due to delayed payments. These ongoing disputes have led to temporary suspensions of cashless services in some hospitals. While hospitals claim that medical inflation is rising at 12-14 per cent annually, insurance companies are willing to reimburse at an average reimbursement

rate. The lack of standardised treatment costs is also an area of conflict between healthcare providers and insurance companies. Government schemes like Ayushman Bharat, ESIC and CGHS too suffer from certain structural issues. Package rates under these schemes are frequently far below actual treatment cost, especially for complex procedures and critical care. On top of that, payments are often delayed for months, with unexplained deductions and repeated queries. The Inaugural Summit of the AHPI West UP Chapter saw a full-house assembly of the medical and healthcare fraternity, with representation from leading hospitals across Western Uttar Pradesh. Senior clinicians, hospital founders, administrators, and healthcare leaders from the Moradabad Division, Noida, Ghaziabad, Meerut, Rampur, Amroha, and Sambhal were present, reflecting the region's collective engagement with the evolving healthcare discourse. Dr Sunil Kapoor, Director, 4Sight Advisor addressed the technological dimension, outlining how artificial intelligence is increasingly integral to healthcare delivery.

Himanta launches distribution of MMUA cheques to 27,000 women

TONY DAS
Guwahati

In a significant push towards financial inclusion and self-reliance for women, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma today launched the distribution of seed capital under the Mukhya Mantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan (MMUA) for the Bokakhat Legislative Assembly constituency. At a programme held in Bokakhat, Golaghat district, the Chief Minister handed over cheques worth ₹10,000 to each of the 27,166 women beneficiaries. The event was a major development milestone for the region, with Sarma virtually inaugurating 22 completed projects worth ₹64.58 crore and laying foundation stones for 18 new initiatives valued at ₹77.55 crore. These projects are set to strengthen local infrastructure, covering roads, housing, irrigation and the health sector. Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Sarma emphasised that the Assam Government's MMUA scheme is designed to financially empower 32 lakh women across the State with a total outlay of ₹3,200 crore. He announced that after already providing the capital to 16 lakh women, the remaining beneficiaries would receive their funds within the next 15 to 20 days. "In the nearly 80 years since India gained independence, Assam has never implemented such a large-scale scheme to financially empower women," Sarma stated. The initiative stands alongside the Government's flagship Orunodoi scheme, which now provides monthly assistance to 40 lakh women Statewide. In Bokakhat alone, 31,844 women benefit from Orunodoi, while the Nijut Moina scheme for promoting



women's education has benefited nearly three lakh female students, including 1,980 students in the current year. Sarma recalled the initial scepticism from the opposition when the monthly ₹830 Orunodoi payment was first announced, noting that the scheme has since expanded from 18 lakh to nearly 40 lakh beneficiaries, with the monthly assistance increasing to ₹1,250. The Chief Minister also detailed the State Government's collaboration with the Centre to support poor families, citing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's free rice distribution initiative. In addition to the free rice, the State Government is now supplying one kilogram each of pulses, sugar, and salt to ration card holders for the reduced price of ₹100, down from ₹117. In further welfare announcements, Sarma confirmed the imminent launch of the Nijut Babu scheme for male students, mirroring the Nijut Moina scheme. He also

announced that Orunodoi beneficiaries would receive an additional ₹8,000 along with their monthly assistance on February 20, ahead of Bhogali Bihu. Furthermore, 2,000 additional beneficiaries will be identified to ensure every eligible family in Bokakhat is covered by the Orunodoi scheme. Highlighting the Government's focus on law and order and conservation, Sarma proudly stated that rhino killings in the Kaziranga National Park have been completely halted due to strict action against poachers. He also provided an update on the continuous eviction drives against illegal encroachment, which have already recovered approximately 1.60 lakh bighas of land, with efforts ongoing to recover a further 12 lakh bighas. He reiterated the Government's commitment to complete transparency in the recruitment process, noting that nearly 1.5 lakh youth have already secured Government employment, exceeding the initial

