

No rift with DK Shivakumar, Siddaramaiah calls him brother

6



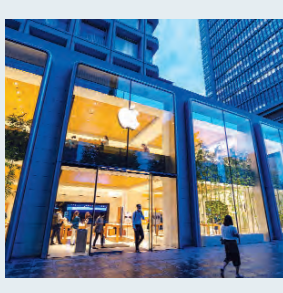
Should intruders be given red carpet welcome, asks SC

7



Biting the apple after cooking it

13



Floods in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand kill over 1,300

11



Facing Kohli, Rohit nothing new, but it bolsters India: Temba Bavuma

12



PIONEER IN SHORT

MAHARASHTRA POLL COUNTING HALTED

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday restrained the Maharashtra State Election Commission (SEC) from counting votes cast in the first phase of local body elections on December 3, ruling that early results could influence voter behaviour in the second phase scheduled for December 20. The court said results from both phases must be declared together, prompting the SEC to announce that counting for all 288 municipal councils and nagar panchayats will now begin at 10 am on December 21. A division bench of Justices Anil Kilor and Rajnish Vyas also barred the publication of exit-poll results until 30 minutes after polling ends on December 20. The hearings stem from petitions challenging the SEC's revised poll schedule after irregularities led to rescheduling elections in 24 local bodies. Petitioners argued staggered counting violated principles of free and fair elections. The court maintained the model code of conduct will remain in force until results are declared and will hear the matter again on December 10.

SANCHAR SAATHI APP MANDATE CLARIFIED

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

A day after the Department of Telecom (DoT) mandated Sanchar Saathi application on all new mobile phones, Union Minister for Telecom Jyotiraditya Scindia clarified, "If you want, you can activate it; if you don't, then don't activate it... If you don't want Sanchar Sathi, you can delete it. It's not mandatory. It is optional." The minister was speaking outside the Parliament. His clarification came after the Opposition raised privacy concerns and fears of State surveillance. They also demanded the immediate rollback of this direction.

Scindia added that the app involves no spying or call monitoring and that the motive behind the direction was only to ensure wider access to a tool designed to curb cyber fraud. The DoT order dated November 28, addressed to all manufacturers and importers of mobile handsets that are intended for use in India, stated, "Ensure that the pre-installed Sanchar Saathi application is readily



Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia speaking at the Parliament in New Delhi on Tuesday

PTI

visible and accessible to the end users at the time of first use or device set up and that its functions are not disabled or restricted."

BJP MP and national spokesperson Sambit Patra also reiterated the Government's clarification that users would be free to

delete the app from their mobile devices if they do not want to use it.

Taking a dig at the Congress, he said, "I know who will delete it... *Chor ki dadhi mein tinka* (a guilty conscience needs no accuser). You know very well who they are. An FIR has also been filed

against them. They have swindled ₹5,000 crore. At present, they are out on bail."

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, however, alleged that the Government's move is yet another attempt by the BJP to strangle the voice of the people and is akin to dictatorship.

Delhi, Moscow prepare high-stakes agenda

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Russian President Vladimir Putin's forthcoming visit to India is shaping up to be one of the most consequential diplomatic engagements in the Indo-Pacific this year, with Moscow signalling an ambitious agenda spanning defence modernisation, energy security, nuclear cooperation and trade expansion. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov, speaking during an online media briefing organised by Sputnik News in New Delhi, Peskov indicated that the trip is likely to produce "significant outcomes" and further anchor a relationship built on trust and mutual respect.

Peskov underscored the political depth of the India-Russia relationship, calling it a partnership forged "shoulder to shoulder" through decades of geopolitical change. The visit, he said, will consolidate a shared approach to global affairs, one that both capitals frame as rooted in sovereignty, stability and the rule of law.

At the core of the talks will be defence cooperation, still the anchor of bilateral ties, even as India diversifies its military suppliers. Peskov said Moscow is ready to deepen



FILE PHOTO

INDIA EYES S-500, SU-57

New Delhi: Russian President Vladimir Putin's December 4-5 visit to India will focus on expanding high-end defence cooperation, new nuclear energy initiatives and counter-terrorism coordination. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said talks will include India's possible acquisition of an additional S-400 air-defence system and exploration of the Su-57 fifth-generation fighter jet. He noted Russia's

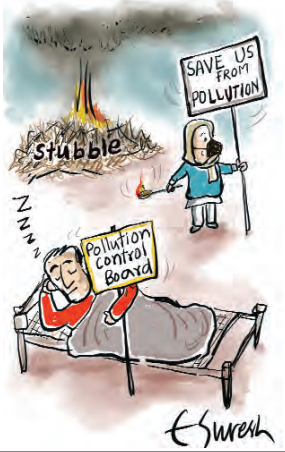
readiness for deeper military collaboration, citing the BrahMos joint missile programme as a model for co-development and advanced technology sharing. Russia is also expected to propose new projects in civilian nuclear energy, including small, flexible reactors, while seeking to build on ongoing work at the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant.

high-technology defence collaboration, reaffirming that discussions are expected on advanced systems including the S-400 long-range air-defence system and the Su-57 fifth-generation fighter jet. Despite India's expanding

procurement from Western suppliers, Russia-built platforms continue to account for roughly a third of India's arsenal, a figure Moscow sees as a base for renewed cooperation rather than a peak.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

The ByStander



IMRAN MENTALLY TORTURED: SISTER

Imran Khan's sister, Dr Uzma Khan, said on Tuesday that the former Pakistan prime minister is in "perfectly fine" physical health but is being subjected to "mental torture" in solitary confinement at Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail. Her remarks followed a rare meeting after more than a month of the family being denied access, sparking widespread rumours about the 73 year old PTI leader's condition. Uzma claimed Khan is kept confined for most of the day, allowed limited time outdoors, and barred from communicating with anyone. Adiala Jail authorities maintain that Khan is in good health.

FOUR RECORDS BROKEN AT KIUG

At the Khelo India University Games (KIUG) in Rajasthan, four meet records were broken on the second day of athletics, with two from Chandigarh University athletes. Rahul of Chandigarh University set a new men's 20km race walk record with 1:25:43, surpassing the 2022 mark. Deepika of Chandigarh University broke the women's javelin throw record with 55.53m, while Ruchir Mori of Swarnim Gujarat Sports University improved the men's 400m hurdles mark to 51.00 seconds. Lovely Professional University's Jyoti raised the women's high jump record to 1.77m. Guru Nanak Dev University continued leading the medal tally with 31 golds, followed by Chandigarh University (22) and Lovely Professional University (23).

PMO to move to Seva Teerth

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The upcoming new complex housing the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) will be called Seva Teerth-1, the first of three newly built structures in Executive Enclave-1, located adjacent to Vayu Bhawan.

The official residence and principal workplace of the PM, currently, is 7, Lok Kalyan Marg. Earlier, it was 7, Race Course Road.

The remaining buildings in Executive Enclave-1, Seva Teerth-2 and Sewa Teerth-3, will host the Cabinet Secretariat, the National Security Advisor's Office and the India House, which will be a venue for high-level talks with visiting dignitaries.

The development came a day after nine States and a Union Territory renamed their Governor and Lieutenant Governor's residence from Raj Bhawan, Raj Niwas to Lok Bhawan, Lok Niwas, following a directive from Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

In a letter to principal secretaries or secretaries to State Governors and Lieutenant Governors of UTs, the MHA cited the suggestion as the word Raj Bhavan smacked of colonialism. West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Gujarat, Telangana and Tripura have effected the change and renamed 'Raj Bhavan' as 'Lok Bhavan'.

DGCA grounds AI A320 plane

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has grounded an Air India (AI) aircraft and an aircraft maintenance engineer after the airline reported that the aircraft had operated eight revenue sectors on an expired Airworthiness Review Certificate (ARC). The Airbus A320 remains grounded pending DGCA investigation.

AI has also set up a committee to decide on possible action against pilots who were involved in operating

THE LAPSE OCCURRED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ONGOING MERGER OF VISTARA INTO AIR INDIA, THE MINISTRY SAID

the aircraft, sources said. The airline acting on DGCA's directions, has initiated an internal investigation to identify system gaps, accountability failures and corrective measures to prevent similar incidents in the future.

AI Accountable Manager and Director of Flight

Operations Manish Uppal has sent out a communication to all pilots, reminding them of their responsibility regarding document validation, sources said. However, some pilots are not happy with the communication, claiming that it amounts to "passing the buck" for the violations that have happened with respect to the A320 neo plane operations.

Earlier, in a press statement, the ministry explained that the lapse occurred in the context of the ongoing merger of Vistara into Air India.

MEA sets tone for Putin visit

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Senior officials in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Tuesday outlined the key priorities for Russian President Vladimir Putin's upcoming visit, emphasising that the summit will be driven primarily by economic and trade objectives, alongside efforts to stabilise the widening trade imbalance and advance a long-awaited skilled mobility pact.

"This is an important visit, and the leaders will review the entire spectrum of the relationship," a senior MEA official said. "India and Russia have been one of the most stable relationships in modern times. It has contributed to peace and stability, and on both sides there is a deep understanding of how important this partnership is."

Officials said the summit will place strong emphasis on increasing bilateral trade and correcting India's mounting deficit. India hopes to expand exports of pharmaceuticals, agriculture and marine products, processed foods and consumer goods. Talks have also included the export of potatoes, pomegranates and additional marine products.

A key deliverable expected during the visit is the finalised pact enabling the mobility of skilled and semi-skilled Indian workers to Russia. "The document has been finalised and is going through internal processes," an MEA official confirmed, noting the arrangement aligns with Russia's labour requirements.

India is also expanding its diplomatic footprint within Russia.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Government, Opposition strike a truce on SIR debate

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ New Delhi

The Union Government and the Opposition parties on Tuesday agreed to end the logjam in Parliament and resolved to have a discussion on Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in both the Houses—Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. The truce came after a series of adjournments and walkouts by the Opposition benches, following which an all-party meeting and a Business Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting were convened, chaired by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

Both sides also reached a consensus to debate on the 150th anniversary of the

national song Vande Mataram. While the treasury benches pressed to debate Vande Mataram first and then the electoral reforms, the Opposition insisted vice versa. Before the standoff in the Rajya Sabha post lunch session, Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge said Vande Mataram comes from us (Congress), not from them (BJP), to which Chairman CP Radhakrishnan said, "Vande Mataram is for everyone".

After the all-party meeting, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said Lok Sabha will take up a debate on the 150th anniversary of the National Song 'Vande Mataram' on Monday and on electoral



Union Minister Kiren Rijiju arriving as Opposition leaders protest against SIR at the Parliament complex

PTI

reforms on Tuesday.

After discussion on both issues in the lower house, it will be held in the Rajya Sabha thereafter.

"During the All Party Meeting Chaired by Speaker Lok Sabha, it has been decided to hold discussion in Lok Sabha on the 150th

Anniversary of National Song 'Vande Mataram' from 12 Noon on Monday, 8th December and discussion on Election Reforms from 12 noon on Tuesday, 9th December," Rijiju said in a statement.

Simultaneously, floor leaders from the Opposition parties will meet on Wednesday morning in the chamber of the Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, to discuss their joint strategy in Parliament. Sources said TMC has not been participating in the meetings of Opposition parties since Monday.

Rijiju said after both the discussions are over, "We will propose to take it up in the Rajya Sabha". "In any case, the

discussion can be initiated in either of the Houses. But we have decided that it will be taken up in the Lok Sabha first. Otherwise, both Houses have the privilege to take up any matter. After all, they are complementary to each other; both Houses are extremely important," he said.

Earlier in the day, Rijiju met floor leaders of political parties but refused to give a timeline for the discussion on electoral reforms, contending that the opposition cannot dictate terms to the Government. Rijiju is learnt to have ruled out a discussion on SIR, contending that it was an administrative matter of the Election Commission and the Government had no role in it.

Admiral Tripathi on the high-tempo sea watch that changed Operation Sindoor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Navy's aggressive posturing during Operation Sindoor forced Pakistan Navy to remain confined to its ports and coastline, Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi said here on Tuesday.

He also disclosed this action by the Indian Navy resulted in a dip in Pakistan's economy as many reputed merchant shipping companies avoided its ports during the intense action. Moreover, these companies were not willing to pay increase a hike in insurance premiums for their ships, the Navy chief said.

Addressing the annual news conference ahead of the Navy Day on December 4, he also said China did not help Pakistan during Operation Sindoor. However, Pakistan used Chinese-made equipment during the military action.

Stating that Operation Sindoor was still ongoing, Admiral Tripathi said he will not be able to disclose more details adding the force learnt several lessons during the action and analyzing them to further hone readiness. He also mentioned about the high level of synergy between Navy, IAF and Army during the military action.



Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi addressing a press conference ahead of Navy Day

PANKAJ KUMAR

He also informed that the Navy continues to maintain a high tempo of operations in the region. Also, focus is to further enhance maritime domain awareness to respond to any challenge, and Pakistan does not do anything inimical, Admiral Tripathi said. "We know where Pakistani units are deployed," he said and ruled out any chance of retaliation.

As regards the Navy's role in Operation Sindoor, the Navy chief said deployment of India's carrier battle group in the North Arabian Sea during the four-day action forced Pakistan to remain confined its ports and Makran coastline.

Indian Navy's action, moreover, had a significant impact on Pakistan's economy as several shipping companies avoided Pakistan, he said. The Navy chief said there was a dip of ten to 15 per cent in maritime trade of Pakistan.

As regards the ongoing modernisation of the Navy, Admiral Tripathi said the process to seal the proposed acquisition of six stealth submarines under Project 75 India (P75-I) is nearing completion.

He also said that the Navy will get the first four of the 26 Rafale-M fighter jets in 2028. India had inked the ₹64,000 crore deal with France in April to procure the jets.

MP Assembly clears law for direct election of municipal council heads

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh Assembly on Tuesday passed the Madhya Pradesh Municipal Amendment Bill, 2025, clearing the way for the return of direct elections for presidents of municipal councils and nagar parishads from the 2027 urban body polls. The legislation was approved by voice vote after an extended debate that saw both the government and the Opposition underline the need for stronger, more accountable urban governance. Moving the Bill, Urban Development and Housing Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya said the provision restores a system that functioned in the state between 1999 and 2015 and had proven its democratic value. He argued that chairpersons elected

by the entire electorate, rather than by councillors in an indirect poll, demonstrate broader accountability, greater responsiveness and a city-wide developmental outlook. According to him, indirect elections had often produced leaders who focused narrowly on ward-level considerations instead of the collective needs of the municipality. “Urban bodies are the first step of democracy, and their empowerment strengthens the democratic fabric,” he told the House. One of the most debated elements was the amendment to the Right to Recall provision. The minimum period after which recall proceedings may be initiated has been increased from two-and-a-half years to three years. Vijayvargiya said elected chairpersons deserve a reasonable window to demonstrate their

work before facing any recall attempt, and that premature motions often destabilise civic administration. Under the new rules, recall proceedings can begin only if three-fourths of the councillors sign a proposal to the Collector, and removal will require more than half of the total electorate of the municipal area to vote in favour of recall through a secret ballot. The Opposition Congress did not resist the direct-election mechanism and instead offered suggestions to make the recall process more transparent, emphasising the need for safeguards to protect it from misuse. Several MLAs, including Jayawardhan Singh, Arif Masood, Phool Singh Baraiya, Shailendra Jain, Dhruvnarayan Singh and Leader of the Opposition Umang Singhar, participated actively in the debate.



Survivor gas victims take out a torch rally on the 41st anniversary of gas disaster, in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

Youth stabs two BMC workers in anti-encroachment action

Bhopal: Shyamla Hills police have registered a case against an unidentified shopkeeper who attacked two Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) employees with a knife during an anti-encroachment drive on Tuesday afternoon. The assailant, who had been selling helmets on the footpath near Polytechnic intersection and MLB College, fled after the attack. According to encroachment officer Shailendra Singh Bhadoria, a routine drive was underway around noon when the team asked the youth to remove his goods from the pavement. He allegedly resisted, became aggressive and suddenly drew a knife. Mohammad Akbar, one of the BMC employees, raised his hand in defence and suffered a deep cut. When colleague Ramesh Rathore attempted to intervene, the

accused slashed him across the face. Both injured employees, bleeding heavily, reached Shyamla Hills police station where a case was registered for assault and obstructing government work. They were then taken to Hamidia Hospital for treatment. Doctors said their condition is stable but both require stitches and follow-up care. Police teams are examining CCTV footage from the vicinity to identify the accused. Officers said he took advantage of the commotion to escape from the spot. Senior BMC officials condemned the attack, stating that violence against staff engaged in lawful anti-encroachment operations would be dealt with strictly. They also said such drives will continue across the city as planned, despite the incident.

Push to speed up Simhashtha projects

Ujjain: The Simhashtha preparations gained momentum on Tuesday as Divisional Commissioner and Simhashtha Fair Officer Ashish Singh reviewed key infrastructure works at the Simhashtha Fair Office. The meeting assessed progress on the Kanha Closed Duct, Sewer Khedi-Silar Khedi works, ghat development, and projects under the Electricity Board, Building Construction, Rural Mechanical Services, Tourism and Forest departments. Singh instructed officials to complete all blasting-related tasks within deadlines, deploy additional cranes to speed up work on the Kanha Closed Duct, and fast-track projects requiring railway clearance. He emphasised close coordination among departments to ensure timely completion.

Child marriages rising in MP, minister unaware

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

A serious contradiction emerged in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly on Tuesday when Women and Child Development Minister Nirmala Bhuria claimed she had ‘no information’ about the rising incidents of child marriage in the state—despite the fact that the data had been officially submitted in a written response by her own department. The issue came up during Question Hour when the opposition raised alarm over the steady year-on-year increase in child marriage cases. According to figures placed before the House, Madhya Pradesh recorded 450 cases in 2021, 519 in 2022, 528 in 2023 and 529 in 2024. This year, 538 cases have already been reported,

reflecting an upward trend that shows no sign of slowing. However, when questioned, Minister Bhuria said, “No such question was raised in the Assembly. I have no such information,” adding that she would inquire into the source of the data—despite it being an official departmental submission. The opposition criticised the government for what it called a disturbing disconnect between the ministry and ground realities. Former minister and Congress MLA Jaivardhan Singh said the figures “clearly indicate that awareness and enforcement mechanisms are failing,” adding, “Who will ensure the safety of daughters if the government itself is unaware of the crisis?” The debate came days after child-rights organisation Just

Cong protests in Assembly on farm distress

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

The winter session of the Madhya Pradesh Assembly witnessed sharp political confrontation on Tuesday as the Congress Legislative Party, led by Leader of the Opposition Umang Singhar, staged a dramatic protest highlighting what it called the BJP government’s persistent neglect of farmers. MLAs arrived at the Assembly precincts carrying a symbolic tableau titled “Chidiya Chug Gayi Khet”—depicting a farm already stripped bare—meant to illustrate how, in their view, the government’s failures have left farmers’ labour, hopes and harvests devastated. The demonstration drew considerable attention, capturing the frustration brewing among cultivators across the state. Speaking to reporters, Singhar said farmers in Madhya Pradesh continue to struggle for basic entitlements such as fertiliser, fair prices for their produce and timely compensation for crop losses. “The farmer, the provider of food for the nation, is being pushed from pillar to post,” he said. “While the government keeps rattling the tune of Bhavantar, the ground reality is that the farmer is left abandoned and betrayed.” He added that the tableau symbolised the BJP



government itself as the “bird” that had ravaged the fields. “The government has already emptied the farmer’s barn,” he remarked, accusing it of failing to protect farmers’ economic interests at a time of growing hardship. Congress legislators said they would continue to raise farmers’ issues forcefully inside and outside the House and vowed to take the struggle for farmers’ rights to a “decisive conclusion.” The protest marks yet another escalation in the Opposition’s strategy to corner the government during the short winter session, particularly on matters of rural distress and agricultural policy.

QR codes to help citizens reach police

Bhopal: The Bhopal Police on Tuesday launched a citizen-friendly QR code system aimed at making police services more accessible, transparent and responsive. Police Commissioner Harinarayan Chari Mishra announced the initiative during a press conference at the Commissionerate, calling it a step toward “dynamic and people-centric policing.” Under the new system, QR codes have been installed at all police stations in the city. By scanning them, residents can directly send complaints, information, grievances or suggestions related to their local police station to the Office of the Commissioner of Police. Issues that can be reported include traffic concerns, law-and-order problems, pending complaints or general feedback on police functioning. Officials said the mechanism is

expected to speed up grievance redressal, reduce unnecessary visits to police stations and strengthen public trust by ensuring that concerns reach senior officials without intermediaries. The commissioner clarified, however, that the QR service is not an emergency response tool like Dial-112. It will primarily register non-emergency issues, which will then be prioritised and resolved based on urgency. Emergency situations, he emphasised, must still be reported through the dedicated helpline. The police appealed to citizens to make active use of the facility, stating, “This is your police — your suggestions will help us serve you better.” The QR codes have been placed prominently at police stations and are also being circulated through official social media channels to maximise public reach.



Members of the Sambhavna Trust Clinic, providing free medical care to survivors, with the photographs of gas victims who lost their lives pay homage during a candlelight vigil near the now defunct Union Carbide factory on the 41st anniversary of gas tragedy in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

Youth held for killing man, staging hit-and-run to mislead police

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Kolar police on Tuesday arrested a 25-year-old man who allegedly murdered a 48-year-old resident and then tried to mislead authorities by reporting the death as a hit-and-run accident. The incident occurred late Monday near a liquor shop in Sarvadhama Colony along Kolar Road. Police said the Dial-112 control room received a call around midnight claiming that an unidentified man had been run over by a vehicle and that the body was lying on the roadside. A team rushed to the spot but found no tyre marks, skid impressions or other signs typical of a road accident. The victim had deep head injuries inconsistent with a vehicular collision, immediately raising doubts about the caller’s version. An FSL team was summoned, and forensic examination confirmed that the injuries were caused by blunt-force trauma consistent with being hit by a stone. The deceased was identified as Kanhaiya Singh Lodhi, 48, a resident of Gandhi Nagar. With inconsistencies mounting, investigators turned their attention to the caller himself. Police used tower location data to trace and detain 25-year-old Nitesh

Vishwakarma alias Nanna, a resident of Sector Dakheda in Kolar. Nitesh initially insisted that he had merely reported an accident he had witnessed. However, sustained interrogation, CCTV footage from nearby establishments and technical analysis contradicted his claims. Confronted with the evidence, he allegedly confessed to the murder. Police said Nitesh told interrogators that his sister had died by suicide several years ago, and that Kanhaiya Lodhi frequently taunted him over the incident. According to the accused, Kanhaiya—often under the influence of alcohol—would repeatedly hurl derogatory remarks about his deceased sister, accusing her of character flaws and blaming Nitesh’s family. On the night of December 1, after another round of insults, Nitesh allegedly lost control, picked up a stone and struck Kanhaiya on the head, killing him on the spot. To conceal the crime, he called Dial-112 and fabricated a hit-and-run story. Police have booked Nitesh under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita for murder and destruction of evidence. The investigation is continuing.

Fresh initiatives unveiled on Disability Day

Bhopal: On the occasion of World Disability Day, the Social Justice and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Department organised a state-level programme at the Directorate auditorium, led by Principal Secretary Sonali Vayangankar. The event underscored the government’s commitment to equality, rights and long-term empowerment of persons with disabilities. Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Dr Ajay Khemariya, was also present. In her address, Principal Secretary Vayangankar said that persons with disabilities do not require sympathy but deserve equal opportunities, dignity and full participation in society. She stressed that the government is focused on improving access to quality education, strengthening skill development and expanding employment avenues to help persons with disabilities become economically independent. Vayangankar also highlighted ongoing efforts to make workplaces more accessible and disability-inclusive across sectors. As a significant step in this direction, an MoU was signed with Atypical Advantage, an organisation working to enhance employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Four-storey garment factory engulfed in fire; stock and machinery gutted

PNS ■ Jabalpur

A major fire gutted a four-storey shirt manufacturing unit in Jabalpur’s busy Lordganj area on Tuesday afternoon, destroying large quantities of garments, raw fabric and machinery in what officials described as one of the city’s biggest firefighting operations in recent years. The unit, owned by businessman Tarun Jain, was closed for its weekly holiday when the blaze broke out. With no staff inside, the fire spread rapidly through the building, which was packed with highly combustible cloth rolls, finished shirts, packaging material and chemical dyes. Dense smoke and flames erupting from the rear of the structure alerted locals, who immediately raised an alarm. The fire brigade received the call around 2:30 pm and deployed more than 24 fire tenders and over 150 personnel. Despite continuous dousing efforts from multiple sides, the blaze remained difficult to contain for several hours due to the heavy fuel load on each floor. Jabalpur Municipal Corporation Commissioner

Ramprakash Ahirwar, accompanied by senior civic and police officials, supervised the operation on site. Electricity to the building was cut off as a precaution, and neighbouring residential units and commercial establishments were evacuated. Officials confirmed that no casualties or injuries occurred. By evening, authorities said the fire was largely under control, though cooling operations would continue through the night. A detailed assessment of damage will begin on Wednesday once the building becomes safe to enter. Loss estimates vary widely. The factory owner reported damage of over Rs 1 crore, while local traders placed the figure at Rs 60–70 lakh. Fire department and municipal officials suggested the total loss could be between Rs 1.5 crore and Rs 2 crore, given the extensive damage to stock and equipment. The cause of the fire remains unclear. Preliminary indications point to a possible electrical short-circuit, but forensic experts and police investigators are examining all angles, including any possibility of foul play.