target of one lakh jobs. Road connectivity in the region is set for a monumental upgrade. Prime Minister Modi is scheduled to lay the foundation stone for the Kaziranga elevated corridor on January 18. Set to be Asia's longest elevated corridor at 34 kilometres, the project will drastically cut travel time between Bokakhat and Kaliabor to about 15 minutes, significantly improving access to Guwahati. The Chief Minister also announced forthcoming work on an underwater tunnel beneath the Brahmaputra between Numaligarh and Gohpur, which will accommodate both road and rail traffic. He noted that the recent inauguration of a bio ethanol plant at Numaligarh by the Prime Minister, with plans to produce sustainable aviation fuel from bamboo, underscores the constituency's strong industrial growth. Emphasising the larger goal of MMUA, Sarma said the mission is not merely about providing initial capital, but about inspiring women to become Lakhpati Baidetu (millionaire sisters). Assam currently has 40 lakh women in self-help groups (SHGs), with over eight lakh already achieving 'Lakhpati' status. Citing successful examples like Nirmala Sarma, who thrived through dairy entrepreneurship, and Riju Das, who found success in the tailoring and garment business, he expressed confidence in the beneficiaries. The programme was attended by Minister Agriculture Atul Bora, Minister Finance Ajanta Neog, MP Kamakhya Prasad Tasa, MLAs Bhambendra Nath Bhaari and Biswajit Phukan, and Mission Director Kuntal Moni Sarma Bordoloi, alongside other dignitaries.

BRIEFLY

Anahat enters British Junior Open squash final



Top-seeded Indian Anahat Singh registered a fine win over Egypt's Malika El Karasy in the semifinals to storm into her maiden women's under-19 final at the prestigious British Junior Open squash.

The 17-year-old, winner of 12 PSA Tour titles, secured a 11-8, 11-7, 11-9 win over Malika in just 28 minutes at the University of Birmingham. Anahat will meet European junior champion and second seed Lauren Baltayan of France in the summit clash.

This is Anahat's ninth British Junior Open final across age-groups, as she aims to become only the second Indian to win the U-19 title after Joshna Chinappa in 2005. Anahat, who beat Malika in the BJO U-17 final and the World Junior Championships quarterfinals last year, kept attacking the front corners and converted those opportunities into winners to close out the contest in straight games in what is the 100th anniversary edition of the tournament.

Meanwhile, Aryaveer Dewan, the second seed in the boys' U-17 category, went down in the semifinals to Egypt's Philopater Saleh (3/4) 9-11, 5-11, 7-11.

Tunisia changes coach after disappointing AFLON



World Cup participant Tunisia has parted with coach Sami Trabelsi and his coaching staff following their last 16 exit at the Africa Cup of Nations.

"The executive committee has decided to terminate by mutual consent the contractual relationship with the entire technical staff of the national team," the Tunisian Federation of Football said in a statement on Facebook late Sunday. It gave no further details.

Tunisia lost to Mali on penalties in the last 16 of the Africa Cup despite having a player more for most of their match. The team previously failed to impress in Group C, where it lost to Nigeria and finished runner-up after a 1-1 draw with Tanzania. The 57-year-old Trabelsi took over as Tunisia coach for the second time last February and guided the team to World Cup qualification atop its qualifying group.

The Carthage Eagles were drawn in Group F at the World Cup with the Netherlands, Japan and the winner of a European playoff involving Albania, Poland, Sweden and Ukraine.

The Suresh Kalmadi legacy

From IAF pilot to India's foremost sports administrator

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Resourceful but also hugely controversial and almost always in the line of fire. This was Suresh Kalmadi as one of India's most towering sports administrators in varied roles for over two decades.

The former Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President, who breathed his last early this morning in Pune, was a dynamic man, whose command on Indian sports yielded both success and scandal.

Born in Madras in 1944, Kalmadi studied at Fergusson College in Pune, the city he went on to represent in the Parliament.



But much before entering politics or taking up sports administration, Kalmadi served in the Indian Air Force from 1964 to 1974, first as a commissioned pilot and then an instructor before retiring as a Squadron Leader.

Then came the political journey after being spotted by Sharad Pawar. The Maharashtra-man was appointed Pune Youth Congress chief and later developed close ties with Sanjay Gandhi and former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

After the Congress split in the late 1980s, Kalmadi stayed with the Indian National Congress and was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1982, 1988, 1994 and 1998.

During his tenure as a Rajya Sabha MP, he also served as Union Minister of State for Railways in the PV Narasimha Rao Government in 1995. Kalmadi was elected to the Lok Sabha from Pune in 1996, but lost the seat in the very next general election before making a comeback by winning the 2004 and 2009 polls.

However, what brought him fame and a degree of infamy was his transition into the most powerful Indian sports administrator of his time.

He brought several top-class events to the country including the 2003 Afro Asian Games, the 2008 Commonwealth Youth Games, the 2010 Commonwealth Games, as well as two Asian Athletics Championships in 1989 and 2013. His tenure as IOA chief

lasted from 1996 to 2011, the year allegations of corruption in the conduct of the Commonwealth Games (CWG) were levelled against him, culminating in his arrest. However, in April this year, the Enforcement Directorate filed a closure report in the case, giving him a clean chit.

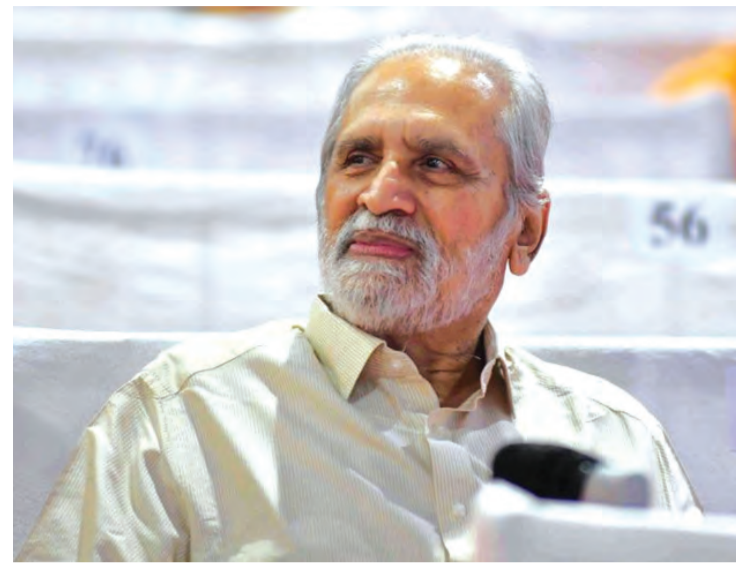
The mostly soft-spoken and retiring administrator was pushed into international limelight during the scandal and became the face of everything that went wrong in the organisation of the costliest CWG of all time while he headed its Organising Committee.

He vehemently denied any wrongdoing but those assertions were lost in the public outrage and cacophony of news channel debates.

Despite the lasting damage the charges did to his reputation, it would be unfair to make Kalmadi's legacy all about the CWG wrongs.

As head of the IOA, one of his biggest successes was to revive the National Games. He managed to organise the National Games at regular intervals and at different venues including Pune, Bengaluru, Chandigarh, Hyderabad, and Manipur. He was closely associated with Indian athletics, serving as the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) President for 19 years from 1987 to 2006.

During this time, he managed to pull in international track and field stars for eight meets in Delhi from 1989 to 1998. He also helped in organising the Pune International Marathon, which is now a regular



fixture. New Delhi also hosted the Asian Athletics Championships in 1989 for the first time in the country's history. Elected as the Asian Athletics Association (AAA) president in 2001, he launched Asian Grand Prix Athletics meet in 1990.

He also brought Asian Athletics Championships to Pune in 2013 but lost the AAA president's elections to current chief Dahlan Al Hamad in the polls held just before the continental showpiece at his hometown.

He also organised the World Half Marathon in 2004 in New Delhi after becoming the first Indian to get membership of the World Athletics Council from 2001 to 2013. Kalmadi was honoured with the Association of National Olympic Committees

(ANOC) award in Beijing in 2008 for his role in spreading awareness on Olympic Games. One of the highlights of his IOA tenure was India achieving a historic breakthrough at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, when shooter Abhinav Bindra won the country's first ever individual Olympic gold medal.

In addition, he was also instrumental in starting the Pune International Film Festival, and the Pune Festival during Ganeshotsav.

"...May his contributions to Indian sport always be remembered," read a condolence message from one of Kalmadi's former colleagues, summing up the mixed bag that his tenure ended up being for Indian sports.

Malaysia Open: Lakshya Sen enters 2nd round, Malvika out

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kuala Lumpur

India ace Lakshya Sen made a fine start to the new season, advancing to the men's singles second round with a hard-fought win over Jia Heng Jason Teh of Singapore at the Malaysia Open Super 750 badminton tournament on Tuesday.

The 24-year-old from Almora, who won the Australian Open and also registered a final finish at Hong Kong last season, took 70 minutes to get past world number 21 Teh 21-16 15-21 21-14 in a thrilling opener.