Students participate in a rifle shooting competition during 69th state level school games, in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

Poacher held in South Panna with 10 kg deer meat

Bhopal: The South Panna Forest Division arrested a poacher late Monday night after he was caught hunting a deer using an illegal electric wire trap. Forest officials recovered nearly 10 kilograms of freshly butchered deer meat from the spot. Acting on a tip-off, a patrol team from the Saleha Range, led by Range Officer Jitu Singh Baghel, raided a forest patch near Bandora village. As the team closed in, three suspects attempt-

ed to flee. Forest staff managed to nab one of them, identified as Rahul Balmiki, while his two accomplices escaped into the forest under cover of darkness. South Panna Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Anupam Sharma said the arrested accused has admitted to killing the deer with the help of the two absconding men. Forest officials seized the meat along with a wooden peg, bamboo poles and electric wire used to rig the lethal trap.

Rahul Balmiki has been taken into custody at the Saleha Range office, where interrogation and evidence collection are underway. Multiple teams have been deployed to track down the two fugitives. Forest authorities have urged nearby villagers to report any suspicious activity, warning that strict action under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 will be taken against anyone involved in poaching or assisting wildlife offenders.

Cabinet extends urban infra scheme

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh Cabinet, on Tuesday approved a series of significant decisions aimed at strengthening urban infrastructure, improving rural connectivity, and streamlining recruitment processes in the Transport Department.

One of the key decisions was the approval of an additional Rs 500 crore for the Chief Minister Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme, which has now been extended until 2026-27. The scheme forms a major pillar of the state's urban development programme and supports essential civic works such as potable water supply, sanitation systems, street lighting, construction of roads and drains, development of cremation grounds, community buildings, night shelters and sports grounds.

Officials informed the Cabinet that under the scheme, 1,062 projects worth Rs 1,070 crore have been sanctioned so far. Of these, 325 projects have been completed, 407 are currently under execution, while the remaining 330 projects are at various stages of DPR approval and tendering. With the infusion of additional funds, the government aims to expedite the pace of ongoing works and ensure timely creation of urban amenities across municipalities and town councils. The Chief Minister emphasised that strengthening basic infrastructure in urban areas remains a high priority for the government.

The Cabinet also approved supplementary expenditure for completing remaining works under the Madhya Pradesh Rural Connectivity External Aided Project. An additional Rs 9.45 crore has been sanctioned, over and above the previously

approved Rs 12.32 crore, to ensure that no sanctioned rural road project is left incomplete. Officials noted that improved connectivity is critical for enhancing rural livelihoods and mobility.

In another significant administrative decision, the Cabinet approved revised eligibility provisions concerning candidates selected as Transport Sub-Inspectors through the State Services Examination 2022 conducted by the MP Public Service Commission. Of the 29 selected candidates, 25 will be issued appointment orders, subject to the condition that they submit two mandatory qualifications—a one-year computer diploma and a valid driving licence—within their two-year probation period. The Cabinet made it explicit that failure to furnish these qualifications within the stipulated time will lead to immediate termination of service with

EOW action after Jabalpur firm fakes certificate for Rs 226cr bids

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh Economic Offences Wing (EOW) has registered a criminal case against a Jabalpur-based construction company and its directors for allegedly obtaining high-value government tenders using forged documents. The action follows an investigation that confirmed that Kailash Devbuild India Pvt Ltd used a fabricated performance certificate to secure contracts worth Rs 226 crore from the Madhya Pradesh Power Transmission Company Limited (MPPTCL).

According to officials, a complaint received by EOW Jabalpur alleged that the company's promoters had submitted a fake performance certificate to qualify for major transmission and substation infrastructure projects. The probe revealed

that managing director Kailash Kumar Shukla and directors Seema Shukla and Bhanu Shukla—residents of Hathital Colony, Jabalpur—submitted a forged document purportedly issued by InoxWind Infrastructure Services Ltd, Noida, dated March 2, 2017. The forged certificate enabled the firm to win MPPTCL tenders numbered TR-36/16, TR-13/20 and TR-35/20 for the construction of high-tension lines and 220 kV substations—contracts normally awarded only to companies with proven technical capability.

During verification, InoxWind's Noida corporate office confirmed that no such certificate had ever been issued to Kailash Devbuild India Pvt Ltd. This confirmation exposed the fraudulent use of forged documents to obtain government contracts.



Madhya Pradesh Congress President Jitu Patwari, Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly Umang Singhar and other party leaders attended a dinner hosted by former Chief Minister Kamal Nath at his residence in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo



Vehicles were stuck in a traffic jam at the busiest Hamidia Road in the old city locality in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

Chaddi Baniyan gang strikes in city

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Miscreants suspected to be members of the notorious Chaddi Baniyan Gang struck Indraprastha Colony late Monday night, fleeing with valuables worth around Rs 50,000. The gang reportedly attempted to break into three houses but managed to loot only one.

The theft came to light when resident Ram Mohan Patil found locks broken and discovered silver coins, silver utensils and cash missing from his home. He immediately filed a complaint with police.

CCTV footage from the neighbourhood shows two men wearing only vests and underwear—a trademark of the Chaddi Baniyan Gang—moving through the area during the night.

Bulldozers roll on Vanaraj Resort encroaching govt land near PTR

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

The Seoni district administration on Tuesday launched a sweeping demolition drive against three high-end resorts accused of illegally occupying government land near the Pench Tiger Reserve, marking one of the most significant enforcement actions in the region in recent years. Bulldozers moved in early in the day at Vanaraj Resort, where teams from the revenue department, backed by heavy police deployment, began dismantling structures found to be constructed beyond approved boundaries. Similar action is scheduled over the next several days at Pench International Resort and Regenta Resort, both of which have also been flagged for sizable encroachments.



Officials said the crackdown follows months of scrutiny and repeated complaints from local residents and district panchayat member Rakesh Sanodiya, who alleged large-scale illegal occupation and unregulated expansion by the resort operators. Multiple site inspections reportedly confirmed that permanent structures had been built on government land designated for public and forest-

related use. Authorities said the operation was compelled by the rapid spread of unregulated commercial construction around the tiger reserve, the obstruction of natural wildlife movement corridors, and repeated violations by property owners despite warnings.

Senior officials said the district administration intends to send a clear message that encroachments around protected areas

will not be tolerated, stressing that unchecked construction near eco-sensitive zones threatens habitat integrity and disrupts tiger and wildlife movement. Pench, which draws heavy tourist traffic and is home to a thriving tiger population, has been facing increasing ecological pressure due to resort proliferation in nearby villages.

The ongoing drive is expected to continue for several days until all illegal extensions are removed and government land is restored. The action has reignited debate over regulating tourism infrastructure around India's tiger reserves, with conservationists calling for stricter zoning laws and more vigilant monitoring. The administration said further inspections will be carried out to ensure complete compliance with environmental and land-use norms in the future.

Cross-party delegation seeks IAS officer's suspension

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Political and social uproar intensified in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday as legislators from both the Congress and the BJP jointly met Chief Minister Mohan Yadav to demand the immediate suspension and FIR against IAS officer Santosh Verma, president of the state AJJAKS association, over his controversial remarks that have triggered widespread anger in the Brahmin community.

The delegation told the Chief Minister that a serving IAS officer making statements perceived as divisive and insensitive was "deeply unfortunate" and had caused serious offence to the community.

They said Verma's comments violated the dignity expected

of the civil service and had eroded public trust in the neutrality of the administration.

The Congress delegation, led by Deputy Leader of the Opposition Hemant Katara, included former minister P.C. Sharma, Ashok Pandey, Pushpendra Mishra, party spokesperson Vivek Tripathi and representatives of employee unions.

They urged the government to suspend Verma immediately, arguing that the state must send a clear message that any officer who uses language that fractures social harmony or disrespects any community will face strict action.

In a rare show of convergence, BJP legislators also joined the demand. The ruling party delegation comprised MLAs Riti Pathak, Sitasaran Sharma,

Ramesh Mendola and Abhilash Pandey. They told the Chief Minister that no officer should be allowed to insult any caste or community and insisted on firm departmental action.

The delegations informed the Chief Minister that Verma's remarks had sparked anger across several districts, where community members were holding protests and seeking strong disciplinary measures. Representatives of Brahmin organisations have warned that the issue could escalate if the government fails to act swiftly.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav assured the delegations that the government was treating the matter seriously and would take an appropriate decision soon, keeping in view both administrative norms and public sentiment.

Unpaid paan bill triggers violent assault at Koh-e-Fiza wedding

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

A wedding celebration at the Bagh-o-Bahar marriage garden in Koh-e-Fiza turned violent late Monday night after a dispute over an unpaid bill at a paan stall outside the venue escalated into a full-scale assault, leaving two guests injured and causing panic among attendees. Police said the clash began when a few young men from the wedding procession bought paan and other items from a roadside stall but walked away without paying. When the vendor confronted them, a heated argument ensued. The stall owner allegedly called his relatives, who soon stormed into the marriage garden armed with stones and metal utensils.

Viral videos show 10-12 youths

hurling stones inside and outside the venue while shouting abuses, forcing guests to run for cover as chaos spread through the gathering.

Koh-e-Fiza police station in-charge Krishan Gopal Shukla said four accused have been arrested while three others are absconding. "No women or children were harmed. We are analysing the video footage, and further action will follow," he said. Two guests were injured in the attack—one suffering a deep head wound after being hit by a stone, and another sustaining minor injuries. Both were taken to Hamidia Hospital. Police have registered a case under sections related to assault and rioting against the accused, most of whom are reportedly relatives of the paan vendor.

Cong MLA slams govt over rising smart meter bills

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Congress MLA Kailash Kushwah from Pohari constituency on Tuesday targeted the Madhya Pradesh government over the growing public anger against smart electricity meters. Speaking to the media during the winter session of the Assembly, he said consumers across the state were reporting steep hikes in monthly bills after the installation of smart meters. Kushwah claimed that households that earlier paid around Rs 1,000 are now receiving bills of Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,000, alleging that the system is causing financial distress and that the Energy Department has failed to address mounting complaints.

Central Bank launches dedicated NRI Desk in Indore to enhance services

PNS ■ Indore

The Central Bank of India on Tuesday inaugurated a dedicated NRI (Non-Resident Indian) Desk in its Indore region, marking a significant step toward strengthening banking services for customers living abroad. The facility, launched at the bank's Palasia branch (Anand Bazar, Indore) and simultaneously at the Sanwer branch, aims to provide faster, more specialised support to NRIs and their families.

The inauguration was carried out by R.K. Singh, Regional Head of the Central Bank of India, who formally opened the desk by cutting a ribbon. The event was attended by Assistant Regional Head Dheeraj Goyal, senior bank officials, staff members and customers. Speaking on the occasion,

Dheeraj Goyal said the new NRI Desk will streamline and enhance services for Indians residing overseas. He noted that NRIs will now be able to access a wide range of services—such as NRE/NRO account operations, remittance facilities, forex services and investment advisory—more smoothly through the single-window system.

Regional Head R.K. Singh emphasised that the NRI Desk reflects the bank's commitment to customer-centric policies. He said the initiative will help the bank respond promptly to the needs of NRI customers and ensure quicker resolution of their service requests. The Central Bank of India described the launch as an important step toward modernising banking infrastructure and providing tailor-made financial solutions to customers with global banking needs.

Family rivalry behind Mandla jewellery heist; 8 nabbed

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Mandla police on Tuesday solved the sensational November 20 armed robbery and firing at Ayushi Jewellers in Katra village, arresting eight accused—including the key conspirator Anil Soni, cousin of shop owner Ayush Soni. Six members of the inter-state gang are still absconding.

According to police, the case unfolded as a disturbing mix of family rivalry, financial desperation and organised crime. Anil Soni, reportedly unemployed and under severe financial strain, had grown resentful of his cousin Ayush's success in the jewellery trade. Exploiting his access to family information, he provided criminals with details about the shop's large gold and silver stock. He first contacted his acquaintance Rohit Bhartiya in Mandla,

who connected him to an inter-state gang comprising Vishnu Shinde, Pankaj, Lavkush and others. The group allegedly conducted reconnaissance and even attempted the robbery twice—on November 13 and 19—but aborted both attempts. The third attempt succeeded. On November 20, as employee Bobby Yadav loaded two bags of jewellery into a car after closing the shop near the Hanuman Temple, a Brezza/Grand Vitara SUV pulled up. Three masked robbers emerged, held a pistol to Bobby's head and snatched the bags. When shop owner Ayush Soni resisted, he was shot below the knee and collapsed, while the assailants fled with the jewellery.

Fearing police checking, the gang hid the weapons and stolen ornaments in a forest near Semerkhapa before escaping towards Jabalpur. Mandla police launched large-scale

operations in Bihar, Indore, Raisen, Barwani and parts of Mandla, analysing more than 200 CCTV feeds and using technical surveillance to trace the suspects. Those arrested include Khalid Ansari, Shashi Kumar and Krishna alias Ramakrishna from Bihar—along with the Grand Vitara used in the crime—and Mohammed Azhar (Indore), Rajesh Thakur (Barwani), Lavkush Gaur (Raisen), Rohit Bhartiya and mastermind Anil Soni (both Mandla). Police recovered an Ertiga, jewellery, bags, mobile phones and other incriminating material.

In a twist, police said Anil Soni himself was double-crossed: after the robbery, the gang refused to acknowledge his role, leaving him exposed and ultimately leading to his arrest. Of the 14 accused, six remain on the run as the investigation continues.

30 children fall ill after eating castor seeds in Damoh village

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

More than 30 children from Kishanganj village in Damoh district fell severely ill on Tuesday evening after accidentally consuming castor seeds while playing near their school. The incident triggered panic in the village as several children began vomiting shortly after reaching home.

According to parents, the children had mistakenly eaten seeds that looked similar to peanuts. "My child said they tasted seeds that looked like groundnuts, and soon after, they began vomiting," said Janaki Patel, mother of one of the affected

children.

As symptoms spread rapidly among multiple children, villagers rushed them to the Damoh district hospital using auto-rickshaws and ambulances. A special medical team of more than six doctors was deployed immediately on the instructions of the District Collector.

At the hospital, Dr Vikrant Chouhan, Dr Sonu Sharma and Civil Surgeon Dr Prahlad Patel led the emergency treatment. Officials said the condition of all children has begun to stabilise after prompt medical care.

Upon receiving information, SP Shruti Kirti Somvanshi and Patharia SDM Nikhat Chaurasia

reached the hospital to assess the situation. They interacted with the children and their families and instructed health and police teams to visit Kishanganj village to investigate how the children accessed the toxic seeds.

Police have also begun making public announcements in the village, urging families to immediately bring any child showing symptoms to the hospital without delay.

Castor seeds, though commonly found in rural areas, can be highly toxic if ingested, especially by children. Officials said further inquiries are underway to prevent such incidents in the future.

CM pushes reforms to boost school education

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav on Tuesday reviewed the functioning of the School Education Department and directed officials to accelerate efforts to strengthen school infrastructure, improve learning outcomes and expand student-centric welfare schemes across Madhya Pradesh. Chairing a detailed review meeting at the Assembly committee room, the Chief Minister said that the state has recorded notable progress in reducing the school dropout rate—from 21.4 per cent to 16.8 per cent in the past two years—and stressed the need to push it down further through targeted interventions and wider coverage of incentive schemes.

Dr Yadav noted that, in accordance with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, both High School and Higher Secondary examinations were successfully conducted and results were declared within stipulated timelines over the past two academic sessions. He directed officials to intensify efforts to promote vocational education and skill-based learning and ensure that high-performing schools and principals are suitably recognised for their contribution to improving academic results.

Emphasising optimal use of existing resources, the Chief Minister asked the department to examine the feasibility of operating college classes in school buildings during non-teaching hours under a "one

building, multiple classrooms" model. The meeting reviewed the status of free textbook distribution, scooty and bicycle distribution schemes, hostel facilities, and initiatives promoting girls' education. Officials informed the Chief Minister that 19 lakh girls have received sanitation and hygiene kits through DBT, while hostels are being equipped with washing machines, mattresses and kitchen appliances to improve living conditions. Under the PM Janatiya Adhikar Maha Abhiyan, 210 hostels have been sanctioned, and modernised Sandipani and PM Shri schools are benefitting students across the state.

The improved academic performance was highlighted, with Class 10 and 12 results crossing

74 per cent and 76 per cent respectively in 2024-25, and first and second terminal examinations recording average pass percentages of 87 and 82. Government schools have also seen a remarkable rise in the number of students securing first division.

Dr Yadav instructed officials to ensure timely distribution of textbooks at all levels, enhance vocational and agricultural education, develop a policy to encourage private schools in remote areas, and reduce teachers' administrative burden by improving departmental digital platforms. He also called for incentivising teachers who deliver exceptional results and ensuring that access roads to schools are upgraded through inter-departmental coordination.

Youth found dead at school site

PNS ■ Ratlam

A 28-year-old man was found hanging from the boundary railing of the closed CM Rise School in Rawti, Ratlam, early Tuesday morning.

The deceased was identified as Bhanupratap Singh Rathore. Locals spotted the body around 6.30 am and informed his family and the police.

A team led by Sub-Inspector M.I. Khan reached the spot, conducted a preliminary inquiry and sent the body to Ratlam Medical College for post-mortem. Police said the man had used a gamcha to hang himself. A case has been registered, and further investigation is underway.



CAN FIN HOMES LTD.
(CIN:L85110KA1987PLC008699)

Pithampur Branch: G-1, Jeevan Complex, Mhow-Neemuch Road, Pithampur, Dist. Dhar (M.P.)
Ph.: 07292-252542, 76250 79242, e-mail: pithampur@canfinhomes.com

DEMAND NOTICE

Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 (SARFAESI Act) read with Rule 3(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 (Rules) Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Can Fin Homes Ltd., under SARFAESI Act and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) read with Rule 3, issued Demand Notice under Section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the Borrowers / Guarantors listed hereunder (hereinafter referred to as the "said Borrowers"), to repay the amounts mentioned in the Notice, within 60 days from the date of receipt of Notice, as per details given below. The said Notices have been returned undelivered by the postal authorities / have not been duly acknowledged by the borrowers. Hence the Company by way of abundant caution is effecting this publication of the demand notice (as per the provisions of Rule 3 (1)). The undersigned has, therefore, caused these Notices to be pasted on the premises of the last known addresses of the said Borrowers, as per the said Act. As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to the Company by the respective parties as detailed below.

| Name of the Borrower/ Guarantors with Address | Description of this Secured Asset | Date of NPA | Amount Claimed as Per Demand Notice |
|--|---|-------------|--|
| 1. Mr. Brajesh Singh S/o Mr. Raghav Singh (Borrower), House No. 336, North Part 336-B, Kalyan Sampat Greens, Village Kalibhild, Tehsil Depalpur, Dist. Indore | House No. 336, North Part 336-B, Kalyan Sampat Greens, Village Kalibhild, Tehsil Depalpur, Dist. Indore (M.P.). Area: 400 Sq.ft., Owner: Mrs. Neelam W/o Brajesh Singh. | 01.05.2024 | Rs. 19,17,952.00 (Nineteen Lakh, Seventeen Thousand, Nine Hundred Fifty Two Only) as on 03.11.2025 |
| 2. Mrs. Nilam Singh W/o Mr. Brajesh Singh (Co-Borrower), House No. 336, North Part 336-B, Kalyan Sampat Greens, Village Kalibhild, Tehsil Depalpur, Dist. Indore | Boundaries: North: Plot No. 337, 336-B, Kalyan Sampat Greens, Village Kalibhild, Tehsil Depalpur, Dist. Indore South: Remaining Part of Same Plot, Kalibhild, Tehsil Depalpur, Dist. Indore East: Plot No. 329, West: Colony Road | | |

* Payable with further interest at contractual rates as agreed from the date mentioned above till date of payment. You are hereby called upon to pay the above said amount with contracted rate of interest thereon within 60daysfrom the date of publication of this notice, failing which the under signed will be constrained to initiate action under SARFAESI Act to enforce the afore said security. Further, the attention of borrowers / guarantors is invited to provisions of Section 13 (8) of the Ad, in respect of time available to them to redeem the secured assets

Sd/-
Place : Indore Pithampur, Date : 03.12.2025

Authorised Officer, Can Fin Homes Ltd.

IN FOCUS



Sambhavna Trust Clinic members holding a candlelight vigil to pay homage to the victims of the Bhopal gas tragedy on its 41st anniversary

PM Modi praises teen for 2,000 vedic verses recital

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A teenage Vedic scholar's feat of reciting 2,000 verses of the Shukla Yajurveda without any interruption in 50 days, as part of the Dandakrama Parayanam, has won plaudits from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Vedamurti Devavrat Mahesh Rekhe (19) achieved the feat of completing the Dandakrama Parayanam, considered the crown of Vedic recitation due to its intricate phonetic permutations, at a gathering in Kashi.

Rekhe's feat is also considered rare as it was accomplished in its classical purity after almost 200 years, the Sringeri Math, which supported the Maharashtra-based scholar, said in a social media post. It said the recitation of the Dandakrama Parayanam has been performed only thrice in known history. "What 19-year-old Vedamurti Devavrat Mahesh Rekhe has done will be remembered by the coming generations,"

Modi said in a social media post on Tuesday.

"Every person passionate about Indian culture is proud of him for completing the Dandakrama Parayanam, consisting of 2,000 mantras of the Shukla Yajurveda's Madhyandini branch, in 50 days without any interruption. This includes several Vedic verses and sacred words recited flawlessly. He embodies the finest of our Guru Parampara," the prime minister added.

Modi said as the member of Parliament from Kashi, he is elated that this extraordinary feat took place in this sacred city. "My Pranams to his family, the several saints, seers, scholars and organisations from all over India that have supported him," he said.

According to the Sringeri Math, the Parayanam was conducted at the Vallabharam Shaligram Sangved Vidyalaya from October 2 to November 30, and supported by several religious and social institutions of Kashi.

INS Aridhaman, India's nuclear submarine, set for induction

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Giving a significant boost to its operational capabilities, the Navy will soon induct INS Aridhaman, India's third indigenously built nuclear-powered submarine, Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi announced on Tuesday.

In the annual press conference ahead of the Navy Day on December 4, he said the advanced submarine had entered the final stages of its trials. The new submarine, equipped for longer-range missiles, boosts India's strike capability and survivability, reinforcing the country's nuclear doctrine and nuclear triad.

The second Arihant-Class submarine 'INS Arighaat' was commissioned into the Indian Navy on August 29, 2024 at Visakhapatnam. The construction of INS Arighaat involved the use of advanced design and manufacturing technology, detailed research and development, utilisation of special materials, complex engineering and highly skilled workmanship.

The presence of INS Aridhaman together with INS Arihant and INS Arighaat



will enhance India's capability to deter potential adversaries and safeguard its national interests. India's nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) programme is a closely guarded project. INS Arihant was the first vessel under the SSBN project, followed by INS Arighaat.

The SSBN programme is a key element of India's nuclear deterrence capability.

While India has proven

air and land-launched nuclear capabilities, it is now focusing on boosting its underwater nuclear prowess.

India is among a select group of countries having nuclear-powered submarines.

The countries that have such assets are: the US, Russia, the UK, France and China. India has been a leading voice in pitching for universal nuclear disarmament aimed at complete

elimination of atomic weapons.

In 1998, India conducted Pokhran-II nuclear tests, triggering strong reactions from many countries. Following the tests, India maintained that it carried out the tests to have 'credible minimum deterrence' and it will follow the approach of "no first use". In 2003, India officially came out with its nuclear doctrine that clearly elaborated on the 'no first use' policy.

Delhi Cabinet approves 10,000 dual desks from Tihar Jail for schools

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Cabinet approved the procurement of 10,000 dual desks from the Tihar Jail Factory to address a growing furniture shortage in government schools on Tuesday. "This decision will strengthen schools and create meaningful work opportunities for inmates. It supports rehabilitation, reform, and reintegration," the Chief Minister said after chairing the Cabinet meeting.

The order follows instructions issued by the Union Housing and Urban Affairs

Ministry during the third National Chief Secretaries' Conference, which encouraged states to expand productive work for inmates. The desks will be supplied at approved rates, inclusive of GST. The total project cost is set at ₹8,95,40,000 covering transport and related expenses. Officials said the Education Department has already set aside ₹20 crore in the 2025-26 budget for furniture and essential items. The Chief Minister said Tihar-made desks match Public Works Department standards and are about 25 per cent cheaper than market options. The gov-



ernment expects the decision to improve the learning environment while providing steady work and skills training inside the prison factory.

Education Minister Ashish Sood said the city runs 1,086 government schools. Student numbers have grown over the past few years, along with new classroom construction.