A 2021 world championships bronze medallist, Lakshya, currently ranked World number 13, will next

face either sixth seed Christo Popov of France or Lee Cheuk Yiu of Hong Kong.

In women's singles, Malvika Bansod, returning after a six-month layoff due to a left knee injury, however, suffered a 11-21 11-21 loss to seventh seed Ratchanok Intanon of Thailand, a former world champion in the opening

round. Later in the day, Ayush Shetty, who won the US Open Super 300, will take on Malaysia's Lee Zii Jia, the Paris Olympics bronze-medallist.

Indian men's doubles pair of experienced MR Arjun and 22-year-old Hariharan Amsakarunan will face Japan's Hiroki Midorikawa and Kyohei Yamashita.



Australian open prize money hits record high

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Melbourne

Australian Open prize money has increased by 16 per cent on last year to a record total for the tournament starting January 18.

Organisers of the season's first tennis major on Tuesday announced their largest prize pool ever in local currency, with the total for 2026 set at 111.5 million Australian dollars (US \$75 million). That was up from 96.5 million Australian dollars in 2025.

The women's and men's singles champions will win 4.15 million Australian dollars (\$2.8 million), a 19 per cent increase on last year.

Prize money for the qualifying tournament will increase by 16 per cent and organisers say all main draw singles and doubles players

will get a minimum 10 per cent increase. Tennis Australia chief executive Craig Tiley said the increase "demonstrates our commitment to supporting tennis careers at every level."

"From boosting qualifying prize money by 55 per

cent since 2023 to enhancing player benefits, we're ensuring professional tennis is sustainable for all competitors," Tiley said. "By supporting players at all levels, we're building deeper talent pools and more compelling storylines for fans."



Gvardiol has broken leg and faces months out

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Manchester (England)

Manchester City and Croatia defender Joško Gvardiol needs surgery this week for a fracture to his right leg and faces months out ahead of the World Cup.

The 23-year-old Gvardiol "suffered a tibial fracture to his right leg" in the second half of a 1-1 draw against Chelsea at the weekend, City confirmed in a statement late Monday.

He will have surgery this week and City gave no timetable for his return.



City trails Premier League leader Chelsea by six points and is well set to advance directly to the round of 16 in

the Champions League which resumes in March. The club is fourth in the 36-team standings with two league-phase games left this month at Bodo/Glimt and hosting Galatasaray.

Croatia starts its World Cup group on June 17 against England at the Dallas Cowboys stadium. Croatia then plays Panama in Toronto and Ghana in Philadelphia.

Gvardiol is likely to miss Croatia's visit to the United States in March for warmup games against Colombia and Brazil.

Liam Rosenior leaves Strasbourg

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Strasbourg (France)

Liam Rosenior confirmed his exit from French club Strasbourg on Tuesday and strongly hinted he will be the next Chelsea coach.

Rosenior has been praised for turning Strasbourg, which is part of the same ownership group as Chelsea, into a force in French soccer after a seventh-place finish last season.

Rosenior told a press conference in Strasbourg he has an agreement with Chelsea but has not signed a contract.

"Everything is agreed, it will probably go through in the next few hours," he said. "It looks like I will be the next manager of that football club."

Rosenior's previous jobs include a stint as assistant coach at Derby to Wayne Rooney, who praised his "incredible" work ethic and attention to detail.

"He is more than capable of going into Chelsea and doing a great job," Rooney said on his podcast on Monday. "His detail, how he approaches day to day,

he's as good as I've ever worked with."

The 41-year-old Rosenior has never coached in the Premier League.

Chelsea last week parted company with Enzo Maresca, who spent 18 months in charge.

Moving to Chelsea will bring much



more visibility and pressure for Rosenior.

The fifth permanent coach since BlueCo ownership took over in 2022, Rosenior will inherit a team which is capable of high-level success but has lacked consistency. Chelsea is fifth in the league with a 17-point gap to leader Arsenal. Rosenior could head straight into his first competitive game on Wednesday against Fulham, one of his former clubs as a player.

Interim coach Calum McFarlane laid out one potential challenge when he revealed some players had been left stunned by the decision to move on from Maresca's 18-month tenure.

"Enzo was incredibly successful with this group and some of them were shocked by the decision," McFarlane said on Sunday.

Maresca left after a reported breakdown in his relationships with club management and made cryptic public comments about a lack of support. McFarlane stepped in as interim coach to oversee Sunday's 1-1 draw with Manchester City.

Venus Williams loses in Auckland but shows she's still competitive at 45

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Wellington

Venus Williams has lost her first singles match of 2026 to fifth-seeded Magda Linette at the WTA Tour tournament in Auckland, New Zealand.

The 45-year-old Williams put up a superb show before losing 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 to the No. 52-ranked Linette, who was only two years old when Williams played her first professional singles match.

Tuesday's match was Williams' 1,101st in singles on the WTA Tour. But the competitiveness she showed against a player 12 years her junior will give her confidence as she heads to Australia for the Hobart International and the Australian Open.

The seven-time major champion received wildcard entries into the Auckland tournament and also in Hobart from January 12 and at the first Grand Slam tournament of the year at Melbourne Park.

The Auckland match was Williams' first since she lost

6-3, 2-6, 5-1 to Karolina Muchova in the first round of the U.S. Open last August. She played only three tournaments in 2025, beating Peyton Stearns in July to become the second-oldest woman — behind Martina Navratilova — to win a match on the WTA Tour.



Venus Williams of the US hits a forehand to Magda Linette of Poland during her singles match at the ASB Classic Women's Tennis Tournament in Auckland, New Zealand on Tuesday

Williams appeared fit, moved freely, served seven aces and hit hard on both sides.

"Look at the level she brought. She moved really great," Linette said in a court-

side TV interview. "She was really hitting well, especially when she was running to the open space. "It was really impressive and I really had to stay calm. She pushes you to a spot you don't want to be and that's where I was for a while, so I'm really glad I was able to refresh and

come back with a little bit better game."

Williams, ranked number 582 this week, has been a regular visitor to Auckland in the latter part of her career. She beat Caroline Wozniacki

in the fifth game of the third set.

in the 2015 final for the 41st of her 46 WTA Tour titles. This year, she told reporters, she felt under no pressure.

"The biggest pressure is the one we put on ourselves, right?" Williams said. "And then when you look back and you're like, it wasn't such a big deal."

"So hopefully I can look back with the 20/20 vision while I'm in the present, like just let it go, let it flow, enjoy it and be in the moment. That's not easy to do and that's why people love sports, right?"

Williams started strongly and had her first ace in her opening service game. She was broken by Linette in the fifth game and trailed 5-2 before breaking back.

Linette took the first set in 51 minutes. In the second set, Williams broke in the sixth and 10th games. She hit hard to the corners, then was able to pull out sharp winners down the line. She also went to the net effectively.

Linette broke decisively in the fifth game of the third set.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Rabat

Mohamed Salah scored with the last kick in extra time to seal's Egypt's 3-1 win over Benin in the Africa Cup of Nations last 16, and Nigeria enjoyed a 4-0 rout of Mozambique.

Egypt had to dig deep after being surprisingly held to 1-1 in normal time after Benin's Jodel Dossou pounced on a rebound to level the game in the 83rd minute. "Before the game, I said there are no easy teams, and Benin were a tough opponent," Egypt coach Hossam Hassan said.

The Pharaohs dominated from the start but had to wait till the 69th before Marwan Attia finally made the breakthrough. Attia was involved

again when Yasser Ibrahim met his cross with a looping header to send the ball inside the top left corner in the seventh minute of extra time.

Salah had the final say on a counterattack, shooting past Benin goalkeeper Marcel Dandjinou from outside the penalty box after Zizo played

him through. It was his third goal of the tournament.

Benin coach Gernot Rohr was encouraged by his team's performance without injured forward Steve Mounié. "In a match like this he would have helped us a lot, particularly in aerial play," the German said. "But as

head coach, I am proud of my players. I take away their attitude tonight, their solidarity and fighting spirit. That is very positive for the future of the Cheetahs."

Egypt, which has played every game in Agadir, will stay in the coastal city for a quarterfinal on Saturday against Burkina Faso or defending champion Ivory Coast, who were meeting on Tuesday. The Pharaohs will have an extra day of rest before facing their next opponents as they bid for a record-extending eighth title.

Egypt was dealt a blow before the break when left back Mohamed Hamdy went off on a stretcher with knee injury after his foot connected with Dokou Dodo's head.



India women would be hard to beat in near future: Gardner

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mumbai

She considers Australia the best women's cricket team in the world right now but Ashleigh Gardner is also spooked by the fact that recently-crowned ODI world champion India is well on its way to become a "very hard to beat" side in the coming decade.