Ranveer Singh apologises for Kantara mimicry

TN RAGHUNATHA
■ Mumbai

A controversy has erupted over mimicry of a pivotal scene from Rishab Shetty's film "Kantara: Chapter 1" performed by actor Ranveer Singh during the closing ceremony International Film Festival of India (IFFI) 2025 held in Goa, with the Hindu Janajagruti Samiti (HJS) submitting a written complaint against the actor at Panaji police station.

Ranveer, meanwhile, issued a statement saying that if he had hurt the religious sentiments during a mimicry of a scene from Rishab Shetty's film "Kantara: Chapter 1", he was tendering an unconditional apology.

"My intention was to highlight Rishabh's incredible performance in the film. Actor to actor, I know how much it would take to perform that particular scene in the way that he did, for which he has my utmost admiration. I have always deeply respected every culture, tradition and belief in our country. If I've hurt anyone's sentiments, I sincerely apologise," the actor said in his statement.

In its complaint submitted to the Panaji police station



demanding registration of an FIR against Ranveer, the HJS alleged that the actor had insulted Chamundi Daiva, and in the process

hurt the religious sentiments of Hindus.

The HJS contended that Ranveer referred to the sacred deity of the Koti

Tulu community, Shree Chamundi Daiva, as a "female ghost".

The complaint seeking registration of FIR against Ranveer was handed over to Police Sub-Inspector Sahin Shetye by Pramod Tuyekar and Dilip Shetye on behalf of HJS.

"This incident has created an atmosphere of resentment in society, and the possibility of disturbance to public peace cannot be ruled out," the complaint said.

"The Samiti has therefore urged that, under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, sections 299, 194 and 302 relating to deliberate wounding of religious feelings and promoting enmity in society, a formal offence be registered against Ranveer Singh and a thorough investigation be conducted," HJS spokesperson Ramesh Shinde said and sought an apology from Singh.

The HJS has also called upon the IFFI organisers and concerned authorities to frame a clear code of conduct to ensure that, in future, no religious deity of any faith is subjected to ridicule or disrespect at such events, and that this code is strictly implemented.

Man held for wife assault over affair



ABHINAV KUMAR JHA
■ New Delhi

A 35-year-old man from Paharganj has been arrested for assaulting his wife with an iron rod and threatening to kill her with an illegal pistol on Friday. The woman told officers that her husband had been accusing her of having an affair with his cousin. The weapon was later recovered from his home after a targeted search by a police team.

The case began on 27 November when police received a PCR call about domestic violence. On Thursday afternoon, the accused, Lokesh Chauhan, forced his wife to go with him to the cousin's house. When the man was not found, they returned home. According to the wife, after returning home,

her husband attacked her with an iron rod and threatened to kill her, showing a pistol.

Based on her statement, an FIR under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Arms Act was registered at Paharganj police station. Police said the nature of the threat and the mention of a firearm made the recovery of the weapon a priority. "This was a serious case of violence and intimidation. The team acted without delay and ensured the accused was disarmed," DCP Central Nidhin Valsan said.

The officers searched the accused's house and found an illegal pistol hidden on the premises. Police said they are now trying to identify how Chauhan got the weapon. The source of supply will be checked against recent cases

of illegal firearms in the Central district. Chauhan was arrested soon after the recovery. Police records show he has two previous cases from the same police station. One under the Gambling Act was registered in 2019, and another under Section 188 of the IPC in 2020 for violation of government orders.

Officers said the investigation will also examine whether the accused had used the pistol earlier to intimidate neighbours or family members. Police believe the presence of the pistol may have encouraged him to act with more aggression during arguments. The complainant is undergoing medical examination and counselling. Police said her statement has been recorded, and further sections may be added if needed.

OVER 90 SAVED BY NDRF AMID SRI LANKA CYCLONE

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) rescuers have saved more than 90 people affected by landslides or floods in Sri Lanka that has been hit by the devastating Cyclone Ditwah, officials said on Tuesday.

India had sent two teams of the federal contingency force, comprising 80 personnel and four dogs, as part of Operation Sagar Bandhu to initiate relief-and-rescue measures in the affected areas of its southern maritime neighbour.

"The NDRF rescuers are deployed in landslide- and flood-affected areas of Kaduwela, Badulla and Puttalam. The teams have rescued a total of 64 people, evacuated 28 and retrieved a body till early Tuesday," an official said.

The teams are assisted by Sri Lankan security forces and administration officials and they have also distributed about 800 food packets among 1,070 locals, the officials said.

The force has retrieved a body from Badulla from under five feet of debris, they added.

The NDRF personnel have also rescued a nine-month pregnant woman from Puttalam.

There are four women rescuers in the 80-member NDRF team and they have been tasked with specifically assisting local women, the officials said.

The Disaster Management Centre (DMC) based in Colombo has confirmed at least 410 deaths and 336 people missing till Tuesday morning in the catastrophic floods and landslides caused by extreme weather conditions since November 16.

MEA sets tone for Putin visit

"Our consulate in Kazan started functioning last week, and the consulate in Yekaterinburg will begin operations soon," officials said.

On energy, the MEA reiterated that decisions by Indian companies remain market-driven and based on global price dynamics. Addressing concerns about Indians joining the Russian Army, officials again urged caution. "Indian nationals should be careful when signing foreign contracts. They must be cautious about job offers," an official said, adding that more than a dozen Indians have been repatriated.

Counter-terrorism will feature in the discussions, with officials recalling that Russia was the first partner with whom India established a counter-terrorism working group in 2002. Officials also expressed sharp displeasure over a joint op-ed by the UK, French and

German ambassadors published ahead of the visit, calling it "very unusual" and "not an acceptable diplomatic practice." An official said, "It is not appropriate to give public advice on third-country relations. We have taken note of it."

Delhi, Moscow prepare high-stakes agenda

Energy and nuclear engagement are set to feature prominently in the Modi-Putin dialogue. Peskov said Russia continues to offer India competitively priced oil, which has become a central pillar of bilateral economic ties since 2022. He also confirmed ongoing and future nuclear projects, noting that Russian involvement has already helped build "a separate sectoral ecosystem" within India's civil nuclear programme—particularly at the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant. On the economic front, trade will be a major

priority. Bilateral commerce touched \$ 63 billion this year, and both sides aim to cross \$ 100 billion before 2030. Peskov acknowledged foreign attempts to impede the expanding trade relationship—an unmistakable reference to the United States—and said Moscow plans to increase imports from India to correct the current imbalance. A business congress preceding Putin's arrival will focus on unlocking new export channels for Indian industry.

Addressing global geopolitical tensions, Peskov welcomed India's calibrated approach to the Ukraine conflict, reiterating Moscow's appreciation for New Delhi's willingness to engage even as communication channels with Europe narrow. He said Russia remains open to dialogue, including with US interlocutors, though progress remains limited.

On China, Peskov emphasised that Russia's growing partnership with Beijing does not dilute its engagement with India. Cooperation with both Asian powers, he said, is expanding "in every field as far

as India allows," but the relationships remain independent of one another.

Counter-terrorism will also feature in the agenda. Peskov condemned the recent blast in Delhi and reaffirmed Russia's long-standing security coordination with India, stressing that global terrorism can be countered only through unified international efforts.

Connectivity and currency issues will round out the discussions, with fresh momentum expected on the Chennai-Vladivostok maritime corridor and cooperation at Iran's Chabahar port. Peskov also highlighted accelerating global interest in de-dollarisation amid growing volatility in the international financial system.

As Moscow seeks to rebalance its strategic footprint and New Delhi consolidates its multi-aligned global posture, Putin's visit is primed to shape the trajectory of Eurasian geopolitics—strengthening a relationship that remains central to both nations' long-term strategic calculations.

FROM PAGE - 1

PM Modi greets people on Asom Diwas



PM Narendra Modi on Tuesday greeted the people of Assam on the occasion of Asom Diwas, which commemorates the arrival of Ahom kingdom founder Chaolung Sukapha in Assam in 1228. Modi said numerous steps are being taken towards popularising the Tai-Ahom culture which will greatly benefit Assam youth.

JP Nadda urges MPs to oversee TB elimination drive

Union Health Minister JP Nadda on Tuesday urged MPs to monitor the TB elimination campaign in their respective constituencies, help raise awareness and reduce stigma around the disease and mobilise the community to actively participate in the drive. He was interacting with Members of Parliament on the TB-Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan at the Extended Parliament House Annexe (EPHA) Auditorium.



Suvendu urges Hindus to unite beyond language, caste



With the West Bengal Assembly elections just months away, senior BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari on Tuesday sharpened his political pitch, urging Hindus to "unite" and warning that the community "cannot afford to be divided by language and caste".

CM Naidu proposes metal cluster in north Andhra

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday proposed establishing a metal cluster in North Andhra, citing Visakhapatnam's rapid industrial growth. The chief minister reviewed mining activities in the State and emphasised strengthening the Andhra Pradesh Mineral Development Corporation to enhance revenues, following the Odisha mining model.



(Left-to-Right) Mahesh G Jiward (IRS), Dr Dilip Khare (Technical Advisor – WBA India), Dr Pradeep Moonga (Senior Advisor & Policy Director to WBA UK, IAS Retd), Minister Shripad Y Naik and Kushan Mitra (Printer & Publisher of *The Pioneer*). A team from the World Biogas Association (WBA), UK and *The Pioneer* met with Shripad Y Naik, Union Minister of State for Ministry of New & Renewable Energy, and Ministry of Power. The team invited Naik to be the keynote speaker at the WBA India Congress on December 4, 2025. And share the Government of India's vision on the key role of CBG/Bio-Gas in the New & Renewable Energy landscape. Under the aegis of *The Pioneer* Biofuels360 programme, we are working together with WBA, UK to create awareness and promote their Making Biogas Happen (MBH) programme as a capacity building effort for the National Biogas Mission of India.



Census 2027 to be conducted in 2 phases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Census 2027 will be conducted in two phases, the first between April and September 2026 and the second in February 2027, the Lok Sabha was informed on Tuesday. Giving details of the exercise in response to a question by Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said the two phases will be Phase I-

House Listing and Housing Census followed by Phase II-Population Enumeration (PE). The first phase from April to September 2026 will be conducted in a period of 30 days in accordance with the convenience of State/UT Governments. "Population Enumeration will be done in February 2027 with reference date 00:00 hours of 1st March, 2027 except for the Union territory of Ladakh and snow-bound non-

synchronous areas of the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir and the States of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, where it will be done in September, 2026 with reference date 00:00 hours of 1st October, 2026," he said. The minister said the census questionnaire is finalised on the basis of inputs and suggestions from different ministries, departments, organisations and census data users before each exercise.

MPs raise anganwadi, Bhojpuri academy, pollution issues in RS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Members of Parliament on Tuesday raised issues ranging from modernisation of Anganwadi kitchens and establishment of a Bhojpuri literary academy to the growing air pollution crisis during Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha. Rekha Sharma (BJP) demanded a national programme for modernising Anganwadi nutrition kitchens, proposing upgr-

ades including stainless steel utensils and food storage, clean preparation counters, safe drinking water units and exhaust systems for ventilation. While acknowledging the Anganwadi network as one of India's proudest social welfare achievements, she said nutrition kitchens require modernisation to meet today's needs. Sharma stressed the importance of millet-based nutrition menus and urged States yet to adopt this practice, to

follow the example of those already implementing it. She also called for integration of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for supply of nutritious food and strengthening of digital monitoring and growth tracking systems in Anganwadis. Kunwar Ratanjeet Pratap Narain (BJP) demanded establishment of a Kendriya Bhojpuri Sahitya Academy in Kushinagar and Deoria districts of Uttar Pradesh, saying it would provide a platform for literary figures

and artists from Seemanchal, Mithila and Nepal, and help save the language from extinction. Noting that Bhojpuri academies function in Delhi, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, he said Uttar Pradesh, considered the heartland of Bhojpuri language, does not have any such academy. Ayodhya Rami Reddy Alla (YSRCP) flagged the escalating air pollution crisis as a major public health emergency, saying nearly one in seven Delhi residents faces

the risk of premature death due to air pollution. Over 17,000 deaths last year were directly attributed to deteriorating air quality, with the capital's Air Quality Index frequently remaining in the severe category, he said. Reddy highlighted a similar crisis in Visakhapatnam where PM10 levels have increased 32.7 per cent over the past seven years. Despite allocation of ₹129.4 crore under the National Clean Air Programme for Andhra Pradesh, only ₹39.64 crore

has been utilised, exposing serious lapses in monitoring, inter-departmental coordination and local enforcement, he said. Stating that unchecked air pollution costs India more than 3 per cent of its GDP annually, he called for political will to combat pollution, backed by reliable data, public awareness and real-time governance. Mamata Mohanta (BJP) and Karthikeya Sharma (IND) also raised issues during Zero Hour.

BJP slams Rahul Gandhi, Renuka Chowdhury over Parliament dog row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The BJP on Tuesday slammed Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Renuka Chowdhury for their remarks on the row over bringing a dog into the Parliament complex, alleging that they did not just hurt the decorum and dignity of Parliament but also insulted all MPs, security personnel, officers and other staff working there. A day after Chowdhury stoked a controversy with her remarks that "those sitting inside bite, dogs don't", after some MPs objected to her bringing a rescued stray dog in her car in the Parliament complex, Rahul Gandhi, during an informal chat with reporters on Tuesday, said that pets are not allowed outside but "inside" and gestured towards the Parliament building. Reacting sharply, BJP MP and national spokesperson Sambit Patra said, "The way the deco-

The way the decorum and dignity of Parliament was hurt by the statement made by Rahul Gandhi and Renuka Chowdhury. Both the 'Rs' need to remember that there is an R – that is 'responsibility of an MP'
— SAMBIT PATRA, BJP MP, NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON

rum and dignity of Parliament was hurt by the statement made by Rahul Gandhi and Renuka Chowdhury. Both the 'Rs' need to remember that there is an R, that is 'responsibility of an MP.' With their remarks, both Rahul Gandhi and Chowdhury have insulted all the MPs, including those of the Congress, as well as the security personnel, officials and other staff working in Parliament, he charged. The Congress has stooped to "such a low in its frustration" that its leaders did not spare even their own party MPs and "friends" in Parliament, Patra alleged. "There may not be much consensus between two

parties; there can be disagreements. But we are not enemies and baying for each other's blood," he added. The BJP leader asked Rahul Gandhi to listen to what he and his party colleague Chowdhury have said later at his residence with a calm mind and introspect. "With this kind of speech and behaviour, will the country respect you? Will people vote for you when you talk like this," he said. In a social media post, BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said, "Rahul Gandhi is comparing his own Congressmen and Opposition leaders to Dog! This is how Parivarvadi treat temple of democracy."

BJP delegation meets Nadda over Vaishnodevi medical college row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jammu/New Delhi

A BJP delegation met Union J P Nadda on Tuesday in Delhi, seeking reservation for Hindus in admissions at Katra's Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence (SMVDIME), a party spokesperson said. The college, run by the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, has been accused by a certain section of activists and politicians with charges of bias for admitting mostly Muslims for its MBBS programme. Over the past fortnight, right-wing Hindutva groups have held multiple protests demanding the shifting of Muslim students from the college and the Hindu reservation. According to the spokesperson, the party delegation informed Nadda that resentment is brewing over 42 of the 50 MBBS seats in the college's first batch going to non-Hindus.



The party said the issue has triggered strong reactions among devotees of Mata Vaishno Devi and donors to the shrine. The delegation said it is important to acknowledge the sentiments of millions of devotees associated with the shrine and urged the minister to intervene and find an "emotionally acceptable" solution, said the spokesperson. It sought from Nadda, who is the BJP's national president, a thorough review of the admission process and greater transparency at

the SMVDIME. Nadda said the matter would be examined seriously and compliance with national medical education norms would be enforced, the party said. The delegation comprised J-K BJP president and Rajya Sabha MP Sat Sharma, Union Minister of State Dr Jitendra Singh, Leader of Opposition in the State assembly Sunil Sharma, Lok Sabha MP Jugal Kishore Sharma, Rajya Sabha MP Ghulam Ali Khatana, MLAs Dr Devinder Manyal and Sham Lal Sharma, and Advocate RS Pathania.

Rahul Mamkootathil faces new allegation of sexual assault



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

With police continuing their intensive search for absconding Congress MLA Rahul Mamkootathil, another woman has filed a fresh sexual assault complaint against the legislator. The 23-year-old woman, who lives outside Kerala, sent the complaint to the party high command and the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) via email. The party's state leadership has handed the complaint over to the state police chief for further action, party sources said on Tuesday. However, DGP Ravada A Chandrasekhar said he's yet to receive the complaint. Mamkootathil has been absconding for the past few days after police registered a sexual assault and forced-abortion case against him based on a complaint submitted to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan last week. In the fresh complaint, the woman allegedly stated that Mamkootathil had "grievously exploited, assaulted, and emotionally abused her under the false promise of marriage." She said she was coming

forward now because recent reports of similar allegations had surfaced, and she wanted to ensure that no other woman "falls prey to his predatory behaviour." In her complaint, she also gave a detailed account of how she met Mamkootathil years ago and how she was "sexually assaulted" in a homestay-like building after "being deceived with a false promise of marriage." According to the FIR registered on November 28 from the earlier complaint, the complainant—who was pregnant at the time—was allegedly raped by Mamkootathil over two days at an apartment in the last week of May. The suspended legislator has reportedly been untraceable since the case was registered on November 28. He has filed an anticipatory bail plea before the Thiruvananthapuram District and Principal Sessions Court, which will be considered on December 3. Apart from Mamkootathil, his friend Joby Joseph is also named as an accused and is currently untraceable. Joseph allegedly gave the complainant a pill inside a car on May 30 to abort the pregnancy.

States Focus



BIHAR ASSEMBLY PICKS PREM KUMAR AS SPEAKER

Veteran BJP leader Prem Kumar was on Tuesday unanimously elected as the Speaker of the Bihar assembly. Pro-tem Speaker Narendra Narayan Yadav informed the House that Kumar was the only candidate whose name figured for the post. Thereafter, he was declared "unanimously elected" following a voice vote. As per custom, Kumar, who recently won the Gaya Town seat for a record eighth term, was escorted to the Chair by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav. The CM urged all the members to stand up and extend their greetings to the newly elected Speaker.



OPPOSITION DOING 'DRAMA' ON MANIPUR: SITHARAMAN

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday accused the Opposition of shedding crocodile tears on Manipur and indulging in 'drama' over the grievances of people of the state. Her attack came during her reply to a discussion in the Rajya Sabha on the Manipur Goods and Services Tax (Second Amendment) Bill, 2025, extending GST benefits to the state through a bill. Sitharaman accused the Opposition of not participating in the discussion on the bill that seeks to replace an Ordinance in this regard.

Bombay HC defers local poll results to December 21

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

In a major development, the Bombay High Court has barred the Maharashtra State Election Commission (SEC) from counting of votes and declaration of the results of the polls to the Municipal Councils, Nagar Parishads and Nagar Panchayat elections held in the state on Tuesday (December 2) till December 21.

As notified by the SEC on November 4, the polls to as many as 246 Nagar Parishads and 42 Nagar Panchayats across the state were scheduled to be held on December 2 (Tuesday). However, the polling was held for a majority of the local bodies on Tuesday, while the SEC deferred the polls to some of the local bodies to December 20.

In its ruling on a bunch of petitions challenging the SEC's move to defer the election of certain municipal councils and nagar pan-



People waiting in queues to cast their votes at a polling booth during the Maharashtra local body elections in Thane on Tuesday PTI

chayats, the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court overturned the state poll body's decision to declare the results in two phases on December 2 and December 21 respectively.

The Nagpur HC bench of Justice Anil S Kilor

and Justice Rajnish R Vyas noted that "if the public mood is disclosed by declaring the result on December 3 of the polls to be held on December 2, it may materially affect the result of the polls to be held on December 20".

"Therefore, we are of the opinion that the decision of the SEC to declare the results in two phases ie on 3/12/2025 of the polls to be held on 2/12/2025 and on 21/12/2025 of the polls to be held on 20/12/2025, is not just and proper and needs to be interfered with for fair and transparent election," the HC bench noted.

While postponing the vote counting and declaration of the results of the polls held on Tuesday, the HC bench ruled: "The State Election Commission is hereby directed not to publish the result on 3.12.2025 of polls to be held on 2.12.2025."

"It is further directed that the same shall be declared along with the results of the elections to be held on 20/12/2025".

In another directive, the HC bench refrained the media and pollsters from publicising the results of the polls held on December 2.

"We direct that no person

shall publish or publicise by means of print or electronic media or in any other manner, any result of exit poll during the period commencing from beginning of the hours fixed for poll on 2.12.2025 and shall continue till half an hour after closing of the polls on 20/12/2025," the HC bench ruled.

"Model Code of Conduct shall continue to apply till declaration of results," the HC bench said.

While adjourning the further hearing of the petitions till December 10, the HC bench directed the SEC to file its response to the various petitions by then.

Multiple petitions from candidates, parties and organisations have challenged the SEC's decision to count votes and declare the results in a phase-wise manner of the elections completed on Tuesday and the upcoming round on December 20.

Most of the petitioners

prayed for a direction that the results of all wards within their respective municipal councils be declared on a single date in a non-bifurcated manner.

They argued that the phase-wise declaration of results could create a two-tier electoral process within the same civic body, confer undue political and psychological advantage upon candidates in the remaining wards who would contest against the backdrop of an already declared council composition.

The petitioners voiced apprehension that the phase-wise declaration of poll results would lead to alliances, inducements, political negotiations and public perception that could be shaped by the already declared results in the wards, thus violating the fundamental principles of a free, fair elections providing a level playing field to all contestants.

Kashmir businessman Shafat Ahmed Shangloo set free by TADA Court

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

A Kashmir valley-based businessman, Shafat Ahmed Shangloo, arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the 35-year-old kidnapping case of Rubaiya Sayeed, daughter of former Home Minister Mufti Mohd Sayeed, was set free by the special TADA court immediately after rejecting the CBI plea seeking his custody on Tuesday.

"I was not involved in the (abduction) case. There was nothing against me. The court acquitted me today. Justice has been done," an emotionally charged Shafat Ahmed Shangloo said, signalling a victory sign in the special court premises.

"Shafat Ahmed Shangloo

was produced before the special TADA court in Jammu on Tuesday. We have sought custody of the accused," CBI lawyer SK Bhat told reporters.

As a battery of cameramen and reporters chased Shangloo outside the court premises, his lawyer, Sohail Dar, briefed the media persons about the proceedings in the special TADA court. Dar said the CBI had produced Shangloo in the court seeking his custody. After going through the chargesheet filed in the abduction case, the court decided to set him free as there was no evidence against him on record, he added.

The detailed order of the verdict delivered by Madan Lal, Third Additional District and Sessions Judge of the



TADA Court, was not immediately available.

Referring to the allegations levelled against him that he was absconding for the last 35 years, Shafat

Ahmed clarified, "I was not absconding. I am a businessman. I was in Delhi for 10 years. In 1995, I shifted to Delhi. I was doing business in Delhi. Then I came back to

Kashmir in 2002. In 1998, I got a passport from Delhi. Then, in 2016, I got a passport from Srinagar. I am a traveller. I travel a lot. How can you say I was absconding? I have a Modi card, I have a Ration card, and I have an Aadhar card. I was not involved in the abduction case. Finally, the judge has delivered justice to me, and I am thankful".

Shangloo carried a reward of ₹10 lakh for allegedly being part of a conspiracy hatched by members of the banned Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). He was alleged to be a close confidant of JKLF chief Yasin Malik, who is in jail in this and other cases. In a statement, the CBI had said Shangloo conspired with Malik and others in committing offences.

NMC raises ₹200 crore for clean Godavari Bonds for 2027 Kumbh mela

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

In a key milestone towards mainstreaming municipal finance in India for infrastructure projects, the Nashik Municipal Corporation (NMC) has raised ₹200 crore through "NMC Clean Godavari Bonds" listed on the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE), to fund the preparations of Simhastha Kumbh Mela 2027.

The funds mobilised through this NMC bonds will be deployed towards key infrastructure projects in the view of upcoming construction of pedestrian bridge of Ram Jhula, construction of a vending plaza and general development near Kalaram Temple, construction of pro-

posed command and control centre near Kapaleeshwar Temple and sewer network improvement works for administrative zones of Panchavati, Satpur and Nashik West.

Expressing his happiness over the development, Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnis said: "I am very happy to learn that NMC's Clean Godavari Bonds were oversubscribed nearly four times. These bonds will help to finance the infrastructure related to the Kumbh Mela in 2027, ensure efficient utilisation of resources and timely repayment".

"The 3.95 times oversubscription reflects institutional investors' growing confidence in municipal bonds as

a credible asset class. NSE remains committed to helping cities and local bodies raise capital in a transparent and efficient manner for sustainable urban infrastructure. Today's listing further strengthens the foundation for future municipal bond programmes across the country," NSE MD & CEO Ashishkumar Chauhan said.