Gardner, who was a part of the Australian team which lost to India in the Women's World Cup semifinal last year, said Harmanpreet Kaur and Co are improving by leaps and bounds. "India's going to be one of those teams in the next five to ten years that are going to be very hard to beat," said Gardner, who would be turning up for Gujarat Giants in the Women's Premier League starting January 9.

"It's an exciting prospect, it's scary as an Australian, but I guess knowing that the game is growing so quickly and rapidly over here, it's fantastic to see."

However, Gardner said she still believes Australia is the best team in the world when asked how they processed the defeat to India.

"I've said in the media since that World Cup (and) I'm not denying that I still think we're the best team in the world. World Cups showcase your win in those high-pressure moments," she said.

"If we played any team ten times in a row, I would say that we're probably going to win eight or nine times. That might sound really cocky, but I just believe that we are the best team in the world still. It was a pretty hard defeat playing against a very good side. We know how damaging India can be and we got challenged throughout," she added.

Gardner does not read much into the absence of a frontline Indian batter in Gujarat Giants' camp for the Women's Premier League and insists that it won't come in the way of her side's push to win the coveted event.

While the Giants only have



seamer Renuka Singh Thakur from the Women's World Cup-winning Indian squad in their ranks, they have a star-studded bench of overseas batters in Beth Mooney, Danni Wyatt-Hodge and Sophie Devine to do the heavy-lifting.

"If you look at all the teams, the overseas (batters) do a lot of the heavy-lifting in all regards. I don't

think it's going to be any different in our side," Gardner told the media here during a press conference organised by the franchise. "Certainly we would have loved a more experienced Indian batter, but they're all aligned to other teams and there's plenty of youth within our side."

"Yes, we might not have the likes of Harman (Harmanpreet

I've got faith in certainly helps," Gardner added.

With the women's T20 World Cup to be played later this year in England, Renuka said the Indian players will keep working towards the "next goal".

"We have seen a lot of changes since winning the World Cup. We enjoyed a lot for a month but then the message arrived to start training and we played in the Sri Lanka series," Renuka said.

"Everyone knows what the next goal is and now the standard has been set, we would want to keep it that way."

Renuka admitted she had to work on her mental strength after the first edition of WPL.

"Yes my performances have not been that great (in WPL) but all that is in the past and I cannot keep thinking about it," she said.

"I will try to remain mentally strong because I remember in the first season I was mentally weak, and I worked on it," Renuka added.

India's going to be one of those teams in the next five to ten years that are going to be very hard to beat. I still believe Australia is the best team in the world when asked how they processed the defeat to India

— ASHLEIGH GARDNER

ICC T20 Rankings: Harmanpreet moves up 2 places



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Dubai

India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur on Tuesday moved up two spots to reach 13th position in the latest ICC Women's T20I ranking for batters, following her match-winning knock in the fifth and final game against Sri Lanka in Thiruvananthapuram.

India won the game by 15 runs, making a clean-sweep for the five-match series which concluded on December 30.

Harmanpreet smashed 68 off 43 deliveries to bag the Player of the Match award and moved towards the top 10. Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma continued to hold on to their third and sixth spots respectively as Australia's Beth Mooney extended her stay at the top. Jemimah Rodrigues, however, slipped out of the top 10, and is placed 12th. Deepti Sharma lost the top spot in the fifth T20I was not enough to stop Australia's Annabel Sutherland's climb to the top.

Deepti has one rating point less than Sutherland's 736 as the Australian fast-bowling all-rounder regained the No 1 position, which she first attained in August 2025 when Pakistan spinner Sadia Iqbal had similarly conceded the top spot to her. The bowling rankings also saw Indian left-arm spinner Shree Charani advance five places to 47th.

For Sri Lanka, Kavisha Dilhari (up one place to 32nd) and Chamari Athapaththu (up three places to 48th) gained in the bowling rankings.

Bombay HC halts Maharashtra Cricket Association election

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mumbai

The Bombay High Court has stayed elections to the apex council of the Maharashtra Cricket Association (MCA) scheduled for Tuesday, questioning the way in which 400 new members, including relatives of incumbent president and NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar, were inducted.

A bench of Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam Ankhad noted that the manner in which the entire process of admission of new members was carried out gave a "prima-facie impression that everything was done in a hot haste."

The order came on a bunch of petitions claiming that norms laid down by the Supreme Court for the elections were violated and there was favouritism in adding members to the voters' list released on December 25, 2025.

The new members include Rohit Pawar's wife Kunti and his father-in-law Satish Magar, and NCP (SP) MP Supriya Sule's daughter Revati, the petition stated.

The petitioners, which include former cricketer Kedar Jadhav, alleged that many of the new members had nothing to do with cricket, and they were added only so that some people could run the MCA as their private organisation.

The petitions challenged the election process, terming it "illegal", and claimed there was an "erroneous" inclusion of more than 400 voters in the draft voter list.

"Many of the new members are related to the President and other office-bearers who are at the helm of affairs," the high court noted in the order.

The existing members had no opportunity to raise objections and they were not provided access to the minutes of the



meeting of the Apex Council and Annual General Meeting, it added.

In view of the allegations of illegality, arbitrariness and nepotism, the court was entitled to examine the decision-making process which led to the induction of 400 new members, the judges said.

The court also raised doubts over the large-scale

admission of new members prior to elections.

The induction of 400 new members would certainly affect the election, it said.

"In the circumstances of the case, this Court cannot adopt a hands-off stand and permit the elections scheduled on January 6 to continue. The high court should not permit the illegality to be perpetuated," said the

division bench, asking the electoral officer to not proceed with the election until further orders.

The next hearing would be conducted on February 4.

The court also noted that the object of the MCA was to control and improve the quality and standards of cricket in the state, to lay down policies, to build stadiums of international standards, and so on.

It was debatable whether a person can become a life member of the association merely because he or she has donated funds towards cricket, the HC said.

Senior counsel Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for the MCA, had argued that the newly inducted members had made substantial contributions to the sport by donating crores of rupees, and the rules and regulations of the MCA do not mandate that only a cricketer or a person associated with the sport can be a member.

Mustafizur unlikely to get any compensation

KUSHAN SARKAR ■ Kolkata

Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman is unlikely to receive any financial compensation after being released by Kolkata Knight Riders on the instructions of the BCCI, despite having no role in the circumstances that led to the termination of his contract.

Mustafizur was bought by KKR for ₹9.20 crore at the IPL auction following competitive bids from Chennai Super Kings and Delhi Capitals. The Indian Board didn't specify the reasons for its decision and merely stated that it was necessitated by "the developments all around".

In a retaliatory move, the Bangladesh Cricket Board has demanded the shifting of their T20 World Cup games from India to Sri Lanka.



While the move has triggered debate over the player's rights, especially since he neither voluntarily pulled out of the competition nor was accused of any wrongdoing, sources say the existing insurance framework leaves little room for compensation.

"The salaries of all IPL players are insured. For foreign international players, normally the franchise pays if he is injured after joining the camp or during the course of the tournament."

"Normally up to 50 percent is paid from insurance. It is better for India's injured centrally contracted cricketers who normally get paid by the BCCI," an IPL source in the know of things told PTI on condition of anonymity.

However, Mustafizur's case does not fall under the standard insurance clauses. Since the release was not due to injury or a cricketing reason linked to participation in the league, KKR are not contractually bound to pay him any amount. (PTI)



Double ton for Aman Rao against Bengal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Rajkot

US-born Aman Rao underlined his prowess as a big hitter with a scintillating unbeaten double century to propel Hyderabad to a commanding 352 for 5 against Bengal in a Group B match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy on Tuesday.

The 21-year-old Rao, who was

signed by Rajasthan Royals at the IPL auction, smashed 12 fours and 13 sixes en route to his 200 not out from 109 balls, achieved in just his third List A appearance.

It was the second double century of this edition of the tournament, after Odisha's Swastik Samal had struck 212 against Saurashtra last December.

Sent in to bat, Rao tore apart a Bengal bowling attack featur-

ing Mohammed Shami (3/70), Akash Deep (0/78) and Mukesh Kumar (0/55), scoring 120 of his runs off the trio with a display of power and class.

Rao put on 104 runs for the opening wicket with Rahul Singh (65) and later added 87 runs with skipper Tilak Varma (34).

He brought up his double hundred in style, smashing a six off the final ball of the innings.

Glenn Phillips explores left-arm batting to counter left-arm spin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Gearing up for the upcoming T20 World Cup in India, explosive New Zealand batter Glenn Phillips believes his increasingly refined left-handed batting offers a glimpse of the future, particularly as a weapon against left-arm spin.