"These bonds will finance infrastructure development related to Kumbh Mela 2027, and ensure sustainable development of the region. We managed to complete the entire fund-raising process within 4 to 5 months and are also working on the second bond issue," NMC Commissioner and Administrator Manisha Khatri said.

Mamata claims creating 2 crore jobs before mega rallies

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

In what critics called a pre disclosure of her talking points ahead the series of mega rallies that she has lined up against special intensive revision in at least two Muslim dominated districts of Murshidabad and Malda besides a mega rally in Cooch Behar Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday claimed that her Government has created 2 crore jobs in the last 14 years.

She also said that her Government had been helping 2.2 crore women under Laxmir Bhandar scheme providing ₹1000 to every receipt. Banerjee also slammed the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government for distributing ₹10000 among voters before Bihar elections but used bull-

allegedly blocked funds.

"The Bengal Government has spent more than ₹1 lakh crore in food security scheme though the Centre stopped fund allocation we have covered 9 crore people under Khadya Saathi spent ₹1717 crore on Duare Ration — Ration at doorsteps — covering 7 crore people" Banerjee said claiming her Government had created 2 crore jobs in the last 14 years.

She also said that her Government had been helping 2.2 crore women under Laxmir Bhandar scheme providing ₹1000 to every receipt.

Banerjee also slammed the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government for distributing ₹10000 among voters before Bihar elections but used bull-

dosers on them post polls.

Banerjee's statement came days before her mega programmes that she is to address in districts. The rallies will be held against "hasty and unplanned SIR in the State." The Chief Minister's decision to scale up anti SIR campaign comes against the backdrop of two developments: Extension of submission of enumeration forms and announcement by a local yet powerful Trinamool Congress leader Humayun Kabir. The leader had vowed to float a new outfit and construct a new Babri mosque in the district.

The Chief Minister's plans also come in tandem with a decision taken by Kolkata Municipal Corporation Mayor and senior Minister Firhad Banerjee's proposed

mega mobilisations are reportedly planned to counterbalance the response State Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari got in recent anti infiltration campaigns. It is also planned to offset the increasing foothill in Left rallies, insiders say.

While the rally at Malda will be held at Gazole block, the one at Murshidabad will be organised at Behrampore the home town of Congress leader Adhir Chowdhury.

"The kind of rally the TMC is planning will be three times as big as that of Suwendu Adhikari they will take three generations to go past the record that is going to be created by Mamata Banerjee," said party spokesperson Arup Chakraborty.

No rift with DK Shivakumar, Siddaramaiah calls him brother

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bengaluru

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday asserted that there are no differences between him and his deputy DK Shivakumar, and that they both are running the Government unitedly like "brothers", and will continue to do so in the future too.

Reiterating that both of them will abide by the decision of the Congress high command on the leadership issue, he said Shivakumar will become the CM when the high command decides.

In an apparent display of unity, Siddaramaiah on Tuesday visited Shivakumar's residence for breakfast, just days after the two broke bread in the wake of a raging power tussle. Following breakfast, both leaders asserted that they and the entire party were united.

"This understanding will always be there. There are no differences. DK Shivakumar and I are united; we run the Government unitedly. In the future also we will run the Government unitedly," Siddaramaiah told reporters here after the breakfast meeting.

On the leadership issue, he said, as decided in the previous breakfast meeting organised at the CM's residence on Saturday, both of them will abide by the high command's decision.

So far, there is no communication from the high command on the timeline for any decision on the matter. The CM, in response to a question, said, "If they (high command) call us, we will definitely go and meet them. Tomorrow, I will be meeting AICC General Secretary K C Venugopal at a function, where both of us are invited."

Asked when Shivakumar will become the CM, Siddaramaiah said, "When the high command says."

Stating that he was invited by Shivakumar for breakfast, he said, after the breakfast, he and Deputy CM discussed regarding the upcoming legislature session starting from December 8 at Belagavi and the strategy to be adopted, also on organising a meeting of MPs from Karnataka in Delhi on December 8, to discuss on issues concerning the state.

Regarding the cabinet reshuffle, Siddaramaiah said, the high command has to



take a decision on it.

Noting that the opposition BJP and JD(S), as per media reports, are planning to move a no-confidence motion against the Government, along with raising several issues, the CM said, the Government will "aggressively" face them.

He said that his Government is "pro farmer" and highlighted the measures taken by the administration to resolve the issues faced by sugarcane and maize farmers in the state. He further alleged that the centre was not doing enough in this regard.

Earlier, in the day, Siddaramaiah drove down to the Deputy CM's Sadashivanagar residence

here, where he was received by Shivakumar and his brother, former Congress MP DK Suresh, and Kunigal MLA HD Ranganath (a relative of Shivakumar). They had breakfast together, which had a combination of veg and non-veg dishes, including idli and country chicken, according to sources.

Siddaramaiah said Shivakumar had ensured non-vegetarian food for breakfast with country chicken, despite him being vegetarian.

On the reference made to him and Shivakumar, calling them "brothers", Siddaramaiah said, "We are always brothers, we are in one party and believe in the same ideology. We will work

together. In 2028 (Assembly polls) too we will work together and bring Congress back to power."

On Monday Shivakumar had said that he and CM were "working like brothers", while asserting that there were no groups in the state Congress, and blamed the media for creating confusion.

Shivakumar, who did not speak much, replying to a question on Tuesday, said that all MLAs are united in the Congress party and there are no differences.

Stating that they discussed candidates for four MLC seats, party and Government matters, also the strategy for the legislature session, and meeting of MPs from all parties on issues concerning the state, he said, "We will face the opposition during the session; they have an empty trunk. We are with one voice. There are no differences in the party; it's only media creation."

Regarding meeting the high command leaders, Shivakumar said, "They will have to call us."

Following the initial breakfast meeting on Saturday, at the CM's official residence, as part of an attempt by the Congress high command

to break the logjam over the leadership row involving the two leaders, both Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar had publicly stated that "there won't be any confusion", and that they would obey the high command on the leadership issue.

The breakfast meetings are seen as a move by the high command to pause the leadership tussle between the two and signal Siddaramaiah's continuation as the CM for the time being, especially ahead of the Belagavi legislature session from December 8.

The power tussle within the ruling party had intensified amid speculations about a change in chief minister in the state after the Congress Government reached the halfway mark of its five-year term on November 20.

The speculation was fuelled by talks of a 'power-sharing' agreement said to have been arrived at while the party was elected to power in 2023.

Meanwhile, Home Minister G Parameshwara termed the breakfast meeting as a "good development" and expressed hope that all issues are settled.

Language key to shed colonial mindset: Pradhan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Varanasi (UP)

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday said language is one of the primary instruments to come out of the colonial mindset, which he referred to as "Macaulay mindset", after the British civil servant who paved the way for an anglicised upper crust in the 19th century.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the Kashi Tamil Sangamam 4.0 in Varanasi, Pradhan said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave a clarion call to the people of the country when he visited Ayodhya to hoist the saffron flag atop the Ram temple.

"In 1835, an aggressor with the name of Macaulay came to India and planned a conspiracy against Indian civilisation. He used language as a negative weapon. India is an independent country today. It has been 190 years since then, and we have to come out of the colonial mindset, the Macaulay mindset," the BJP leader

said, adding, there is no need to remain "dependent" on English.

Pradhan said that those who seek to do innovation must be proficient in their mother tongue — Tamil, Punjabi, Gujarati, Marathi and Hindi.

"The prime minister has given a call to come out of the colonial mindset. Language is one of the primary instruments to come out of the colonial mindset," he said.

Addressing a gathering in Ayodhya on November 25 after the flag hoisting, Modi said the moment symbolised a cultural resurgence for the nation and said there was a need to free the country from the "mentality of slavery."

"Macaulay sowed the seeds of uprooting India from its roots 190 years ago. We gained Independence but not freedom from inferiority," he said, adding, next 10 years should be dedicated to reversing this mindset.

Modi said that "colonial-era distortions" led to the belief that India borrowed democracy from abroad.

Your Trusted Management Advisory

www.transglobeadvisors.in

Order Order

SC stays trial in POCSO case against Yediyurappa



The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the trial proceedings against former Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa in a case filed against him under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO). The Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi passed the order after hearing Yediyurappa's petition challenging the Karnataka High Court's refusal to quash the case.

Senior Advocate Sidharth Luthra, appearing for Yediyurappa, earlier argued that the High Court had ignored key evidence. The criminal case against Yediyurappa was registered on the allegations made by a woman that he molested her 17-year-old daughter, who had accompanied her on a visit to the senior BJP leader's residence to seek some help. The girl's mother, now deceased, lodged a police complaint on March 14, 2024, accusing Yediyurappa of having sexually harassed the girl. She also said in her complaint that the former Chief Minister had tried to hush up the issue by offering her money. Based on this complaint, the police registered a First Information Report (FIR) under Section 8 of the POCSO Act and Section 354(A) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) on charges of sexual harassment of a minor.

Jio-Facebook deal: SC rejects RIL's plea against SAT order imposing ₹30 lakh fine



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed an appeal of Reliance Industries Limited and two of its officials against a Securities Appellate Tribunal's decision upholding a penalty imposed by markets regulator SEBI for not making prompt clarification to stock exchange about the Jio-Facebook deal.

"The bigger the company, the greater the responsibility. You must meticulously comply with the regulations," a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi observed during the hearing.

The top court declined to interfere with the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) ruling and effectively affirmed SEBI's findings that Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and its compliance officers failed to promptly disclose unpublished price-sensitive information (UPSI) concerning the high-profile stake sale.

In June 2022, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) imposed a penalty totalling ₹30 lakh on RIL and two individuals, Savithri Parekh and K Sethuraman, for not making prompt clarification to the stock exchange pertaining to the Jio-Facebook deal, which was disclosed through media reports.

The SEBI penalty was upheld by the SAT on May 2, 2025. "In our considered view, the conclusion drawn by the SEBI with respect to the violation of the 2015 regulation, whereby there is a statutory embargo on insider trading, we are satisfied that there is no case made out for interference.

That apart, the issues dealt with by the SEBI and the SAT are substantially issues of fact giving rise to no substantial question of law for consideration by this court," the bench said in the order.

The top court said the SAT findings did not merit interference and moreover, no question of law was there needing adjudication. During the hearing, the counsel for RIL said that the firm had complied with the regulations and there was no insider training or unlawful gains. The prior selective news leaks about the Facebook-Jio deal should not be a ground to impose liability on the company, he said.

SEBI's adjudicating officer had in June 2022 imposed the ₹30 lakh combined penalty after concluding that RIL violated Principle 4 of Schedule A of the Prohibition of Insider Trading (PIT) Regulations.

"I find that the news pertaining JIO-Facebook deal came out on March 24 and 25, 2020, and the information to the stock exchanges about the media release titled 'Facebook to invest ₹43,574 crore in Jio Platforms for a 9.99 per cent stake' was made on April 22, 2020, ie, After 28 days and this calls for an appropriate penalty," SEBI Adjudicating Officer Barnali Mukherjee had said in an order.

The regulator said Reliance Industries had the obligation to have enveloped the unpublished price-sensitive information. However, having come to know about the selective availability of the information it was incumbent upon the company to provide due clarification on its own.



Should intruders be given red carpet welcome, asks SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday sharply questioned the legal status of Rohingyas living in India and asked whether "intruders" should be given a "red carpet welcome" while the country's own citizens grapple with poverty. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi made sharp observations while hearing a habeas corpus (bring the person) petition filed by rights activist Rita Manchanda alleging disappearance of few Rohingyas from the custody of authorities here. Next hearing is scheduled on December 16.

The counsel alleged certain Rohingyas were picked up by Delhi Police in May and there was no information about their whereabouts. "If they do not have legal status to stay in India, and you are an intruder, we have a very sensitive border in the north India side.

If an intruder comes, do we give them a red carpet welcome saying we would like to give you all facilities" the CJ asked, adding, "What is the problem in sending them back." He said India is a country with a lot of poor people, and we should



Chief Justice of India Surya Kant

rather focus on them. "First you enter, you cross the border illegally. You dug a tunnel or crossed the fence and entered India illegally. Then you say, now that I have entered, your laws must apply to me and say, I am entitled to food, I am entitled to shelter, my children are entitled to education. Do we want to stretch the law like this," the CJ asked.

The petitioner referred to an apex court order of 2020 in which it was said that Rohingyas must be deported only according to procedure. "We also have poor people in the country. They are citizens. Are they not entitled to certain benefits and amenities? Why not concentrate on them? It is true, even if somebody has entered illegally, we should not subject them to third-degree methods... You are asking writ of habeas to bring them back," CJ Kant asked. The bench said if repatriation is sought then it may give rise to "logistical issues".

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said the plea has

not been filed by an affected person and the petitioner has no locus to file such a plea. On July 31, the top court, while hearing a batch of pleas concerning Rohingyas in the country, had said the first major issue to be dealt with in cases concerning Rohingyas is whether they are refugees or illegal entrants.

It said once that is decided, the other issues might be consequential. "The first major issue is simple, are they refugees or illegal entrants," Justice Kant observed.

After the Supreme Court on Tuesday questioned the legal status of Rohingyas living in India, Trinamool Congress MP Kalyan Banerjee said the Chief Justice of India "shouldn't make loose comments". TMC MP's comment followed Chief Justice Surya Kant's observation in a hearing on five missing Rohingya refugees. "Do you want us to roll out a red carpet for them," he said.

The apex court's bench headed by CJ said that Rohingyas were entering India through underground routes and then demanding rights such as food and shelter. "They enter through tunnels and demand rights like food and shelter," the CJ observed. The bench also highlighted security concerns linked to illegal migration, especially along India's north-

‘CJI should not make loose comments’



Kalyan Banerjee

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

ern borders. "We have a very sensitive border in North India. If an intruder enters illegally, do we have the obligation to keep them here?" the CJ said, highlighting the national-security side of the issue.

After CJ's observation, the Trinamool leader declared 'judges these days talk too much'. Banerjee was responding to media at Parliament premises. "Earlier, judges were seen talking less... were seen talking only when delivering judgments. But now the trend has changed. Nowadays, judges talk more to increase TRPs, but they don't deliver judgments. This is the biggest problem today," said Banerjee, who is also a practicing lawyer. All those who have infiltrated from Bangladesh have come here with the "blessings of Union Home Minister Amit Shah," added the TMC MP.

burden of proof, forcing voters to establish citizenship merely because the EC marks them as "suspected non-citizens", "This creates a parallel, extra-statutory NRC," Singhvi said.

Lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay drew the court's attention to alleged attacks on block-level officers in West Bengal. "The authorities will take care of it. Don't worry," the CJ said. Senior Vrinda Grover, argued that the SIR process, as currently designed, is "structured to exclude".

She pointed to the sharp decline in the number of women voters on draft rolls compared to the January 2025 summary revision. "Women who were on the rolls six months ago are now missing. The drop, from 4 lakh to 79,000, reflects ground realities which affect women differently," she said.

Grover questioned the legality of the enumeration form, calling it a "creature of the ECI without legislative authority" that dilutes statutory Form 6. "This abridges rights of vulnerable groups and disproportionately impacts women," she submitted. The bench will resume the hearing on Thursday, December 4, when Bhushan will commence his submissions.

ECI's reasons for SIR untenable, Opposition parties tell SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Election Commission's reasons like 'rapid urbanisation' and 'frequent migration' for undertaking special intensive revision of electoral rolls in various states are "untenable" and its power to revise rolls of any constituency does not empower it to do it pan-India, the Supreme Court was told on Tuesday.

These strong arguments were advanced by senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for one of the petitioners, before a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi which continued for the third consecutive day its hearing on a batch of petitions challenging the legality of the EC's ongoing intensive revision of electoral rolls in several states.

"If the reasons are common, they must have a rational nexus. Here even the generic reasons are the most generic of all, rapid urbanisation and frequent migration. Urbanisation has been ongoing for many years. When does an area move from rural to 'rurban' and then to fully urban. Rapid urbanisation cannot be a ground... (for SIR)," Singhvi said.

At the fag end of the hearing, the bench took strong note of the submissions of lawyer Prashant Bhushan terming the EC as a 'despot'.

He termed the decision of undertaking SIR "unprecedented", saying "For the first time, a voters' list is being prepared from a clean slate. This is a de-novo preparation, not a special revision."

He questioned the haste in the exercise and linked the pressure on ground staff to reports of "30 BLOs having committed suicide", and referenced a media investigation indicating that "over five lakh duplicate voters remain even after SIR".

He said many perceive the EC as acting like a "despot". "Let us not make sweeping statements which are not there in the pleadings... Please confine yourself to the pleadings," the CJ said.

Referring to rules, Singhvi said the poll panel is empowered to undertake special revisions and that too require specific reasons for each constituency.

"The expression 'any' constituency cannot be read loosely and it does not mean 'all' (constituencies). Reasons under Section 21(3) are individualised and can never be one-size-fits-all," he said,



Abhishek Singhvi

Kapil Sibal

Prashant Bhushan

adding "What is being done here overstretchers the statute." Singhvi criticised the EC's SIR exercise, saying that the Commission had exceeded its statutory powers under Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act. Separately, he accused the EC of "conducting a citizenship test by proxy".

Singhvi further said that an "intensive revision" cannot be invoked merely for administrative convenience.

He cited Rule 25 of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, to argue that any inten-

sive revision must still conform strictly to the statutory framework. To emphasise the requirement of constituency-specific reasons, Singhvi referred to the Thakurdwara case in Uttar Pradesh, the only historical instance of a genuine special revision.

"In Thakurdwara, a detailed inquiry found 15,000 wrongful deletions and 21,000 wrongful additions. That was an individualised exercise based on concrete findings," he noted, contrasting it with the EC's current "statewide classification",

which he called "a new innovation" never attempted in 75 years. Singhvi also launched a constitutional challenge, asserting that the EC's new classification of post-2003 voters into multiple documentary requirement categories violated Article 14's anti-arbitrariness doctrine, which evolved through landmark cases.

"The EC has no power under Article 324 to determine citizenship," he submitted, citing the Citizenship Act and a few judgments.

He alleged that the guidelines effectively reverse the

burden of proof, forcing voters to establish citizenship merely because the EC marks them as "suspected non-citizens", "This creates a parallel, extra-statutory NRC," Singhvi said.

Lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay drew the court's attention to alleged attacks on block-level officers in West Bengal. "The authorities will take care of it. Don't worry," the CJ said. Senior Vrinda Grover, argued that the SIR process, as currently designed, is "structured to exclude".

She pointed to the sharp decline in the number of women voters on draft rolls compared to the January 2025 summary revision. "Women who were on the rolls six months ago are now missing. The drop, from 4 lakh to 79,000, reflects ground realities which affect women differently," she said.

Grover questioned the legality of the enumeration form, calling it a "creature of the ECI without legislative authority" that dilutes statutory Form 6. "This abridges rights of vulnerable groups and disproportionately impacts women," she submitted. The bench will resume the hearing on Thursday, December 4, when Bhushan will commence his submissions.

SC expresses concern over closure of DCW, asks: where will women in distress go?

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

"Where will the women in distress go," the Supreme Court on Tuesday asked as it expressed concern over the 'closure' of the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW).

A bench of justices JB Pardiwala and KV Viswanathan asked Additional Solicitor General Archana Pathak Dave, appearing for the Delhi government, to do something about closure of the commission.

"It's closed. Where will the women in distress go? They don't have chairperson. They don't have staff. It's all in shambles," the top court said, while referring to a recent media report where it was stated that the DCW was closed.

The top court made the remarks while hearing a child trafficking case, where a slew of directions was passed for expeditious trial of such cases. Dave said she will look into the issue of closure of the commission.

The Mahila Aayog office is situated at Vikas Bhawan in New Delhi here has been virtually closed as since January 2024, as it had no chairperson.

Sources said in May last year, the women and child develop-



ment department of the Delhi government ordered the removal of over 200 contractual staffers over irregularities in the hiring process.

The post of chairperson of DCW has been vacant since Swati Maliwal was elected to Rajya Sabha in January 2024. The website of DCW shows the post of chairperson and its four members including that of member secretary as vacant.

The DCW, constituted in 1994 to investigate and examine all matters relating to the safeguards provided for women under the Constitution and other laws, looks at matters ranging from abuse and exploitation to counselling, rescue, and legal assistance for women.

It further says that the DCW is

constituted with the aim to investigate and examine all matters relating to the safeguards provided for women under the constitution and other laws.

"The Commission functions in the manner of a Civil Court and strives to ensure aims envisaged in the Act through its various programmes like Sahayogini, Mahila Panchayats, Rape Crisis Cell, Mobile Help Line and Pre Marital Counselling Cell. The jurisdiction of the Commission is within the National Capital Territory of Delhi," the commission's website says.

The commission was constituted under the Delhi Commission for Women Act of 1994.

Contracts to CM's kin: SC asks Arunachal Govt to file affidavit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Arunachal Pradesh government to file a comprehensive affidavit giving details of the contracts awarded from 2015 to 2025, including those to firms of family members of Chief Minister Pema Khandu, saying the statistics are "telling".

A bench of justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta, which observed it would consider whether any inquiry is required or not, passed the order while hearing a plea seeking a CBI probe into the award of contracts for public works in Arunachal Pradesh to the firms owned by the family members of Khandu.

"The coincidence is absolutely remarkable," the bench observed, adding that it was alleged before it that difference between tenders of the competing firms was miniscule. The bench said if the difference is miniscule, that shows cartelisation.

"If that is so, that becomes serious," it observed, adding, "The statistics are telling." Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for petitioner NGOs Save Mon Region Federation and Voluntary Arunachal Sena, told the bench that according to the affidavit filed by the state, several contracts and work orders were given to firms owned by the immediate family members of Khandu. The bench asked the state's

counsel why its affidavit has given details of contracts relating to Tawang district only.

The State's counsel said that in the petition and the subsequent orders passed by the top court, the controversy was confined to Tawang only.

"We do not find any such confinement or limitation of the petition being confined to district Tawang or the order passed by this court earlier limited it to district Tawang," the bench said. The State's counsel urged the court to grant him reasonable time to file a detailed affidavit covering all the districts. Bhushan said with regard to Tawang also, the up-to-date information was not provided.

"As such, the respondent may file a comprehensive affidavit covering all the districts, including Tawang. We make it clear that the details as required by the previous order would be confined only to the period 2015 to 2025 and not prior to 2015," the bench said. It granted eight weeks to the state to file the affidavit and posted the matter for hearing on February 3.

Bhushan said it was earlier alleged that State had paid for transportation of rice by head load even when road existed there and it could have been transported through trucks which would have been much cheaper.

"Is it something like Bihar Chara Ghotala (Bihar fodder scam)," the bench asked. Bhushan responded, "In a way."



Editor's
TAKE

Revenue over health: The *gutka* cess debate

Taxing pan masala and *gutka* may fill the govt's coffers, but it presents a paradox — why tax a carcinogenic product and not ban it outright?

Pan masala and *gutka* are words familiar to every Indian, even to those who never touch the products. In North India, government buildings and staircases stained with their tell-tale marks bear silent testimony to their widespread use. Pan masala is truly ubiquitous — sold at every corner shop, splashed across billboards with celebrity endorsements, and promoted on television as a lifestyle product.

Yet behind this glossy veneer lies a harsh reality. Laced with tobacco and several harmful additives, pan masala is a carcinogenic concoction freely available in the Indian market. Its consumption has only risen over the years, driven by low cost, easy accessibility, and its highly addictive nature. The industry itself is a heavyweight. India's pan masala market was valued at approximately ₹46,682 crore in 2024, and projections suggest it may reach nearly ₹64,446 crore by 2033, growing at a CAGR of 3.60 per cent. The new cess, applicable not on the final product but on the machinery and processes used to manufacture it, effectively tightens the net around the *gutka*-pan masala industry. By linking the cess to machine speed, weight per pouch, and manufacturing capacity, the bill closes loopholes, reduces evasion, and ensures a predictable stream of funds for national security and healthcare initiatives. The government's proposal to levy a new cess on machines used for manufacturing pan masala under the 'Health Security se National Security Cess Bill, 2025', though welcome, has reignited an old public health debate: Is taxation enough to discourage harmful consumption, or should the state simply ban such products altogether? At the heart of this discussion lies a contradiction — while the government cites health concerns, it continues to generate substantial revenue from the very substances it claims to discourage and is not interested in banning them altogether as it would lose a substantial amount of revenue. But the big question is — Is earning revenue at the cost of public health acceptable? Another concern is that increasing the cess on manufacturers will inevitably raise production costs, leading to higher retail prices. But past experience shows that higher prices rarely translate into lower consumption; demand for these products continues to grow regardless of cost. What is worse is that small manufacturers start selling even more, as they are not in the tax net and work with second-hand machines and low-grade ingredients that are even more harmful. India collected ₹19.4 lakh crore in various cesses over five years, and the new framework ensures that "sin goods" continue to be taxed heavily.

From the government's standpoint, this is both a revenue-stabilising measure and a public health intervention. If *gutka* and pan masala are so harmful — being among India's leading causes of oral cancer — why not ban them outright? The government cannot simultaneously position itself as a guardian of public health and earn from a substance that is unquestionably a health hazard. Cess risks creating a parallel economy where illicit and unregulated products flourish, posing even greater health risks.

Congress: The Karnataka power tussle

After a setback in Bihar, the Congress Party is now facing an internal conflict in Karnataka, where tensions have escalated between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar



KALYANI
SHANKAR

Following the recent setback in Bihar, the Congress Party is grappling with a power struggle in Karnataka between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy, DK Shivakumar. Within political circles, especially among Congress members, there is rampant speculation about a possible leadership change later this year, raising concerns about stability and future governance.

As soon as the Chief Minister completed his half-term on October 20, tensions rose. DK Shivakumar's supporters claim that a secret agreement was made in 2023 involving six senior Congress leaders, whereby Siddaramaiah became Chief Minister while Shivakumar would lead the party.

The Congress leadership in Delhi has intervened, summoning both leaders to the capital. This has left Shivakumar's supporters uncertain about the future. Congress Chief Mallikarjun Kharge, who hails from Karnataka, stated, "I, Sonia Gandhi, and Rahul will decide soon." The BJP has expressed concerns about how this dispute could impact state administration.

This power struggle dates back to 2023 when the secret pact was established between the two contenders. Shivakumar emphasised this week, "Keeping one's word is the greatest strength," sending a message to the Gandhis, and added, "Word power is world power."

Former BJP Chief Minister Sadananda Gowda has offered the party's outside support to D.K. Shivakumar, aligning with Prime Minister Modi's hints about a potential split in the Congress and raising questions about whether Shivakumar will fracture the party.

The Chief Minister acknowledged current challenges, stating, "Administration is on edge; MLAs are discussing leadership changes in the Karnataka Congress, impacting the bureaucracy." He urged the Congress leadership to make a quick decision.

The Congress Party is expected to announce leadership changes soon, a decision that could reshape Karnataka's political landscape and influence national politics.

This is not the first time Congress has encountered factionalism. Karnataka is known for its groupism. The party previously dealt with a similar situation involving Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot in Rajasthan. Gehlot won that contest, leaving Pilot bitter and disappointed. This bitterness persisted throughout the term.

About ten MLAs supportive of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar are in Delhi advocating for his appointment as Chief Minister. They insist there was a secret agreement for a rotational



DK SHIVAKUMAR'S
SUPPORTERS
CLAIM THAT A
SECRET
AGREEMENT WAS
MADE IN 2023
INVOLVING SIX
SENIOR CONGRESS
LEADERS,
WHEREBY
SIDDARAMAIAH
BECAME CHIEF
MINISTER WHILE
SHIVAKUMAR
WOULD LEAD THE
PARTY

The writer is a popular
Columnist

dailypioneer
 @kalyanishankar
 The Pioneer

chief ministership, under which Siddaramaiah became Chief Minister in 2023. They believe it is now time for Shivakumar to take over.

The decision-making team, including Sonia and Priyanka Gandhi, supports Shivakumar for the Chief Minister's post. At the same time, Rahul Gandhi and KC Venugopal prefer Siddaramaiah to complete his term. The crucial vote rests with Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, who remains undecided and personally involved in the matter.

Shivakumar wants to brief Rahul Gandhi and has sought time to do so. Rahul replied to him on WhatsApp, "Please wait, I will call you." If there is a leadership change in Karnataka now, it could significantly affect the state's stability and national politics, especially with elections approaching.

The Congress Party's influence in national politics is waning. This makes it vital to maintain the power balance in the state. The party must be cautious, as any misstep in leadership could threaten the stability of a crucial government. The Congress High Command faces critical decisions: whether to continue with Siddaramaiah or promote a younger leader like DK Shivakumar. The fight is between the two leaders. Favouring one or the other could disturb the party. Exploring potential future scenarios will be crucial.

Shivakumar, as a younger leader, has also been a key asset to the Congress Party. He is known for resolving issues not only in

Karnataka but also in other states where Congress was in trouble. Being wealthy and supported by the Lingayats, with control over the organisational structure, he effectively solves problems and contributes to the party's success.

Siddaramaiah is known as a capable administrator and one of Karnataka's most prominent leaders, proving advantageous to the Congress Party by fostering unity. He has a strong mass base and popular legitimacy.

Tension is rising as both leaders publicly commit to the party's decision, revealing their underlying ambitions. However, both are preparing their supporters for a fight. The ongoing demands and pressure tactics have harmed the Karnataka Congress's image.

Karnataka is a crucial test for the Congress Party, revealing its ability to manage leadership expectations in a key state. It is one of three states where Congress is in power. Past experiences, such as in Rajasthan, have shown that informal arrangements require careful handling as ambitions grow. In Karnataka, the stakes are high, and any change must not disrupt the government.

The High Command retains some symbolic authority but no longer wields the power it once had. Currently, it must balance the interests of two key leaders who are essential to its future. Additionally, it needs to maintain government stability and demonstrate unity in a time of limited national strength.

The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

Value-based education: Essential for a civilised world



RAJYOGI BRAHMA
KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

2ND OPINION
THE PIONEER

History shows that for ages, human beings have exploited other human beings and living creatures on the basis of gender, caste, creed, race, physical or mental strength, economic power, organisational abilities or unity. Similarly, powerful and mighty nations and communities have exploited weaker and poorer nations and communities because of their vulnerabilities. Exploitation of illiterate and poor people is a known reality across the world.

As we all know, powerful or so-called educated people have long used uneducated, illiterate, and socially backward groups as slaves or bonded labourers, forcing them to work under inhuman conditions simply to make life easier and more comfortable for themselves. As landown-

ers, men have exploited the tillers of the soil. As industrialists, they have extracted labour from the working class at extremely low wages.

As capitalists and moneylenders, they have demanded high interest rates on money and real estate. As heads of multinational companies, they have imported raw materials and labour at cheap rates and exported manufactured goods to global markets, filling their own coffers at the cost of semi-industrialised or unindustrialised nations. In pursuit of exploitation, no limits have ever been set. It is not only exploitation but also active persecution of the weak by the strong. Even when offering something to others, the hidden aim was often to gain name, fame, praise or credit and to be rewarded sooner or later. Only rarely have individuals made sacrifices out of pure love, sympathy, compassion or concern. This demonstrates that money, machines, resources, military strength and political influence have repeatedly been used by selfish individuals to exploit others. Exploitation causes widespread trouble and turmoil. Can it be eliminated to save humanity? Many social, economic, political and interpersonal problems can be solved only if universal love replaces exploitation. If abundance and affluence remove all incentive to exploit, exploitation can end. How can the feeling of universal love be ignited worldwide? The key is education.

Awakening and strengthening the emotion of love can be achieved only through education that ennoble emotions. Without values-based education and practical methods to refine or spiritualise love, crime and lawlessness will increase. Discussions on human rights are meaningless without this education. Any society, however developed, will be riddled with crime if its people lack proper values education. Unfortunately, those in power often overlook how deeply progress, peace and happiness depend on emotional training and values education, especially the teaching of love.

Governments and organisations spend trillions annually to solve conflicts and problems, yet exploitation continues because conflict resolution lacks genuine moral and spiritual education. It is time for leaders to understand this and act seriously to protect future generations from ongoing devastation. This approach to education builds character, empathy, responsibility and emotional intelligence, shaping individuals who choose ethical paths and contribute positively to society. Value-based education offers the essential foundation to overcome exploitation and create a civilised, harmonious world.

The writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist

The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Centenarians rising across the world

While blessing an elderly person, it is customary to say, "May you live a long life." Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve and P Satawalekar both reached their centenary through lifelong dedication and discipline. Even today, many centenarians live across India and other countries, remaining active despite their advanced age.

According to the World Population Review, over the past fifteen years the number of centenarians worldwide has risen significantly — from 4.55 lakh to 9.35 lakh. Japan has the highest number, with 1,23,333 individuals aged one hundred or more. The United States ranks second with 73,629 centenarians, followed by China with 48,566. India stands fourth with 37,988. In addition, several nations such as Russia, Italy, Germany, Britain, Spain, Thailand and Canada also have substantial centenarian populations.

Pension systems, nutritional awareness and a healthier lifestyle further support longer life expectancy. Japan, in particular, places great emphasis on optimistic living rather than stress-driven routines. Moreover, the country's longstanding culture of regular physical activity, balanced diet and social cohesion has played a major role in its exceptionally high number of centenarians.

SHANTARAM WAG | PUNE

India's medicine pricing paradox exposed

India, often described as the pharmacy of the world, presents a paradoxical situation when it comes to the pricing of medicines. In the country, the cost of drugs sold in local chemist shops and those available at Jan Aushadhi Kendras shows an extreme disparity. There exists a considerable inflation gap, even when the medicines share the same chemical composition and therapeutic value. The irony of this pharmaceutical landscape is that the pricing of drugs produced by multinational companies often remains largely untouched, facing minimal competition. This results in a system where affordability becomes a challenge for the very people who depend on these medicines for survival. The government must therefore conduct a thorough reality check on drug prices. It should examine which medicines dominate the pharmaceutical market and investigate how middlemen exploit economically weaker sections through inflated pricing.

Medicines are an essential necessity, not a luxury, and their prices must remain within the reach of every individual. India must prioritise becoming the true pharmacy for its own people by ensuring that all citizens have easy access to high-quality medicines at affordable prices.

KIRTI WADHAWAN | KANPUR

BLO deaths expose electoral negligence

The persistent deaths of Booth Level Officers (BLOs) across India, resulting from the demanding and stressful nature of their work during the ongoing SIR 2025 electoral roll revision, have raised serious and deeply troubling concerns. These incidents have triggered political controversy, widespread public distress and growing criticism of the administrative burden placed on field officers. Such tragic deaths demand intervention from bodies like the National Human Rights Commission to assess whether current practices genuinely protect the rights and welfare of frontline staff. The SIR exercise involves large-scale mobilisation of field personnel, creating immense administrative pressure, especially in regions with dense populations and high migration. Although SIR is crucial for preventing voter fraud and maintaining democratic credibility, the repeated loss of BLOs raises a vital question: should electoral integrity ever come at the cost of human lives?

The deaths of BLOs during this exercise serve as a stark reminder that electoral preparedness must balance procedural accuracy with the well-being of those undertaking door-to-door verification. The system must protect the very workers who uphold the foundation of free and fair elections.

RANGANATHAN SIVAKUMAR | TAMIL NADU

DEEPFAKE TECHNOLOGY POSES GRAVE RISKS DEMANDING URGENT ACTION

Deepfake content has rapidly become one of the most dangerous digital threats of the modern era. These highly manipulated videos and audio recordings are increasingly being misused for character assassination, cyberbullying, financial fraud, and widespread political misinformation. What makes this threat particularly alarming is the extreme realism that advanced artificial intelligence now enables, making it extraordinarily difficult for ordinary citizens to distinguish authentic material from fabricated content.

As a consequence, victims often endure severe emotional distress, social humiliation, professional setbacks, and long-term reputational damage.

Given the seriousness of this crisis, there is an urgent need for

the government to introduce and enforce far stricter cyber laws, supported by clearly defined guidelines to regulate the creation, distribution, and misuse of deepfake material. Strong penalties and faster investigative procedures are essential to deter malicious actors.

Equally important is the responsibility of citizens to remain vigilant. People must verify the credibility of any digital content before sharing it, particularly during sensitive political periods, to prevent the spread of harmful misinformation. Public awareness campaigns and digital-literacy programmes can play a crucial role in educating society about the dangers posed by deepfakes and the steps required to counter them effectively.

ARSHAD BASTAVI | MUMBAI

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

COP30 ends in disappointment with weak commitments

COP30 met in Belém under intense global urgency, yet it ended in broad disappointment. Crucial proposals to phase out fossil fuels and halt deforestation failed to secure agreement, exposing the sharp divide between major emitting nations and vulnerable countries already suffering the harsh impacts of climate change

FIRST
Column



B K
SINGH

A week before COP30 began in Belém, Cyclone Montha formed in the Bay of Bengal and struck the Indian states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, damaging infrastructure and disrupting lives and livelihoods. Around the same time, Hurricane Melissa originated in the Atlantic Ocean and caused widespread destruction in Jamaica and Cuba. Melissa was one of the strongest Category 5 storms ever recorded, with wind speeds approaching 300 km per hour, knocking out power to nearly three-quarters of the island nation. The hurricane then moved towards Cuba, causing extensive damage, and later to Haiti, where 20 people died, before passing across the Bahamas and near Bermuda. In addition, Typhoon Kalamegi made landfall in Vietnam after killing 200 people in the Philippines and Vietnam. By the time COP30 reached its concluding stage, flooding in Vietnam had taken 41 more lives.

Amid so many climate disruptions occurring across the world, COP30 ended with significant disappointment. Brazil's proposal — backed by nearly 90 countries — to lay down a roadmap for transitioning away from fossil fuels, along with the host nation's proposal to end deforestation, failed to reach consensus.

The conference was overshadowed by the absence of leaders from the three top greenhouse-gas-emitting countries. Climate change driven by greenhouse gas emissions has warmed oceans and intensified storms. The most damaging of these gases is CO₂, a non-reactive compound that remains in the atmosphere for hundreds of years. The poorest countries — especially those located between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn — are suffering the most.

They have been pleading for assistance for years, but wealthy nations have failed to meet their pledges to fund mitigation and adaptation efforts. Donald Trump, in both his first and second terms as US President, withdrew from the Paris Climate Accord and did not provide funds to help poorer nations decarbonise their economies or repair climate-related damage. How can he aspire to a Nobel Peace Prize when his



OF THE 74 COUNTRIES WITH TFFF-QUALIFYING FORESTS, 68 HAVE FOSSIL FUEL DEPOSITS BENEATH THEM. THERE ARE 317 BILLION TONNES OF POTENTIAL CO₂ FROM RECOVERABLE RESERVES AND MORE THAN 4.6 TRILLION TONNES IF ALL DEPOSITS WERE EXPLOITED

The writer is Retired Head of Karnataka Forest Force and presently teaches Economics in Karnataka Forest Academy

dailyioneer

@TheDailyPioneer

The Pioneer

actions have left two-thirds of the global population exposed to increasingly destructive climate catastrophes?

More than Trump's claims, the Nobel Committee should consider the state of the global environment. Scientific communities and the United Nations have repeatedly warned that if global warming exceeds 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, life on the planet will face unprecedented disruptions. These warnings have been ignored by Trump, who calls climate change a hoax, dismantles green-energy transition projects and expands fossil fuel production. He praises "clean, beautiful coal" and increases fossil-fuel output to keep inflation in check. How can the Nobel Committee overlook actions that directly contradict scientific advice?

The conference was held at the mouth of the Amazon in Belém, a region of immense environmental significance. The Amazon rainforest is considered the lungs of the world, and its preservation is essential for the survival of humankind. Assured access to concessional finance for adaptation and affordable green technol-

ogy for mitigation are major concerns for the Global South. The scale of the Amazon can be understood from the fact that India's forests store 7.2 gigatonnes of CO₂ equivalent, while the Amazon stores 56.8 gigatonnes. Forests cover 31 per cent of the world's land, amounting to 4.14 billion hectares. Brazil holds 12 per cent of global forests, while Russia, China, Canada and the Democratic Republic of Congo hold 20 per cent, 12 per cent, 9 per cent and 8 per cent respectively. If forests were protected and allowed to regenerate without human pressure, they could absorb nearly 14 gigatonnes of CO₂ annually — equal to one-third of yearly global greenhouse-gas emissions.

Recognising this potential, the host country proposed an initiative to end deforestation. Although only a beginning, the proposal aimed to stop the destruction of tropical forests. The Tropical Forests Forever Facility (TFFF) was launched to mobilise \$125 billion through public and private funding to reward countries that conserve forests and regenerate barren areas to expand tropical

forest cover. It would be managed by the World Bank as a multilateral trust fund. The challenge arises when fossil fuels lie buried beneath these forests, creating incentives for their destruction through extraction.

Of the 74 countries with TFFF-qualifying forests, 68 have fossil fuel deposits beneath them. There are 317 billion tonnes of potential CO₂ from recoverable reserves and more than 4.6 trillion tonnes if all deposits were exploited. Most of these are concentrated in India, China and Indonesia. TFFF cannot succeed unless there is a clear commitment not to extract fossil fuels beneath forests. A similar mechanism must also apply to non-TFFF countries. Boreal forests also cover major fossil fuel reserves, particularly in Russia and Canada. Therefore, an agreement is needed to prioritise forests located above fossil fuel deposits and ensure they remain off-limits for exploitation. Indigenous people from the Andes in Ecuador, the Amazon in Peru, and activists from Brazilian forests and savannas — young and old, women and men — participated in the conference in large numbers. They raised their voices against

the destruction of their territories through oil drilling and gold mining and demanded the protection of the world's most bio-diverse forests. Indigenous communities in the Amazon are known to clear trees and expand agriculture for crops such as soybeans and maize. They will protect the forests if compensated adequately.

Another proposal by the host country that failed to appear in the final agreement was the roadmap for phasing out fossil fuels. Around 90 countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific, along with EU member states and the UK, supported the phase-out plan. A red line, the EU called the roadmap a red line, leading economies such as India, China, South Africa and Russia informed the presidency that they would not accept it. Cambodia also joined this coalition. The initiative sought a binding global agreement to halt new fossil fuel expansion, ensure an equitable phase-out and scale up financial mechanisms to support vulnerable nations. Developing countries require technology transfer, climate finance and capacity-building support for a fair energy transition. There was strong support from both the Global South and Global North for a fossil-fuel phase-out, but the final agreement omitted it. This became the biggest fault line at COP30.

COP30 increased the annual climate-finance target from \$100 billion to \$300 billion by 2035. Developed countries will raise their grant contributions from \$40 billion to \$120 billion, while the remaining \$180 billion — mobilised by developed countries — will come as loans to developing nations for mitigation and adaptation. This could push vulnerable countries into unsustainable debt and harm their economies.

Other issues that reached consensus and were included in the agreement are the health action plan, the Santa Marta Conference (co-hosted with the Netherlands on April 28-29 2026) to discuss global fossil-fuel phase-out, the Open Planetary Intelligence Network, the global ethical stocktake, and the declaration on hunger, poverty and people-centred climate action and adaptation. These have limited significance at the international level. The concern remains that transporting 50,000 delegates from all parts of the world and meeting their logistical needs in Belém may have generated more carbon emissions than the reductions achieved at COP30.

India-Russia: Exploring new frontiers for economic cooperation and partnership



PRIYA
GUPTA

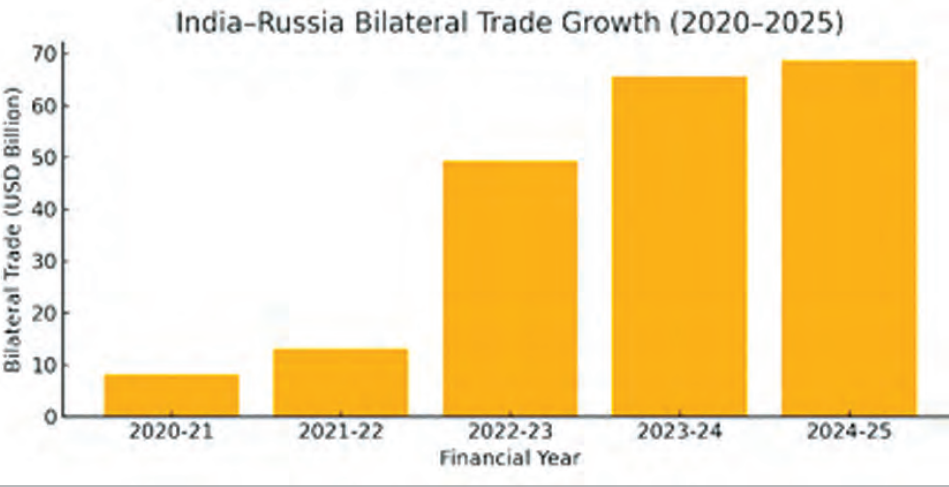
India and Russia remain extremely close and reliable partners on the economic and defence fronts. In FY 2024-25, bilateral trade reached a record US \$68.7 billion, with India importing nearly US \$63.8 billion worth of goods from Russia. Following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Russia steadily emerged as India's largest crude-oil supplier, accounting for more than one-third of India's total crude imports in 2025. Russia has also become India's top fertiliser supplier, with fertiliser imports rising by nearly 370 per cent over the past two years.

India's exports to Russia, although modest at around USD 5 billion, include pharmaceuticals, tea, engineering goods, marine products, textiles, and organic chemicals, and are expected to grow further as both countries work to reduce the trade imbalance.

Alongside this expanding economic corridor, tourism between the two countries carries immense untapped potential. The flying time between major Indian and Russian cities is comparable to several popular long-haul routes, making Russia a viable and attractive destination for Indian travellers, particularly if visa procedures continue to ease. In 2024, around 1.2 lakh Indians visited Russia, whereas more than 50 lakh Indians travelled to Southeast Asia in the same period. This comparison clearly highlights the possibility of exponential growth in Indo-Russian tourism. As visa-free group travel becomes operational, this potential could increase many times over.

Thousands of Indian students pursue higher education in Russia, especially in medicine, engineering, and technical sciences, creating sustained cultural familiarity and long-term interpersonal networks.

These exchanges deepen social understanding on both sides. Similarly, Russian visitors to India frequently engage with India's cultural, spiritual, and wellness traditions—from yoga and Ayurveda to heritage tourism—creating a growing community of cultural ambassadors in both countries. Travel companies note that the new framework will open the route to families, students, MSME delegations and budget travellers who were previously deterred



by procedural complexity. Indian arrivals in Russia rose from 60,000 in 2023 to 120,000 in 2024, while Russian visitors to India increased to 175,000 in the same period. Combined travel volumes could surpass 400,000 in 2025. Moscow also recorded a 26 per cent rise in business travellers from India in 2023, signalling renewed corporate interest in Russian markets.

The tourism revival is anchored in three factors: improved direct flight connectivity, a rebound in post-pandemic travel, and Russia's 2023 introduction of e-visas for Indian citizens.

Impact on the Travel Economy

Industry analysts estimate that the visa-free mechanism could expand the bilateral tourism economy by USD 80-110 million annually through higher spending on flights, hotels, local transport, and packaged tours. Travel associations add that the shift may also encourage more cross-border corporate travel, particularly in energy, pharmaceuticals, education, and technology services.

"The India-Russia travel corridor is entering a high-growth phase. Visa-free group travel will significantly widen the market and bring in first-time international travellers from India's Tier-II and Tier-III cities," said a senior official from the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO).

Cultural and Academic Links

While economics forms the backbone of the new framework, cultural and educational exchanges also stand to gain. Beyond leisure travel, India can expand medical, wellness, and spiritual tourism, while Russia's winter destinations offer new options for Indian travellers seeking seasonal experiences.

Policy Perspective

Officials familiar with the matter say the initiative aligns with broader efforts to diversify

engagement beyond traditional defence and energy cooperation. For India, the agreement fits into a larger strategy of expanding international tourism, especially as outbound travel continues to rise among middle-income households.

To accelerate this momentum, both governments could consider complementary policy measures such as subsidised travel corridors, simplified visa-on-arrival schemes, and dedicated tourism desks for MSMEs and student exchanges. "Visa simplifications always expand mobility," says a senior member of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO). "Russia is not a new market for India, but the revival of affordable direct connectivity and easier entry will make it far more attractive for families and students."

Outlook

If implemented smoothly, the visa-free group travel framework has the potential to reshape how both nations interact at the citizen level. With demand already rising and both governments prioritising mobility reforms, the India-Russia tourism corridor may emerge as one of the most dynamic bilateral travel routes in the coming years.

For tourists, the upcoming changes promise easier access, lower travel costs, and more varied itineraries. For the economy, they signal new opportunities across aviation, hospitality, education, and trade. Above all, the initiative reflects a shift towards closer, more frequent, and more meaningful people-to-people engagement between India and Russia.

The writer is an Associate Professor at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee School of Management and Entrepreneurship, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

dailyioneer

@dailyioneer

v-priya-gupta-28550831



CHAMU
KRISHNA
SHASTRY

As India navigates a moment of renewed cultural assertion and rising linguistic anxieties, the Kashi Tamil Sangamam (KTS) returns at precisely the right moment. Its fourth edition, beginning in December 2025, arrives at a time when debates about regional identity, linguistic pride and national integration have become sharper, sometimes even polarising. In such a context, KTS stands out not merely as a festival, but as a vital civilisational bridge, reminding us that India's unity is an enduring cultural inheritance.

A Counter-Current in Divisive Times

The past few years have seen language enter public discourse more forcefully, often sparking heated debates over recruitment rules, competitive exams, mediums of instruction and digital platforms. Social media frequently amplifies these issues into regional flashpoints, creating a misleading impression of a North-South cultural clash. This narrative, while emotionally charged, ignores the centuries of dialogue, migration, learning and exchanges that have shaped our civilisation. KTS serves as a powerful counter-current to this polarisation by demonstrating that the Tamil and Hindi-speaking regions do not stand in contrast, but rather in constant conversation and agreement.