Known for his out-of-the-box approach, Phillips turned heads during a New Zealand Super Smash clash against Central Districts last Tuesday, smashing an

unbeaten 90 for Otago. What stunned spectators and the opponents alike was not just the innings, but the manner in which he dismantled left-arm spinner Jayden Lennox — batting left-handed, including a six over extra cover that would have sailed over midwicket had he stood in his usual right-handed stance.

"I do enjoy my left-handed batting training," Phillips was quoted saying in ESPNcricinfo.

"Obviously, I do it for multiple reasons. One, just to



keep both hands and both sides of the brain working, but also just for the opportunity to, I guess, take down left-arm spin at some stage."

In modern day cricket, the ball turning away from the batter is considered a favourable match-up, prompting teams to prioritise left-arm orthodox spinners given the predominance of right-handed batters. Explaining his innovation to New Zealand Cricket, Phillips said it has been "a couple of years" in the making. "It's more of a

future thing," he said.

"But for the opportunity to come in a game where there's going to be a lot of left-arm off-spin bowling, I guess it sort of made sense to give it a go and bring it back to the forefront of the training leading into that game. And the fact that the opportunity came during the game to use it was quite good." Phillips admitted that several factors need to align before he fully unleashes his inner left-hander in competitive cricket. "It's just trusting

the training and understanding that I've just got to watch the ball as much as possible and I guess know that I've done the work and I've done the preparation and so there's no reason it shouldn't work," he said.

"But also, I guess, I generally have used it in the situation where there's nothing left to lose. There's a couple overs left and it's now time for a bit of fun, I guess, really." New Zealand's white-ball tour of India begins with an ODI in Vadodara on Sunday.

DC told me not to change my game in WPL: Chinelle Henry

HIMANK NEGI ■ New Delhi

West Indies all-rounder Chinelle Henry believes the upcoming Women's Premier League (WPL) season starting later this week is vital for her preparation for the international season ahead.

In seven WPL matches in 2025, she scored 163 runs at a strike rate close to 196, including a blistering 62, and picked up six wickets with her medium-pace bowling after coming in as a replacement for UP Warriorz's Alyssa Healy.

Her blend of explosive



batting and useful bowling led to Delhi Capitals spending Rs 1.3 crore to secure her services in the players' auction. "This competition is definitely good preparation.

There are a few of us here — myself, Deandra (Dottin) and Hayley (Mathews) — and it's also a chance to cement our spots and give the selectors something to think about before the World Cup," Henry told PTI Videos.

"Being selected shows that the job I did last year was appreciated. This team has reached the final three times, so the goal is to go one step further." On her role with the team, Henry said conversations with captain Jemimah Rodrigues and the coaching staff have been clear and encouraging. (PTI)

I never played cricket with baggage: De Kock on his return

G UNNIKISHNAN ■ Cape Town

Quinton de Kock seems to have found another gear since his return to cricket and the South African attributed the new-found freedom in his batting to a mind without any "baggage."

De Kock decided to come in from the cold in October 2025 during a T20I match against Namibia after retiring from Tests and ODIs, while his future in the shortest format was also unknown after staying away from it since the T20 World Cup final in 2024. "I don't think I've ever played cricket with baggage. My mindset has always been about trying to

win. If I turn up mentally switched on, I'm satisfied, whether I succeed or fail," De Kock told select media after a SA20 match between his side Sunrisers Eastern Cape and Pretoria Capitals here.

"The only time I'm disappointed is when I'm not mentally present and make unnecessary mistakes," he added. True to his words, the left-hander has been in good touch in both ODIs and T20s since his return to SA fold.

In six ODIs, three each against Pakistan and India, De Kock has made 353 runs at an average of 70.60, while 8 T20Is (4 vs India, 3 vs Pakistan and 1 vs Namibia) have yielded 187 runs at a



strike-rate close to 140.

Now, De Kock wants to translate his current form and knowledge of Indian conditions to the benefit of South Africa in the upcoming

T20 World Cup. "I know the conditions very well. I've been touring India for many years now. If I don't understand the conditions by now, then I haven't done some-

thing right. "My role going into the World Cup is to share that knowledge with the younger players, especially those who haven't played at certain venues," he said. South Africa had a successful visit to India recently where they won the Test series 2-0, and ran the home side close in the white ball leg.

But the 33-year-old felt that that tour will have no bearing on South Africa's outing in the World Cup.

"Form honestly means very little when it comes to World Cups. I've seen players with no form come in and score heavily, and players in great form struggle.