A Vision Rooted in Continuity

Conceptualised under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and organised by the Ministry of Education, with IIT Madras and BHU as knowledge partners, KTS aligns perfectly with the ethos of Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat. Far from being merely symbolic, it revives a civilisational relationship between Tamil Nadu and Kashi, two ancient centres of learning whose interactions have shaped Indian thought for millennia. The corridor between the South and Kashi is not a modern creation; it has long been a home for Tamil poets, saints and scholars. It was here in Varanasi that Mahakavi Subramania Bharathi found his intellectual awakening and where Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, a towering Tamil philosopher, led Banaras Hindu University. This living history challenges simplified binaries about regional isolation.

Why Language Matters Now

Language is once again central to India's social discourse. With increased interstate migra-

tion, multilingual workplaces, digital classrooms and a growing national labour market, linguistic literacy is no longer optional. While state-level identity politics has sharpened linguistic boundaries, KTS's renewed focus, "Learn Tamil - Tamil Karkalam", comes as a timely intervention. Recognising Tamil as a national treasure rather than a regional language is crucial for India's emotional integration — an approach that extends to all Indian languages. Celebrating one language does not make another smaller, but instead enriches the entire national linguistic ecosystem.

KTS 4.0 places this exchange at the centre of cultural unity, encouraging youth, students, educators and scholars to treat Tamil, Hindi, Sanskrit, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Marathi, Bengali and all Indian languages as relatives within one Bharatiya Bhasha family.

KTS's key contribution is its ability to humanise history, enabling participants to rediscover shared civilisational roots through methods such as cultural immersions, seminars, poetry recitals, temple visits and academic interactions. It reminds us that Siddha and Ayurveda evolved through cross-lingual knowledge sharing and that Tamil grammar's ancient roots converse deeply with Panini's linguistic tradition. Furthermore, it highlights how temple architecture, music, ritual practices and storytelling traditions between the North and South overlap far more than they differ.

The Needs of a Changing India

India today is far more mobile than ever before. Students from Tamil Nadu attend universities in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, while Hindi-speaking students pursue technology, medicine and the arts in Coimbatore, Chennai and Madurai. Driven by the economy's growing demand for multilingual skillsets, building cultural empathy is now a national necessity. KTS thus stands as a policy-relevant initiative that strengthens national cohesion precisely when identity markers are sharp and sensitivities even sharper.

The Sangamam challenges the flawed assumption that unity requires sameness, and instead calls for unity through understanding. Each edition of KTS proves that genuine dialogue reduces mistrust, dismantles stereotypes and builds emotional bridges. As KTS 4.0 is set to begin, it drives home the key message that celebrating Tamil enriches all of India, learning from others strengthens one's own identity, and our languages are not competing voices, but harmonising notes in the Indian symphony.

The writer is Chairman, Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti

dailyioneer

@ChamuKShastri

The Pioneer

FROM THE WORLD

GERMANY

Libyan suspect sent to ICC

A Libyan man accused of crimes against humanity and war crimes in a Tripoli prison has been sent by Germany to the International Criminal Court to face justice(ICC). ICC prosecutors allege Hached Mohamed Ali El Hishri was a senior commander at the Mitiga prison, where they say he ordered or oversaw atrocities including murder, torture, rape and sexual violence between 2015 and 2020.He was arrested by German authorities on July 16 on a sealed warrant issued by The Hague-based court and had been in custody in Germany before being surrendered Monday, the court said after he arrived at its detention centre.

The ICC's prosecution office in July called El Hishri's arrest "an important development" in efforts to seek accountability for crimes in detention facilities in Libya.

HONDURAS

Hernandez free from US prison

Former Honduras President Juan Orlando Hernandez, sentenced last year to 45 years in prison for his role in helping drug traffickers move hundreds of tons of cocaine to the United States, was released from prison following a pardon from President Trump, his wife announced. The US Bureau of Prisons inmate website showed that Hernandez was released from US Penitentiary, Hazelton, in West Virginia, and a spokesperson for the bureau confirmed his release.His wife Ana Garcia thanked Trump for pardoning Hernandez via the social platform X early Tuesday. "After almost four years of pain, of waiting and difficult challenges, my husband Juan Orlando Hernandez RETURNED to being a free man, thanks to the presidential pardon granted by President Donald Trump," Garcia's post said.

India signs up to procure more Heron MK-II drones

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Tel Aviv

India has signed up to procure additional satellite-linked Heron MK II drones under emergency provisions, aiming to significantly enhance its defence capabilities following their effective use during Operation Sindoor, according to an Israeli defence industry source.

The Heron MK II Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), already in service with the Indian Army and Air Force, will now be incorporated into the Indian Navy, said the source working with Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI). In September, the defence ministry issued the



Request for Proposal (RFP) for the acquisition of 87 MALE drones, with a focus on an indigenous "Make in India" programme that allows foreign collaboration.

"For us, India is a major customer," the unnamed IAI official said. "Our partnership spans over three decades and generations of systems."

After Operation Sindoor, all three branches of the Indian Armed Forces have selected the Heron MK II for emergency procurement, the official stated, but did not disclose the numbers.

"We are very proud that all three branches decided to purchase and operate the Heron Mark II," he said. The Heron MK II is a Medium Altitude Long Endurance or

MALE UAV capable of reaching an altitude of 35,000 feet and remaining in the air for 45 consecutive hours. It is operated by the Israeli Air Force and over 20 other entities globally. Regarding the 'Make in India' initiative, the IAI official said, "We are fully aware of 'Make in India' and are collaborating closely with our local partners to meet those requirements." He added that one of these partners is HAL, while another is Elcom. The IAI intends not only to supply these advanced systems but also to manufacture them in India.

"What we want to do is to manufacture the systems in India. So it will be an Indian version of the Heron," he said. This ambitious vision

includes a significant push for technology transfer and an aim for upwards of 60 per cent indigenous Indian manufacturing content.

"One of the main lessons of the 1973 war was that our intelligence was purely on a second-hand basis," he said, adding that the urgent need for continuous, real-time aerial intelligence led to the creation of the Scout—the world's first-ever operational UAV in the late 1970s.

The UAVs have now evolved from simple surveillance tools to the "Queen of the battlefield," operating thousands of kilometres away, providing multi-sensor capabilities, and even playing a major role against enemy air defences, the official said.

Israeli fire killed two Palestinians in Gaza

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Deir Al-Balah

Israeli fire killed two Palestinians in Gaza and two suspected Palestinian attackers in the West Bank on Tuesday as Israel's Government prepared to receive some of the last hostage remains from militants in Gaza. The return is a key part of a ceasefire between the militant group and Israel's Government. In a statement Tuesday, Israel's Prime Minister's Office said it was expecting to receive the remains from the Red Cross, which later would be taken to forensic testing to confirm that they were the remains of hostages. It was not immediately clear if they had already been transferred to the Red Cross.

The remains are expected to be of the final two hostages taken by Palestinian militants in their October 7, 2023, attack that triggered the war. The Tuesday killings were the latest burst of violence in the Palestinian territories, which has fueled concerns that unrest could spill over and undermine the fragile truce in Gaza.

An Israeli drone strike killed a journalist in southern Gaza on Tuesday, officials at Nasser Hospital, which received the body, said.

The journalist, Mohamed Wadi, who used to film through a drone, was killed in the southern city of Khan Younis, the hospital said. The conflict in Gaza has had a heavy toll on Palestinian



Smoke rising as Israeli forces demolish the home of Abdul Karim Sanoubar, a suspected Palestinian militant

journalists working on the front lines. Also on Tuesday, a man in Gaza was fatally shot near the eastern side of the Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza, according to Al-Awda Hospital.

The Gaza Health Ministry said that more than 350 Palestinians have been killed across the territory since a ceasefire on October 11 stopped the Israel-Hamas war. Israel's military did not immediately comment on either death, but has said that killings have often been in response to firing at their forces by militants.

Both Hamas and Israel have accused the other of breaking the terms of the ceasefire. At the same time, Israel's military has pushed forward its operations in the occupied West Bank.

On Tuesday morning, the military said troops shot and killed a suspect who stabbed two soldiers as they were

confronting him near Ateret, an Israeli settlement north of Ramallah in central West Bank. It said the incident was under review.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said Israeli forces killed an 18-year-old Palestinian north of Ramallah, but it wasn't immediately clear if it was the same incident.

Israel's Mada rescue service said two soldiers were lightly wounded. In the southern West Bank, the army said it fatally shot a Palestinian who had earlier carried out a car-ramming attack that wounded a soldier. The army said the man attempted to flee as they tried to arrest him near the city of Hebron, "while endangering the soldiers," and he was shot dead. The Palestinian Health Ministry identified the suspect as a 17-year-old resident of Hebron.

In a statement late

Monday, Hamas celebrated the ramming attack near Hebron, saying that it came "in the context of the legitimate response of our people" to Israel's ongoing raids in the West Bank. The militant group didn't claim the attack.

The Israeli army has stepped up its activities in the West Bank since Hamas's 2023 attack triggered the war in Gaza. Israel says the offensive is aimed at rooting out militants.

But Palestinians say scores of stone throwers, protesters and uninvolved civilians have been killed.

In recent weeks, Israeli settlers have stepped up attacks on Palestinian civilians. Palestinian assailants killed an Israeli man in a stabbing and car ramming attack last month.

On Tuesday, Israeli forces demolished the home of Abdul Karim Sanoubar, a suspected Palestinian militant currently in detention who has been accused by Israel of planting bombs on buses in central Israel last February. Troops evacuated 13 homes around the building in the city of Nablus, and a plume of smoke billowed out after the home was destroyed. Also on Tuesday, Israel's military launched another round of strikes on southern Lebanon, which has become an almost daily occurrence as Israel accuses the militant group Hezbollah of failing to disarm following a US-brokered ceasefire last year that halted two months of war.

Imran is alive but subjected to mental torture, says sister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Lahore

Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan is alive but subjected to "mental torture in solitary confinement", his sister Dr Uzma Khan said on Tuesday after meeting him at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) said in a statement after Uzma's meeting with the 73-year-old former cricketer-turned-politician that Khan has been "put in solitary confinement and he is being subjected to mental torture". Upon her return, she also confirmed that Khan's health looks fine, the statement added.

An unannounced ban was placed on meeting Khan, who has been in prison since August 2023 in multiple cases, for more than a month.

Constantly denying his family members from meeting the PTI founder led to speculations on social media whether he is alive or dead. Adiala jail authorities however claimed that he is in "good health".

The PTI in a statement on Thursday said that one of the sisters of Khan, Dr Uzma Khan, was permitted to meet him. Meanwhile, the Punjab Government deployed the entire Rawalpindi police force along Adiala Road to thwart the PTI protest.

The Government has already imposed Section 144 (ban on gathering of four or more people) in Rawalpindi



and Islamabad. The station house officers of eight police stations in Rawalpindi along with senior officers are present outside Adiala jail.

"An eight-kilometre stretch has been completely sealed. Schools and colleges are closed. Residents are being required to show their ID card to pass through the area," an official of Punjab Government told.

A group of lawyers also held a demonstration outside the Islamabad High Court against the Government for keeping Imran Khan in isolation. Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry said compliance with Section 144 would be ensured in Islamabad and Rawalpindi at any cost. "Whether they

come to the Islamabad High Court (IHC) or the Adiala jail, action under Section 144 would be carried out without any discrimination," the minister said. Earlier, Imran Khan's son Kasim Khan demanded the Government present proof that he (Khan) is alive. "We demand proof of (Imran Khan)'s life," Khan's son Kasim Khan had said in a post on X. Khan's party has warned the authorities of countrywide protests if the Government does not allow his sisters to see him.

His sisters have also warned that if anything happens to Khan, those involved and their families will not be spared by Pakistanis both here and abroad.

Zia remains critical, security tightened at hospital

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Dhaka

A team of medical experts from the UK will visit Bangladesh to assess the treatment of ailing former prime minister Khaleda Zia, who continues to remain in a critical condition at a private hospital here, her personal physician said on Tuesday.

Speaking to reporters in front of Evercare Hospital, AZM Zahid Hossain said the UK specialists would join the international medical board already supervising Zia's treatment.

"Experts from the UK will come today (Tuesday) to examine her," he said, adding that India, China, the US, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan have also extended their medical assistance.

Hossain said a medical board comprising doctors from the UK, the US, and Bangladesh is overseeing



Zia's care. A five-member Chinese team arrived on Monday and met the medical board, its head Dr Shahabuddin Talukder told local media earlier.

Hossain reiterated that there was no scope to take the 80-year-old Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairperson abroad at this stage.

"We have made all preparations, but the most impor-

tant thing to remember is the current condition of the patient and, above all, we do not have any opportunity to do anything that is outside the medical board's recommendations at the moment," he said. Hossain said the board was continuously monitoring Zia.

"She is properly receiving the treatment being administered to her. We hope she

will recover this time based on the treatment she is receiving and the prayers of the whole nation," said Hossain, also a member of the BNP Standing Committee. The three-time prime minister was admitted to the private hospital on November 23 after being diagnosed with infections affecting her heart and lungs.

She was moved to the coronary care unit four days later as her complications worsened. Her condition deteriorated further, and she was placed on ventilation on Sunday night, BNP Vice-Chairman Advocate Ahmed Aazam Khan said on Monday.

Meanwhile, security was tightened around Zia on early Tuesday. Police erected a barricade at the main gate of Evercare Hospital around 2 am, with more than two dozen personnel deployed to regulate patients' movement and reinforce security. The heightened security

followed after the interim Government on Monday declared Zia a "very, very important person", enabling the deployment of the Special Security Force (SSF) for her protection.

Four SSF personnel inspected several sections of the hospital overnight.

Zia is currently staying in a cabin on the fourth floor, where surrounding cabins have been vacated as part of heightened security protocols. Special prayers for Zia's recovery are being held across Bangladesh, including in Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chattogram, Barishal, Sylhet and Mymensingh, by BNP units and supporters.

Many supporters also took to social media to post prayers and messages wishing her a swift recovery.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday expressed deep concern over Zia's health and offered all possible support.

Pakistan passes bill to protect rights of minorities and establish commission

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Islamabad

Pakistan parliament on Tuesday passed a landmark bill to protect the rights of non-Muslims and establish a dedicated commission for minorities. Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarar moved the National Commission for Minority Rights Bill 2025 which was passed by the National Assembly and Senate in a joint session after intense debate.

"The bill was delayed for 10 years and politics should not influence it," Tarar said on the occasion, adding that the passage of the bill marks a historic step towards formalising minority rights protections in Pakistan. According to the bill, the commission will consist of 16 members. Each of the four provinces will nominate two minority members. One member will represent

THE COMMISSION WILL CONSIST OF 16 MEMBERS. EACH OF THE FOUR PROVINCES WILL NOMINATE TWO MINORITY MEMBERS

Islamabad, nominated at the discretion of the Chief Commissioner.

Three members will come from existing bodies — the National Commission for Human Rights, the National Commission on the Status of Women, and the Child Rights Commission — nominated by their respective chairpersons.

Officials from the Ministry of Law, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Interior, and Ministry of Human Rights at Grade 21 will also serve on the commission. Members and the chairperson must be

at least 35 years old, with the chairperson required to have experience in human rights.

The session saw heated exchanges over the Qadiani community, who were declared as non-Muslims through an act of parliament in 1974. Later Clause 35 of the bill, pertaining to the Qadiani community, was withdrawn after Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) Senator Kamran Murtaza moved an amendment. He highlighted the potential conflict with previous protections for Qadianis and warned that Clause 35 could undermine existing safeguards for Qadianis.

The Qadiani minority community is often targeted by extremists. The bill is part of a decade-long effort to implement the Supreme Court's 2014 directive for a special commission to safeguard minority rights.



US vows to refocus G20 on driving growth and prosperity

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ New York/Washington

The US has said it will steer the G20 back to its "core mission" of driving economic growth and prosperity by prioritising regulatory reform, energy security and technological innovation during its year-long presidency of the grouping. America assumed the G20 presidency on December 1. The State Department in a statement on Monday said under President Donald Trump's leadership, the US will "return the G20 to focusing on its core mission of driving economic growth and prosperity to produce results". "As we usher in these much-needed reforms, we will prioritise three core themes: unleashing economic prosperity by limiting regulatory burdens, unlocking affordable and secure energy supply chains, and pioneering new technologies and innovations," it said.



Pope offers silent prayer at site of 2020 port explosion

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Beirut

Pope Leo XIV visited the site of a deadly 2020 Beirut port explosion and offered a silent prayer on the last day of his trip to Lebanon. Leo was also expected to meet with relatives of some of the 218 people killed by the blast, which tore through Beirut and did billions of dollars in damage after hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate detonated in a warehouse. Five years on, these families are still seeking justice. No official has been convicted in a judicial investigation that has been repeatedly obstructed, angering Lebanese for whom the blast was just the latest crisis after decades of corruption and financial crimes. When he arrived in Lebanon on Sunday, Leo urged the country's political leaders to pursue the truth as a means of peace and reconciliation.

India took a leading role in Ditwah emergency response: Sri Lanka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Colombo

India has taken a leading role in immediate emergency response efforts in the aftermath of Cyclone Ditwah that has killed more than 400 people and caused widespread devastation, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's office said on Tuesday.

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi conveyed heartfelt condolences to President Anura Kumara Dissanayake and reaffirmed that India stands firmly beside Sri Lanka and its people in this difficult hour,” the president's office said.

Prime Minister Modi on Monday spoke to Dissanayake and assured him of continued support in the rehabilitation efforts across all regions impacted by Cyclone Ditwah. In a telephone conversation, Modi expressed condolences for the loss of lives and devastation in Sri Lanka, and said the people of India stood in firm solidarity and support with the people of the island nation in this hour of need.

Sri Lanka has been grappling with widespread flooding, landslides and infrastructure collapse triggered by Cyclone Ditwah, leaving several districts isolated and severely straining the country's disaster-response capacity.

The Disaster Management Centre (DMC) has confirmed at least 410 deaths and 336 missing till Tuesday morning in catastrophic floods and landslides caused by extreme weather conditions since November 16. India launched



National Disaster Response Force personnel taking part in Operation Sagar Bandhu

PTI

Operation Sagar Bandhu and sent two urban search and rescue teams comprising 80 NDRF personnel to the island nation, reaffirming the spirit of INeighbourhood First.

Separately, it was announced on Tuesday that Sri Lanka will allow flood relief items free of customs duties and levies under the condition that they are consigned in the name of

the Director General Disaster Management or the Secretary to the Defense Ministry.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's Road Development Authority said that 256 roads of both A and B grades have been damaged in the disaster, including 15 main bridges. A whopping 14,66,615 people of 4,07,594 families have been affected by the disaster.

will prevent such a tragedy from happening again.” The fire broke out last Wednesday around scaffolding at the Wang Fuk Court complex in the Tai Po district and spread to seven of the complex's eight towers. They were home to more than 4,600 people and many have been left homeless. Forty people remain hospitalised, Lee said.

At least 14 people have been arrested so far by the city's anti-corruption body and police, including scaffolding contractors, company directors and an engineering consultant, as authorities probe suspected corruption and negligence in a renovation project at the housing complex.

The initial investigation has focused on why the fire expanded so rapidly, overwhelming firefighting efforts. Lee refused to comment on media reports that

Hong Kong to start independent inquiry in apartment fire

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Hong Kong

Hong Kong will set up an independent committee of inquiry headed by a judge to determine the cause of a deadly apartment block fire that shocked the city, and to make recommendations to prevent a similar tragedy from happening again, its leader said Tuesday. John Lee, the chief executive of the Chinese region, pledged to overcome vested interests and bring about systemic change in the construction industry after a fire that killed at least 151 people last week. He said 30 others remain missing.

“We must uncover the truth, ensure that justice is served, let the deceased rest in peace and provide comfort to the living,” he told reporters at a weekly press conference. “We want to ensure that we

people were arrested last weekend in what some saw as an attempt to snuff out criticism of the Government, including one person who was reportedly involved in a petition calling for Government accountability and arrested on suspicion of inciting sedition.

Lee said only that “I will not tolerate any crimes, particularly crimes that exploit the tragedy that we are facing now.” Authorities have cited both high winds and substandard materials used for the maintenance work.

Contractors were found to be using substandard netting, authorities said on Monday. Among the 20 samples of netting investigators collected at the complex, seven were found to have failed safety standards.

“This is not just a natural disaster, it's a manmade crisis,” said Rianda Purba from the Indonesian Environmental Forum, an activist group. “Deforestation and unchecked development have stripped Batang Toru of its resilience. Without urgent restoration and stricter protections, these floods will become the new normal.”

Floods in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand kill over 1,300

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Batang Toru

Emergency crews raced to reach survivors and recover more bodies Tuesday as the death toll from last week's catastrophic floods and landslides surged past 1,300 in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand, with more than 800 people missing.

Days of heavy monsoon rains inundated vast areas, leaving thousands stranded and many clinging to rooftops and trees waiting for help. The flooding and landslides killed at least 1,303 people, with 712 people confirmed dead in Indonesia, 410 in Sri Lanka and 181 in Thailand, authorities said Tuesday. Sri Lanka's president, Anura Kumara Dissanayake, said it's too early to determine the exact number of dead.

In Indonesia, the hardest-hit nation, rescuers struggled to access villages on Sumatra island, where roads have been washed out, and bridges collapsed. At least 507 people remain missing, according to the country's National Disaster Management Agency.

Helicopters and boats have been deployed, but officials warn that worsening weather and damaged infrastructure are slowing operations. Floods and landslides in North Sumatra carried away millions of cubic meters of felled timber, officials said, sparking public concern that illegal logging may have contributed to the disaster.

Batang Toru, the lush forested area, has turned into a wasteland of broken logs and shattered homes. Roads have vanished, replaced by rivers of sludge.

“I carried my daughter and went for help,” he said, his voice breaking.



A 9-month pregnant woman in Puttalam being evacuated

PTI

“My only prayer is to find my wife and children.”

Thailand begins cleanup

Military-led rescue teams in Sri Lanka scoured flood-devastated areas for 336 people still missing in the aftermath of Cyclone Ditwah, the Disaster Management Centre said Tuesday. Roads were blocked by landslides and bridges have collapsed, making access difficult.

In the central city of Kandy, residents struggled without running water, relying instead on bottled water collected from natural springs. Authorities warned that conditions could worsen as more rain is forecast in the coming days.

President Dissanayake, speaking in a meeting with Government officials, described the disaster as the worst to strike the country in recent history, saying it remains impossible to determine the full scale of casualties. He warned that the death toll is likely far higher than current figures.

He said that Government agencies were working to reach isolated communities. Selladurai Yogaraj, 35, a resident of Sarasavigama, said he lost his entire family: mother, wife and two children. “I can't even think what life is going to be like,” he said. Another man, Duraikannu Mahoharan, said he lost his wife, daughter and a house. “Only my sons and I survived. Now I am staying with my brother,” he said. In southern Thailand, cleanup has begun on streets and in buildings after massive floods affected more than 1.5 million households and 3.9 million people.

Authorities are working to restore infrastructure, including water and electricity. Thailand's Interior Ministry said on Monday it would set up public kitchens to provide freshly cooked food to affected residents.

The first batch of compensation payments of 239 million baht (\$7.4 million) is set to be distributed to 26,000 people, Government spokesperson Siripong Angkasakulkiat also said Monday.

Change of Name

My old name was SAMREEN. Written in My 12th class Marksheet. After Marriage, I have changed my name. My new & Correct name is now known as **SAMREEN AHMAD W/O SHAHAB AHMAD**. Resident of H.No.1227, Gali no.39, C-Block, Narial kheda, Sharda Nagar Bhopal (M.P.) 462001

Change of Name

I Habib Ullah Qureshi declared that My daughter Araina Habeeb Studying in Carmel Convent School BHEL Bhopal (M.P.) in 5th-A Class. Her name entered in School record as Araina Habeeb Qureshi. While in all present documents. Her right name is now known as Araina Habeeb. Now She will be known & write by her right name **Araina Habeeb D/O Habib Ulla Qureshi**. Address H.No.901, Krishna colony near PGBT College, Berasia road, Bhopal (M.P.) Mob. 9425004496 Advertisement for Correction in School record.

कार्यालय कलेक्टर (कॉलोनी सेल), जिला-इंदौर

क्रमांक/4718/अ.क.री./का.से./2025

इंदौर, दिनांक 01.12.2025

विज्ञापित

मध्यप्रदेश पंचायत राज एवं ग्राम स्वराज अधिनियम 1993 (क्र. 1 सन् 1994) और उसके अधीन बनाए गए मध्यप्रदेश ग्राम पंचायत (कॉलोनीयों का विकास) नियम 2014 के नियम 9 के अधीन प्रदाय ग्राम बड़ियाकीमा, तहसील भिचोली हप्सी, जिला इंदौर में स्थित सर्वे क्रमांक 48, 66/1, 66/2, 67/1/1, 67/1/2, 71/1, 71/2, 74/1/1, 74/1/2, 74/2/1/1, 74/2/1/2, 74/2/2, 74/3, 75/2/1, 75/2/2, 64, 65, 75/1 एवं ग्राम दुधिया, तहसील भिचोली हप्सी, जिला इंदौर स्थित सर्वे क्र. 20/1/2/1, 20/1/2/2 कुल रकबा 11.3500 हेक्टेयर में से 10.1862 हेक्टेयर भूमि पर आवासीय भूखण्ड प्रयोजन हेतु कॉलोनी “बीसीएम पनाश एण्ड उपहार नगर” की संशोधित विकास अनुज्ञा प्रदान के आवेदन के संबंध में दावे-आपत्ति आमंत्रित करने बाबद।

जन सामान्य की जानकारी हेतु एतद द्वारा यह सूचित किया जाता है कि आवेदक भूमिस्वामी 1. बिचोली देवकान्त एलएलपी 2. श्रीमती चंदा चौधरी पति देवेन्द्र सिंह चौधरी 3. स्वर्णिम कंस्ट्रक्शन प्रा.लि. तर्फे विकासकर्ता बिचोली देवकान्त एलएलपी तर्फे भागीदार राजेश मेहता पिता स्व. श्री बादलचंद मेहता पता: 703, शेखर सेन्ट्रल मनोमार्गज, जिला इंदौर (म.प्र.) द्वारा नीचे दी गई कॉलोनी की संशोधित विकास अनुज्ञा हेतु कलेक्टरदे हेलपलाईन, जिला-इंदौर में दिनांक 14.11.2025 को आवेदन प्रस्तुत किया गया।

- कॉलोनी का नाम - “बीसीएम पनाश एण्ड उपहार नगर”
- अवस्थिति (अवस्थिति/ग्राम का नाम एवं खसरा क्रमांक) ग्राम बड़ियाकीमा, तहसील भिचोली हप्सी, जिला इंदौर में स्थित सर्वे क्रमांक 48, 66/1, 66/2, 67/1/1, 67/1/2, 71/1, 71/2, 74/1/1, 74/1/2, 74/2/1/1, 74/2/1/2, 74/2/2, 74/3, 75/2/1, 75/2/2, 64, 65, 75/1 एवं ग्राम दुधिया, तहसील भिचोली हप्सी, जिला इंदौर स्थित सर्वे क्रमांक 20/1/2/1, 20/1/2/2 कुल रकबा 9.756 हेक्टेयर में से 8.868 हेक्टेयर भूमि पर आवेदक भूमिस्वामी श्रीमती चंदा चौधरी पति देवेन्द्र सिंह चौधरी तर्फे विकासकर्ता बिचोली देवकान्त एलएलपी तर्फे भागीदार राजेश मेहता पिता स्व. श्री बादलचंद मेहता पता: 703, शेखर सेन्ट्रल मनोमार्गज, जिला इंदौर (म.प्र.) को कार्यालय कलेक्टर, जिला इंदौर द्वारा कॉलोनी विकास अनुमति क्र. 644/2023, प्र.क्र. 397/बी-121/2023-24 इंदौर, दिनांक 10.10.2023 को प्रदाय की गई थी। आवेदक द्वारा संयुक्त संचालक नगर एवं ग्राम निवेश जिला इंदौर का पत्र क्र. आईएनडीएलपी 27112420359 दिनांक 28.10.2025 द्वारा पूर्व आपत्ति क्रमांक 64, 65, 75/1 को शांति कर संशोधित अभिन्यास स्वीकृत करारक संशोधित विकास अनुमति हेतु आवेदन पत्र प्रस्तुत किया है।
- विकास का प्रयोजन - आवासीय भूखण्ड विकास प्रयोजन
- पूर्व टीएण्डसीपी क्रमांक : संयुक्त संचालक नगर तथा ग्राम निवेश, जिला कार्यालय इंदौर (म.प्र.) द्वारा स्वीकृत अभिन्यास पत्र क्रमांक आईएनडीएलपी 030123018, दिनांक 14.04.2023
- वर्तमान टीएण्डसीपी क्रमांक : संयुक्त संचालक नगर तथा ग्राम निवेश, जिला कार्यालय इंदौर (म.प्र.) द्वारा स्वीकृत अभिन्यास पत्र क्रमांक आईएनडीएलपी 27112420359, दिनांक 28.10.2025
- उक्त के संबंध में यदि किसी हितबद्ध व्यक्ति/सदस्य को ग्राम बड़ियाकीमा, तहसील भिचोली हप्सी, जिला इंदौर में स्थित सर्वे क्रमांक 48, 66/1, 66/2, 67/1/1, 67/1/2, 71/1, 71/2, 74/1/1, 74/1/2, 74/2/1/1, 74/2/1/2, 74/2/2, 74/3, 75/2/1, 75/2/2, 64, 65, 75/1 एवं ग्राम दुधिया, तहसील भिचोली हप्सी, जिला इंदौर स्थित सर्वे क्रमांक 20/1/2/1, 20/1/2/2 कुल रकबा 11.3500 हेक्टेयर में से 10.1862 हेक्टेयर पर “बीसीएम पनाश एण्ड उपहार नगर” कॉलोनी की संशोधित विकास अनुमति दिये जाने में कोई आपत्ति हो अथवा किसी हितबद्ध व्यक्ति द्वारा आवेदित भूमि पर किसी भूखण्ड का अन्य/विकल्प/विकल्प अनुबंध किया हो तो अपनी आपत्ति कलेक्टर कार्यालय के कक्ष क्रमांक 111 में कार्यालयीन समय में (अथवा के दिनों को छोड़कर) सूचना प्रकाशन के 15 दिवस के भीतर प्रस्तुत करें। निर्धारित दिनांक या समय के पश्चात प्राप्त आपत्ति पर विचार नहीं किया जावेगा।

संयुक्त कलेक्टर एवं प्रभारी अधिकारी, कॉलोनी सेल, जिला-इंदौर

मध्यप्रदेश लघु उद्योग निगम मर्यादित

कार्यालय महाप्रबंधक (संपदा/निर्माण), संभाग क्रमांक-01

पंचानन भवन द्वितीय तल, मालवीय नगर, भोपाल (म.प्र.)

दूरभाष क्रमांक : 0755-2673196, E-mail : laghubl01@gmail.com

क्र. लउनि/निर्माण/संभाग क्रमांक-01/भोपाल/2025-26/41 भोपाल, दिनांक : 02.12.2025

निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना

निम्न कार्यों की निविदा ई-टेंडरिंग पद्धति से वेबसाइट <https://www.mptenders.gov.in> पर आमंत्रित की जाती है:- कार्य का नाम- 1. औद्योगिक क्षेत्र इच्छावर जिला सीहोर में सी.सी. रोड, आर.सी.सी. ड्रेन, ह्यूम पाइप कल्वर्ट एवं 1 नग साइन बोर्ड निर्माण कार्य, अनुमानित लागत राशि रु. 394.11 लाख। 2. औद्योगिक क्षेत्र समनापुर जागीर जिला रायसेन में सी.सी. रोड, आर.सी.सी. ड्रेन, ह्यूम पाइप कल्वर्ट एवं 1 नग साइन बोर्ड निर्माण कार्य, अनुमानित लागत राशि रु. 212.28 लाख। निविदा की समस्त जानकारी उक्त वेबसाइट पर दी जावेगी। निविदा में कोई संशोधन व परिवर्तन किया जाता है, तो वह उपरोक्त वेबसाइट पर देखा जा सकता है। बिना कोई कारण बताये निविदा को स्वीकृत अथवा निरस्त करने का अधिकार निगम के पास सुरक्षित है।

म.प्र. माध्यम/123305/2025

महाप्रबंधक (सं./नि.)

FORM NO. 4

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL

(2nd and 3rd Floor, Sanchar Vikas Bhawan (BNSL Building) Residency Road JABALPUR M. P.)

(Area of Jurisdiction: Madhya Pradesh)

SUMMON FOR APPEARANCE & SHOW CAUSE

No. Date

(Summon to defendant under section 19 (4) of the Recovery of Debts due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 read with Rules 12 & 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993)

ORIGINAL APPLICATION No. 1109 of 2024

Bank of Maharashtra Applicant

Versus Defendants

1. Istaq Ali Proprietor M/s Hindal Wood Contractor Ward No. 9, Near Idgah Purani Basti, Maihar District - Satna M.P. Also At - 152/1, Purani Basti Kila Chowk, Maihar, Ward No. 05, District, Satna M.P.

2. Dinesh Kumar Mishra S/o Shri Brahm Deo Mishra Address- Mig- 138, Ward No. 18, Housing Board Colony, Maihar, Satna, M.P. Whereas, OA No. 1109/24 was listed before the Honble Presiding officer on 05-09-2024. Whereas this Honble Tribunal please to issues summons/notice on this said application under 19 (4) of the act, OA filed against you recovery of debts of Rs 40,01,860.00/- with expenses & future interest (application along with copies of documents etc, annexed) In accordance with sub section 4 of section 19 of the act you, the defendants are directed as under-

1. To show cause within 30 days of the service of summons as to why relief prayed for should not be granted.

2. To disclose particulars of properties of assets other than properties & assets specified by the applicant under serial number 3A of the original application.

3. You are restrained from dealing with or disposing of secured assets of such other assets & properties disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application, pending hearing & disposal of the application of the attachment of properties.

4. You shall not transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise, except in the ordinary course of his business any of the assets over which security interest is created and/or other assets & properties specified or disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application without the prior approval of the tribunal.

5. You shall be liable to account for the sale proceeds realized by sale of secured assets or other assets & properties in the ordinary course of business & deposit such sale proceeds in the account maintained with the bank or financial institutions holding security interest over such assets.

You are also directed to file the written statement with a copy thereof furnished to the applicant & to appear before Registrar on 08.12.2025 at 10:30 am failing which the application shall be heard & decided in your absence.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Tribunal this 01-12-2025

Authorised Officer Debts Recovery Tribunal, Jabalpur

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL

Government of India, Ministry of Finance, Department of Finance Services, (Banking Division) 2nd & 3rd Floor, Sanchar Vikas Bhawan (BNSL Building), Residency Road, Near Head Post Office South Civil Lines, Jabalpur (M.P.) 482001

Case No.: RC 447/2018 in O.A. No.781/2017

CANARA BANK Vs M/S SAKET COKE AND COAL INDIA PVT. LTD.

E-AUCTION NO.289/2025

Under mentioned properties will be sold by "on line e-auction" through website <https://www.bankauctions.com> for recovery of a sum of Rs.7,24,62,266.72 (Rupees Seven Crore Twenty Four Lakh Sixty Two Thousand Two Hundred Sixty Six and Seventy Two Paise only) payable by you/him in respect of Recovery Certificate in O.A.No.781/2017 issued by the Presiding Officer, Debts Recovery Tribunal, Jabalpur with interest at 12.00% p.a. with simple Interest from 17-08-2017 and costs payable as per recovery certificate till realization.

Date and Time of E-auction: 07-01-2026 Between 12.00 Hours and 13.00 hours.

SPECIFICATION OF THE PROPERTIES PUT FOR SALE

(1) Land bearing Khasra No. 93/5/1 (old 93/5), Patwari Halka No. 29, situated at Village- Bairagarh chichali, Kolar Road, Tehsil-Huzur, District- Bhopal (M.P.) area admeasuring 0.311 hectare i.e.33480 sq.ft., property in the name of Shri Narendra Prajapati s/o Late Motilal Ji Prajapati.

(2) Land bearing Khasra No. 93/4/1 (old 93/4), Patwari Halka No. 29, situated at Village- Bairagarh chichali, Kolar Road, Tehsil-Huzur, District- Bhopal (M.P.) area admeasuring 0.202 hectare i.e. 21745 sq.ft., property in the name of Shri Narendra Prajapati s/o Late Motilal Ji Prajapati.

Upset Price : Prop. No.1 Rs. 2,75,80,000.00 (Rupees Two Crore Seventy Five Lakh Eighty Thousand only) Prop. No.2 Rs.1,66,80,000.00 (Rupees One Crore Sixty Six Lakh Eighty Thousand only)

Conditions of Sale: (1) Intending bidders must hold a valid digital signature certificate. For details contact M/s. C-1 India Pvt.Ltd. website: <https://www.bankauctions.com>; Helpline No. 01244302020/21/22/23/24, for help a bidder in e-auction contact to Mr. Mitthalesh Kumar on Mob. No. 7080804466; E-mail id-mpcg@c1india.com or E-mail ID: support@bankauctions.com (2) Intending bidders are advised to go through website <https://www.bankauctions.com> for auction bid form and details, terms and conditions of sale before submitting their bids. (3) Bids should be submitted only online in the prescribed form along with a copy of identity document as an attachment to the bid form (refer detailed terms and conditions). Bidder should satisfy them self with regard to correctness, measurement, encumbrances etc by their own sources (Govt. Office) also later on DRT will not be responsible for this. (4) 10% of the upset price i.e. EMD/Bid price for Prop. No.1 Rs.27,58,000.00 (Rupees Twenty Seven Lakh Fifty Eight Thousand only); for Prop. No.2 Rs.16,68,000.00 (Rupees Sixteen Lakh Sixty Eight Thousand only) must be remitted towards EMD through RTGS/NEFT/Money Transfer to the credit of Account no. 5692799461 in the name of Recovery Officer, E-auction account, DRT Jabalpur with CENTRAL BANK OF INDIA, DHOIGHAT BRANCH, JABALPUR. (I FSC Code: CBIN0281616) and the remittance must be clearly mentioned in the bid form (5) Bids should be submitted on or before 12.00 Hours on 05-01-2026 online. (6) A copy of the bid form along with its enclosure submitted online should be sent to Recovery Officer, DRT, Jabalpur, 2nd & 3rd Floor, Sanchar Vikas Bhawan (BNSL Building), Residency Road, Near Head Post Office, South Civil Lines, Jabalpur so as to reach at the earliest. (7) Online bidding will commence from the highest bid quoted among the bids and the minimum increase for each bid will be for Prop. No.1 Rs.2,80,000.00 (Rupees Two Lakh Eighty Thousand only); for Prop. No.2 Rs.1,70,000.00 (Rupees One Lakh Seventy Thousand only). In case of bid received before closure of Auction window, there shall be an automatic extension of 5 minutes in Auction time by the system. (8) The refund of EMD of the unsuccessful bidders will be remitted to the same account from which the payment has been made and no inquiry in this regard will be entertained. After deposit of EMD by intending bidder they cannot withdraw the EMD amount until they are declared as "Unsuccessful bidder" otherwise the amount will be forfeited. (9) In the case of immovable property listed in the schedule below, the successful bidder shall remit 25% of the bid amount (less EMD) on the next day on declaration, if the sale is knocked down in his / her favour through RTGS/NEFT/Money Transfer to the Account No. 5692799461 mentioned in SL. No. 4 and in default of such deposit, the property shall forthwith be put up again and resold and amount deposited as EMD will be forfeited. (10) The successful bidder shall remit balance 75% of the sale amount along with poundage of 1% of sale amount plus Rs. 10/- for each property separately within 15 days of auction, to the Account No. 5692799461 mentioned at SL. No. 4 through RTGS/NEFT/Money Transfer, exclusive of such day, or if the 15th day be a Sunday or other holiday, then on the first office working day after 15th day. In default of payment within the period mentioned above, the property shall be resold after the issue of a fresh proclamation of sale. The deposit will be forfeited to the Government and the defaulting purchaser shall forfeit all claims to the property or to any part of the sum for which it may subsequently be sold. (11) Property will be sold "As is Where is and No Complaint basis". (12) The properties can be inspected on 22-12-2025 between 12.00 Hrs. to 16.00 Hrs. (13) Properties will not be sold below the upset price. (14) Recovery Officer have the absolute right to accept or reject the bid or postpone / cancel the sale without assigning any reason. (15) Intending bidders are advised to peruse copies of the title deed available with the Mr. Akshay Tiwari, Law Officer, Mob. No. 8517031874 and also check the identity and correctness of the property details and encumbrances etc. from their own sources also. DRT will not be responsible for correctness etc. (16) Details regarding e-auction shall be obtained from M/s. C-1 India Pvt. Ltd., website: <https://www.bankauctions.com>; Helpline No. 0124-4302020/21/22/23/24, for help a bidder in e-auction contact to Mr. Mitthalesh Kumar on Mob. No. 7080804466; E-mail id-mpcg@c1india.com or E-mail ID: support@bankauctions.com (17) Further property details if any required shall be obtained from Mr. Akshay Tiwari, Law Officer, Mob. No. 8517031874. (18) The bidders may participate in the e-auction by quoting / bidding from their own offices / places of their choice. Internet connectivity shall have to be ensured by each bidder himself. DRT / Bank / Service Provider shall not be held responsible for the internet connectivity, network problems, system crash down, Power failure etc.

Place: Jabalpur Date: 12-11-2025

Priti Desai Recovery Officer - I

India depends on Ro-Ko to wrap up ODI series

DEVARCHIT VARMA
■ Raipur

The chatter around the volatile dressing room environment notwithstanding, India will rely on Virat Kohli's imperious form and Rohit Sharma's indomitable presence to seal a series victory over a doughty South Africa in the second ODI, on Wednesday.

A record-extending 52nd ODI century by Kohli and a rapid 57 from Rohit paved the way for India's 17-run win in the series-opener at Ranchi, where the home bowlers endured a spirited fightback from the Proteas before managing to stop them.

With the 2027 ODI World Cup two years away, Kohli and Rohit are not only auditioning every match to prove their fitness and form but are also reportedly managing growing differences with head coach Gautam Gambhir. The issue has dominated the off-field talk and is expected to have the BCCI stepping in at some point.

Having set up two consecutive victories for India in last as many ODIs — including a nine-wicket hammering of Australia at Sydney in October — Kohli and Rohit have shown they will everything possible to be on that flight to the World Cup in South Africa.

Both the chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar and Gambhir have remained non-committal about their participation in the World Cup and that has probably



been at the centre of the simmering tensions between the two sides.

However, India have a lot more to worry about despite the opening win.

For starters, the combination does not seem perfectly aligned. Rituraj Gaikwad, who has built an impressive record in List A cricket, was pushed from opening to No 4. He did not look completely conditioned for the role, with stand-in captain KL Rahul staunchly defending his position at No 6.

Washington Sundar is not new to such experiments as the Tamil Nadu all-rounder, who batted at No 3 in Kolkata

Test against the Proteas, has seen plenty of changes in his batting positions. But in the first ODI at No 5, he too was among the batters dismissed in a phase where India slowed down.

And again for an all-rounder, Washington also had another light day in terms of bowling as he sent down only three overs for 18 runs.

To his credit, Harshit Rana did a lot of good to his reputation with two wickets upfront with the new ball but his knack of giving away runs later on will require the all-rounder to bring in more control, especially

when only one ball is allowed to play with after the 34th over.

In their bid to restore balance between bat and ball, the ICC's new rule allows only one ball from the existing two to be continued with from 34-50 overs.

Kuldeep Yadav snaffled key wickets for a match haul of 4/68 and even though he was a shade expensive, his variation proved to be the difference as South Africa fell short but then, not by a big margin.

South Africa will indeed take a lot of heart in their inspired comeback after being reduced to 11/3 at one

stage.

On a flat deck, Marco Jansen tore into the Indian bowlers once again for a minute-a-mile half-century (off 26 balls), scoring a strokeful 70 off 39 balls.

Matthew Breetzke notched up a fine 72 in his first ODI against India to lead a comeback for South Africa while their long tail, which includes the dangerous Corbin Bosch, threatened to take the game away from India.

South Africa played in the first ODI without their regular skipper Temba Bavuma and Marco Jansen, Prenelan Subrayen, Ottneil Baartman, Nandre Burger, Keshav Maharaj, Lungi Ngidi. (PTI)

Proteas are expected to bolster their squad with their return.

Like Guwahati where the hosts were not too accustomed with the pitch and conditions, the Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh Stadium in the Chhattisgarh capital is also relatively unfamiliar.

In the only ODI played here at this venue, India made light work of New Zealand in January 2023 when Mohammed Shami and Mohammed Siraj exploited sharp seam movement off the pitch to bowl the Kiwis out for a mere 108. The hosts completed an eight-wicket win with nearly 30 overs to spare.

Even the only T20I played here in December 2023, against Australia, was also not a high-scoring affair which India won by 20 runs after putting on 174/9.

Teams (from):

India: KL Rahul (c&wk), Rituraj Gaikwad, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel (wk), Virat Kohli, Rishabh Pant (wk), Rohit Sharma, Tilak Varma, Ravindra Jadeja, Washington Sundar, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Arshdeep Singh, Harshit Rana, Kuldeep Yadav, Prasidh Krishna.

South Africa: Temba Bavuma (c), Matthew Breetzke, Dewald Brevis, Quinton de Kock (wk), Tony de Zorzi, Ruben Hermann (wk), Aiden Markram, Ryan Rickelton (wk), Corbin Bosch, Marco Jansen, Prenelan Subrayen, Ottneil Baartman, Nandre Burger, Keshav Maharaj, Lungi Ngidi. (PTI)

Gurbaz hails Gambhir, says criticism makes no sense



TAPAN MOHANTA
■ Dubai

Gautam Gambhir's coaching methods may have polarised opinions in India but dashing Afghanistan keeper batter Rahmanullah Gurbaz has no hesitation in admitting former KKR Mentor as the "best coach" that he has played under and is baffled by the kind of criticism levelled at him in recent weeks.

Gambhir has faced the wrath of one and all after India's 0-2 Test home whitewash against South Africa that came a year after the unprecedented 0-3 home series defeat to New Zealand, ending India's long-standing dominance at home, where they have now lost five of their last seven Tests.

Gurbaz, an integral part of the IPL winning KKR squad in 2024, feels that this outrage against his "Gautam sir" doesn't make much of a sense.

"If 1.4 billion people are there in your country, you can say 2-3 million will be against him. The rest are with Gautam sir and with India team. It doesn't make sense to talk about them," the 24-year-old told PTI in an interview on the sidelines of the fourth season of the ILT20. "He's the best ever coach and human being, mentor that I have had in my career so far. I love the way he goes about things," Afghanistan opener couldn't stop waxing eloquent.

He was quick to point out at the kind of success Indian team has enjoyed under Gambhir's stewardship. "India just won the Champions Trophy in ODI format, Asia Cup in T20 format. They have won a lot of series, so you can't blame them for one series."

Gurbaz said Gambhir's biggest strength was the environment he built at KKR of a relaxed, pressure-free and rooted in discipline which allowed the team to flourish.

"I love the way he goes about his job. When you have a good environment, you will be always on the top. He made the environment very easy for us, nothing stressful, nothing strict... And that's why we won the tournament," he said.

"He is not strict but he is disciplined. He is strict only when something goes against discipline."

The Afghan opener said Indian cricketers deserve empathy, not harsh judgment when chips are down.

"As a cricketer, I will never blame players because everyone works hard and tries their best. They lost, so what? They are human. Sometimes you lose -- it's part of life. When you are going through bad times, that's when you need support."

Gurbaz called his three-year stint with KKR "very exciting".

"Being with KKR for 3 years and then winning the championship was very good."

He also recalled being part of Gujarat Titans' victorious 2022 campaign.

"I am the guy who went won two IPL championships -- first year with Gujarat," he said, referring to his stint as a replacement signing.

Released ahead of the upcoming auction by KKR, he is looking forward to the auction later this month.

"I am in the auction now...Will see whoever wants me, where I deserve to go. Looking for a great season ahead."

He added that Delhi Capitals, apart from KKR, is his favourite team as India's national capital is his favourite city.

"Delhi feels like home. When I am in Delhi I feel like I am in Afghanistan," said Gurbaz, who would often frequent Afghan eateries in capital's Lajpat Nagar, Bhogal, Jangpura areas.

Gurbaz further backed Shubman Gill to grow as a leader. (PTI)

Tilak credits Kohli for batting insights

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

India batter Tilak Varma enjoys the longer formats and has been seeking inputs from Virat Kohli on fitness and running between the wickets as he looks to make the most of the opportunities coming his way.

The 23-year-old, who has featured in only four ODIs with one fifty and is yet to make his Test debut, said the presence of stalwarts like Kohli and Rohit Sharma in team in the ongoing ODI series has been a major confidence boost.

"ODI and Test cricket feel like my game because I enjoy the longer format. I'm really excited to play more

ODIs as well. When Rohit bhai and Virat bhai are in the same team, the confidence level is completely different," Varma said on JioStar.

"They have so much experience and knowledge, and I try to take as much advice from them as possible to get better." The young left-hander said he has particularly been seeking inputs from Kohli on fitness and running between the wickets -- an area he enjoys and wants to excel in.

"I speak to Virat bhai a lot, especially about fitness and running between the wickets. His intensity is incredible. I love running too, and I feel I'm pretty quick, so I really enjoy that part of the game," he said.

Facing Kohli, Rohit nothing new, but it bolsters India: Temba Bavuma

DEVARCHIT VARMA
■ Raipur

South Africa captain Temba Bavuma feels facing an Indian side with Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma is nothing new but it does bolster the hosts whom the Proteas had blanked 2-0 in the Test series.

Kohli's 52nd ODI ton and Rohit's 57 set up a 17-run victory for India in the opening ODI, giving them a 1-0 lead in the three-match series with the second match to be played here on Wednesday.

"The inclusion of those two guys that does bolster the team. Like we said at the start of the series, these are two guys who have a lot of

experience and a lot of skill and that can only benefit the team.

"It is not something that we are not aware of," Bavuma told the media ahead of South Africa's training session at the Shaheed Veer Narayan Stadium here.

Underlining their experience in international cricket, Bavuma recalled watching a young Rohit in the 2007 T20 World Cup which India won as a school student.

"We played against, Rohit... I think it was in 2007, the T20 World Cup, I was still in school then. I mean, these guys have been around, so there is nothing new. These are world-class players," he said. ("Coming up against



them is) nothing new, we have come across it. We have been on the bad end of it. But we have also had good times against them. It all just makes the series a lot more exciting," he said. Bavuma, meanwhile, said there was nothing for

him to clarify on the use of the word "grovel" made by South Africa head coach Shukri Conrad during the fourth day's play in the second Test.

"No, I don't think it is distracting (and) no it's not for me to clarify," said Bavuma.

Williamson scores 50 on Test return against West Indies

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Christchurch

For Kane Williamson it was business as usual.

After 12 months away from test cricket as a privateer in professional leagues around the world, Williamson ground out his 38th half century for New Zealand on Tuesday on the first day of the first test against West Indies.

It wasn't classic Williamson: he was rusty and it showed. He played and missed more than usual, many of his early runs came from thick edges and on 33 his stumps were shattered by a no ball.

But his dogged nature was evident as he reached 52 from 102 balls after coming to the crease when Devon Conway was out to the third ball of the day. Williamson put on 93 for the second wicket with Tom Latham and helped New Zealand overcome a makeshift but demanding West Indies attack to reach 231-9 by stumps.

Latham, also out of sorts, made 24, scoring from only 11 of the 85 balls he faced. Of his half century partnership with Williamson from 105, he contributed 10.

West Indies captain Roston Chase needed no prompting to bowl after winning the toss. There was heavy greenish grass on the pitch at Hagley Oval and a brooding overcast promised the ball would swing.

Chase showed faith in a



pace attack led by Kemar Roach, playing his first since January aged 37; Ojay Shields on debut at 29 and Johann Layne, playing his second test at 22.

"With age coming on and I hadn't represented the West Indies as yet I didn't think it was necessary to challenge the youngsters for a place in the Jamaica Scorpions franchise team. So I literally was thinking of giving up," Shields said.

"That first over, my heart was pumping real hard. I took control of my emotions and did what I had to do."

Only 10.3 overs were bowled in a rain-affected first session at the end of which New Zealand was 17-1. New Zealand added 121 runs in an extended second session in which 32.3 overs were bowled and at the cost of Williamson, Latham, Ravindra and Will Young.

Williamson was bowled

by Shields in the 19th over but the 29-year-old was denied a prime wicket on debut when he overstepped. He fell finally to a superb ball from Greaves which pitched short of a length and New Zealand was 94-2.

Latham was out one run later, driving at a ball outside off which moved away slightly and carried from a thick edge to wicketkeeper Tevin Imlach.

After tea, Tom Blundell stepped up the pace with 29 from 39 balls. In the first two sessions New Zealand had been so cautious that Chase was able to keep his field up, with only one man out.

The result was that more threes were run than is typical in a New Zealand innings.

Blundell was bowled by Shields to finally give the stocky right-arm his first test wicket.

Kallis praises Jansen's batting, calls him top all-rounder

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Bengaluru

Legendary South African cricketer Jacques Kallis said the strides Marco Jansen has made in recent months as a batter will help him find a place among the premier all-rounders in modern day cricket.

Jansen underlined his growing credentials as a powerhouse batter, making quick fifties in the second Test against India at Guwahati and in the first ODI at Ranchi on Sunday.

"He's had a massive year, hasn't he? He's always had the potential. It was just a matter of figuring his game out. He's obviously figured it out now and is getting a good balance," said Kallis during a special interaction with the Indian media, facilitated by SA20 on Tuesday.

"He's always been magnificent with the ball. Perhaps in previous years, he didn't quite fulfil his talent with the bat. He's certainly turned that around now. He's a premium all-rounder now. I think he's going to play a massive role in the SA20," he added.

Apart from his exploits with the bat, Jansen also took 12 wickets across two Tests against India, helping SA blank the hosts 2-0. "They (Sunrisers Eastern Cape) might even be able to use him in different roles, not only down the order. He's good enough to even go up the order a few times. It's an odd game to surprise the opposition.

For me, he's going to be one of the standout all-rounders," said Kallis..

Kallis, who has amassed 13289 runs from 166 Tests with 45 hundreds at an average of 55.37, also pinned his hope on Corbin Bosch to develop as a handy performer with both ball and bat..

Bosch gave a glimpse of his skills while hammering a 67 and taking two wickets against India in the Ranchi ODI.

"I first laid eyes on him a few years ago, I always thought he had something special. It's taken a while for him to break through. But thankfully, he's come through. He's gained confidence. He bowls in the 140s and hits it really hard..

"He's the type of guy who can play different roles. He's good enough to go anywhere in the order. So I'm very happy to see him coming through," he noted..

Kallis hoped that the fourth edition of the SA20, starting from December 26, will stand as a good preparation for Proteas players ahead of next year's ICC T20 World Cup..

"Yeah, I think it's going to play a big role. I don't think it'll make the guys play any harder or anything like that, because the guys would have put the 100% effort in, in any case. But I do think it's fantastic preparation, looking forward to that World Cup.

"You know, a few guys perhaps, who are on the fringe, if they have a good performance in this tourna-



ment, you know, might get a look in and get into the squads.

Kallis had little doubt that the SA20 has ticked several boxes in the last four years, particularly in finding some young talents.

"I think what the IPL did for Indian cricket, we were hoping that a similar tournament would take off in South Africa a lot earlier. But now Graeme (Smith) got this tournament going four years ago and I think you can see where it's taken South African cricket. "These young guys are

FORMER ENGLAND BATTER ROBIN SMITH PASSES AWAY AT 62

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ London

Former England batter Robin Smith, who fought some intense battles with pacers in the 1980s and 90s, passed away at his home in Perth, Australia, on Tuesday. He was 62.

Smith played 62 Tests between 1988 and 1996 and made 4236 runs at 43.67 with nine hundreds, but his impact on English cricket at that period was much more profound than his numbers, excellent anyway.

The powerful right-hander was at his tenacious best against the West Indies pacers like Curtly Ambrose, Courtney Walsh, Malcolm Marshall and Patrick Patterson, when his team-mate often sank into a pool of struggle.

In possession of a withering square cut, often deemed as one of the fiercest strokes in cricketing history, Smith was at his peak between 1990 and 1995, playing a lead role in England drawing back-to-back Test series against the West Indies.

These young guys are playing under good coaches, playing with some world-class players, learning and feeding off them. So, that can only bode well for South African cricket as we've seen in the results, not only in white ball cricket, but in the longer formats as well," he signed off.



iexceed

Appzillon™

AI Powered Digital Banking Solutions

WWW.i-exceed.com

BLASÉ CAPITAL

SECTOR **SHIFTS**

The global landscape of industries, businesses, and sectors has shifted. According to a new McKinsey study, the top 10 list of the world’s most valuable firms has changed beyond imagination. When one compares the 2005 list with the 2025 one, there is one common firm, Microsoft, whose valuation has zoomed from below \$300 billion to just under \$4 trillion. The likes of names that were once influential in the last century, which include energy giants such as ExxonMobil, BP, and Shell, finance powerhouses like Citi, HSBC, and Bank of America, and consumer behemoths such as General Electric, Walmart, and Johnson & Johnson, have vanished. Among the new firms in the 2025 list are the tech superpowers such as Nvidia, Apple, Alphabet, and Meta. There are the new-age firms like TSMC, and Tesla. There is only one energy representative, Aramco. The world of business has transformed quite dramatically in 20 years.

In terms of market cap, the top 10 collectively accounted for less than \$2.5 trillion. Today, the worth of the top 10 is just under \$27 trillion, or more than 10 times the valuation. General Electric headed the 2005 list with a worth of \$370 billion, which seems peanuts compared to the 2025 leader, Nvidia, with a valuation of more than \$5 trillion. The tenth on the list, TSMC, with a worth of nearly \$1.3 trillion, has a value that is more than three times that of General Electric. Aramco’s \$1.65 trillion worth in 2025 is more than the combined value of ExxonMobil, Sheel, and BP in 2005. There is no comparison between the physical retailer, Walmart (\$195 billion in 2005) with the e-commerce seller, Amazon (\$2.7 trillion). Sadly, no finance giant, or a bank, features among the top 10 in 2025. Among manufacturers, only Apple, Tesla, and TSMC qualify in direct and indirect ways.

McKinsey’s study pinpoints 12 industries out of 57 it analysed, which “dramatically outpaced overall economic growth over the past two decades, as captured in the ‘change in industry’s share of the total market cap’ metric. They also saw competitors’ positions change dramatically within their industries, as captured in the ‘shuffle rate,’ measured as the cumulative market share shifts among companies.” When the two were plotted on a graph against each other (change in market cap on X axis, and shuffle rate on Y), the 12 sectors were on the extreme right of the graph. “Collectively, the 12 arenas nearly tripled their share of total market cap from 2005 to 2023,” states the study. Obviously, tech-driven categories such as cloud services, e-commerce, and consumer Internet saw the largest industry shifts. E-Commerce had possibly the largest growth for revenues, which jumped from \$15 billion in 2005 to more than \$1 trillion in 2023.

Shuffle rates capture the dynamism within a sector. Consider consumer electronics. Apple’s share of industry revenues grew from five per cent to 46 per cent. Even a newcomer like Xiaomi, which entered the market in 2010, captured six per cent of the market share. A summing up of the market gains in the sector gave a shuffle rate of 57 per cent. Compare this to the shuffle rates in aerospace and defence, which was 15 per cent. Obviously, in new sectors like electric vehicles and cloud services, the shuffle rate was 100 per cent. From the consumer electronics’ top 10 in 2005, three firms exited the list by 2023. Three firms came down the hierarchy, which include LG (1 to 3), Microsoft (3 to 7), and Sharp (5 to 8). Two maintained their standing: Samsung (2), and Sony (6). Two jumped: Apple (7 to 1), and Huawei (10 to 4). There were three new entrants in the 2023 list: Xiaomi (5), Shenzhen Transsion (9), and Lenovo (10).

Economic profit shifts were visible in the 12 happening sectors. “Between 2005 and 2023, (12) arenas increased their share of total global economic profit from nine per cent to 35 per cent.... Leading arenas by economic profit in 2023 were consumer Internet (\$90 billion), consumer electronics (\$76 billion), and semi-conductors (\$62 billion), which benefited from rising smartphone penetration, cloud computing adoption, and the growing use of microchips. Remarkably, in 2024, Nvidia alone reached \$66 billion in economic profit, more than the entire semiconductor industry in our sample in 2023. In contrast, many non-arena industries, including non-banking financials, and telecom, experienced declining economic profits,” explains the report. As is obvious, the 12 arenas received an unduly high share of R&D investments. In 2020, the expenditure on research was 10 per cent of revenues, or double the figure for others. Newcomers, who accounted for 40 per cent of arena market cap, drove competition and innovation, and hiked dynamism.

Despite the entry of new players in the 12 top arenas, market caps were concentrated. In 2023, the top 10 in each arena accounted for 80 per cent of the total market cap, versus only about 60 per cent for the non-arenas. This implies that the top firms were valued exceptionally higher than the rest of the gang within sectors, despite the awareness that the sector was on the ascendant. Surprisingly, despite the seeming-monopolist tendencies vis-à-vis market cap, the 12 arenas witnessed competitive pressures, which forced the firms to continuously innovate due to fears of tech-related disruptions. Thus, there were winners and losers, which is evident from the newcomers.

The Pioneer



BHOPAL | WEDNESDAY | DECEMBER 3, 2025

BUSINESS

13

Biting the apple after cooking it

The speculations began. Media reports appeared. Apple’s board, it seems, is preparing for CEO Tim Cook to step down next year. The chief of hardware, John Ternus, is being viewed as the new successor. The Cook loyalists within the media began a counter-campaign. Bloomberg’s Mark Gurman, whose newsletter, Power On, is a proxy for Apple’s internal dealings, said that he would be “shocked” if the CEO exited in the first half of 2026, and confidently described the talks of an imminent transition as “simply false.” According to him, succession “moment is not at hand.” The apple is yet to fall.

Cook is 65, has led the company since 2011, and taken its valuation to four trillion dollars. The internal corporate governance guidelines allow directors to continue till 75. So, there is a third theory. Cook may transit to the role of the chairman, when the current one, Arthur Levinson, who has reached this age, steps aside. Whether Cook walks away from the apple tree, or takes another bite in a new role, the question being debated is how Apple changed in the past 15 years, after Cook took over from the legendary founder, Steve Jobs.

Of course, the company is much bigger in terms of revenues. When Jobs left, it was a 350-billion-dollar company. Now, it is more than 10 times larger. In 2011, it was on the steep part of the iPhone ‘S’ curve. iPad was new, Mac was a niche but growing franchise, and the App Store was an uncrowded toll booth. Today, Cook’s inheritor will lord over an installed base of active devices that are at all-time highs across categories, and smartphone shipments will constitute a 19.4 per cent global share in 2025. Apple is by far the world’s largest smartphone maker by volumes for the first time.

Explosive growth has given way to maturity, which implies intense competition from China,

even as the regulators in Washington and Brussels rewrite the rules around App Stores, and mobile ecosystems that target Apple’s business model. The next CEO will need to defend an enormous, high-margin base, and persuade investors that the current ‘S’ curve will lead to another one. Yet, Apple’s centre of gravity, like normal gravity, has not changed. The former is grounded in iPhone, despite the more layered and complex portfolio.

However, the narratives around recent launches are not upbeat. Early sales of iPhone 16e were muted. Counterpoint data reported in June suggests that sales were 17 per cent lower than iPhone SE 2022, and 20 per cent below the SE 2020 in comparable launch windows. The iPhone Air story is worrying. This ultra slim flagship did not find traction. Reports talk not just about weak sales but that the trend is discouraging rivals from launching ultra-thin devices. Apple’s 17 series is on track despite the lackluster launch.

The future will be about whether the company has reinvented itself for the AI era without breaking its privacy promise. Apple Intelligence is the flagship bet. It runs a mix of on-device models, and cloud-hosted ones, orchestrated via Private Cloud Compute to keep user identifiers away from the data used for inference. Its fortunes are tied to newer chips, which are intended to drive upgrades across the iPhone, iPad and Mac family. This is where AI intersects with product segmentation. iPhone 16e supports Apple Intelligence, which implies that AI can be a hook for cost-conscious buyers.

Wall Street treats Apple as a cautious AI follower rather than a leader. Wedbush’s Dan Ives argues that its AI strategy “held shares back” but that the iPhone 17 cycle could mark a “new era,”

and set up a multi-year super cycle if it executes on device-centric AI. Other research reports frame Apple’s consumer AI opportunity as a “once in a decade” style upgrade event, echoing the 5G cycle. Internally, the tradeoff is sharper. Every increment of AI capability eats into Apple’s carefully cultivated privacy stance. Private Cloud Compute is meant to square the circle, but adds cost and complexity.

If Jobs left Cook with world-class products, but fragile operations, Cook may leave his successor with world-class operations but fragile geopolitical maps. China matters disproportionately to Apple as both a manufacturing base, and a revenue source. Over the past three years, iPhone sales in China have come under pressure from Huawei’s comeback, and local brands’ aggression. Political scrutiny of foreign tech has increased. On the supply side, Apple has not done enough to derisk the global business fully.

Bloomberg sourced estimates suggest that in FY24, India accounted for 14 per cent of global iPhone output, or one in seven devices. Indian policymakers expect the share to climb up to a quarter by 2028. Vietnam and Thailand have emerged as important nodes in the supply chain, especially for AirPods, and a few iPad and Mac lines. The US tariff policy overlays this with complexity. Donald Trump’s two tenures have pushed Apple to explore more sourcing out of China. It is still work-in-progress, as the US forces it to invest locally.

Services are the Cook era’s crown jewel, and biggest regulatory headache. Apple’s services revenue, which includes the App Store, iCloud, Apple Music, TV Plus, and other subscriptions reached nearly 100 billion dollars in 2024. The company counts over one billion paid subscriptions across platforms. In the most recent quarter, services revenue hit a record 26.3 billion dollars, up 14 per cent year-on-year. However, this high margin growth is under pressure. In March 2024, there was a civil antitrust lawsuit that accused Apple of a monopoly in smartphone markets through exclusionary conduct, and restrictive App Store rules, including the “Apple tax” on in-app payments.

The European Commission opened non-compliance investigations into Apple’s treatment of steering and alternative app stores, and found the company in breach of the law. Apple responded with a complex fee structure that includes a Core Technology Fee of 0.50 euro per annual install over a one million threshold. Those changes prompted a 500 million euro fine for anti-steering practices, and have become a test case for how much rent Apple can extract from services. The next CEO will inherit litigation in the US, continuing enforcement in Europe, and renewed debates in other jurisdictions.

Bloomberg’s deep dive into Apple’s leadership noted that many of the top executives are long-serving, and approaching the later stages of their careers. It highlighted Ternus as the most probable successor to Cook, and quoted insiders who saw “little doubt.” The choice, of course, is not just about personality. It is about a CEO that Apple, and its board, believes that it needs now.

Since it does take time to read the fine print, and read between the lines, most newspaper headlines on December 2 look like the media entities heaved a sigh of relief. Why not? After all, the GST collections declared for November 2025 appeared to be marginally, or 0.7 per cent, higher than the figure for the same month in the previous year. This was considered a success story, given that the GST 2.0 regime was implemented on September 22, 2025, and included across-the-board cuts in rates for most products and services categories, along with the reduction in the number of slabs.

For instance, there is zero GST on medical and life insurance, which would take away a chunk of revenues. Include a clutch of items of daily consumption, whose rates were in the region of 12 or 18 per cent, and sometimes 28 per cent, earlier but fell to either five per cent, and even zero per cent under the new dispensation. Given this scenario, a decline in GST collections was expected in November 2025. But pause for a while, and read the fine print. One realises that rather than a marginal increase, it is quite possible that the collections really declined, and declined significantly.

Let us look at the various trends. The collections for most of the major states, which collect a bulk of the revenues, reported a decline in November 2025. For instance, the figure for Haryana declined by six per cent, Uttar Pradesh by seven per cent, West Bengal by five per cent, Gujarat by seven per cent, and Tamil Nadu by four per cent. Mysteriously, amidst this fall, the collections in two of the largest states, Maharashtra and Karnataka, grew by three per cent, and five per cent, respectively. This is an example of the deep-rooted mysteries of the economic data in the country.

After all, if GST collections in most major states fell, what prompted the rise in Maharashtra and Karnataka, which happened to be large contributors to the combined pool? This is just a part of the puzzle. Let us dive deeper into the fine print, and one realises the factors that may have contributed to a situation where the collections were shown to be marginally higher or flat, when they could have been considerably

Imports, refunds saved GST

lower. The trick, it seems, was in the collections for imported goods and refunds. Let us look at the numbers again.

The domestic GST collections declined by 2.7 per cent. This means that what analysts and economists predicted happened because of a significant reduction in the rates across the various slabs. But the same did not happen with IGST, or imported goods and services. In fact, there was a 10.2 per cent rise, which is quite surprising. This adds up to a substantial number. So, if the IGST collections were aligned with CGST ones, and the latter denote the domestic element, then possibly there could have been a shortfall.

Let us turn our attention to refunds. Normally, refunds account for a substantive portion of the gross GST collections. After deducting them, the net GST figures are calculated, and released by the Government. In the case of November, 2025, after deduction of the refunds, the net collections were

estimated in the region of ₹1.7 lakh crore. There is a catch here. There has been a 11 per cent decline in the amount refunded. In terms of absolute numbers, this works out to a substantive figure. What does this mean?

It implies that if refunds were in the same nature as was prevalent in the past, and if the collections on imports were aligned with the domestic ones, there would have been a huge shortfall in November 2025. Forget about the marginal increase that marked the newspaper headlines, there would have been a decline in collections. Remember that the collections for November 2025 really mean the GST for the products that were sold in the previous October month. October was the month when the consumers went on a shopping orgy during the festive period across malls, and e-commerce platforms.

Indeed, let us not forget that GST 2.0 kicked in on the first day of Navratri to boost festive buying, which was preceded by the

increase in the personal income tax exemption limit to ₹12 lakhs a year. There were more disposable incomes with the buyers, and the prices of most goods, ranging from two-wheelers, cars, tractors to items of daily consumption went down. Yet, GST collections declined. In fact, this should not have been surprising. After all, the revenue secretary had disclosed during a press conference when GST 2.0 was unveiled that there could be a shortfall or a decline in gross revenues of ₹48,000 crore a year. It was inevitable until volumes picked up.

What is indeed surprising is how the November figures showed a marginal growth in collections. Beyond the cynicism, there is still good news. Consumer sentiments have improved, and sales of both consumer durables and items of daily necessities in November witnessed a steady rise that augers well for not just GST collections in the months ahead, but for the Indian economy. But why the data was presented in the way it was remains a mystery. One can ascribe various factors to it, but they will be in the realm of speculation.

One can add two issues to the debate. The first is that whether it is income tax, or GST, the Government is indeed going slow on refunds. The relevant departments contend that there are doubts, and the returns and payments need to be analysed. In the case of personal income tax, there is a feeling that refunds are high, especially for high-income taxpayers. In the case of GST, there are concerns related to input tax credit, which has been misused. As an indication, the officials have intensified investigations to plug the loopholes.

At the same time, there may be a genuine reason for the low GST collections in November 2025, which essentially refer to the goods sold in October. In the case of several products, such as two-wheelers and cars, and consumer electronics and home appliances, dealers had built up large inventories on which GST was already paid. During the festive season, and especially in October, these were sold. Since the firms had publicised the new prices after GST cuts, the dealers took a hit as they sold the goods at lower prices. The sales of these products would not reflect in the November GST collection data.

The author has worked for leading media houses, authored two books, and is now Executive Director, C Voter Foundation

Women, care work and economic growth: The transformative potential of the OSH Code, 2020



RACHNA MEHRA

The trajectory of India's long-term economic growth is inextricably linked to the full inclusion of women in the labour market. With policymakers and global institutions increasingly recognising the transformative potential of women's economic participation, the country is witnessing encouraging momentum.

Although, India's female labour force participation rate (LFPR) was 32.8 per cent in 2024, which is lower than the global LFPR of 48.9 per cent and East Asia's 59.2 per cent, as reported by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the recent trend of women employment is on the rise, extending its reach to both rural and urban areas.

The participation of women in the labour force in India has long been hindered by various socio-economic and cultural barriers, particularly domestic care responsibilities. However, recent government initiatives are signalling a positive shift in this regard.

The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH) Code, 2020, represents a milestone in India's journey toward inclusive growth. It offers a crucial opportunity to address deep-rooted inequities by safeguarding working conditions for millions of women exposed to unsafe workplaces and limited legal protections. By instituting standardised measures for health, welfare, and safety, the OSH Code serves as both a regulatory framework and a catalyst for gender-equitable expansion.

Global experiences demonstrate that occupational safety and gender-sensitive reforms enhance workforce participation. Vietnam's 2019 Labour Code, which expanded maternity protection and workplace safety, improved female retention and export competitiveness. Similarly, Malaysia's 2022 employment amendments helped balance family responsibilities with formal work in key industries.

For India, these examples offer valuable lessons. Initiatives like Make in India and Viksit Bharat 2047 require a productive, inclusive workforce. The OSH Code's provisions for safety committees, rest facilities, and crèches can mitigate barriers to employment, while its universal applicability extends crucial protection to women in precarious and informal sectors.

The State of women's labour force participation in India

According to the latest report of Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023-24, conducted by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, women's labour force participation has risen to 41.7 per cent in 2023-24 - a substantial increase from the 23.3 per cent recorded in 2017-18. While significant progress has been made, challenges remain - most notably unpaid domestic services and unpaid caregiving services for household members.



This paradox exists despite significant educational advancements, including rising female enrolment in tertiary education and declining literacy gaps. This trend, often termed the "feminisation U-curve," suggests that participation dips during economic transitions before rebounding. However, India risks being an exception; persistently low participation could undermine its transition to a middle-income economy and constrain its demographic dividend.

The role of unpaid care work

A primary barrier to economic participation is the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work. The National Statistical Office's (NSO) Time Use Survey (2024) reveals that Indian women spend two hours 17 minutes daily on unpaid caregiving, compared to one hour 15 minutes for men.

Globally, women perform 76 per cent of

unpaid care work, but the burden is heavier in India due to inadequate childcare infrastructure and cultural expectations. Valued at 15-17 per cent of India's GDP, this unpaid labour remains invisible in formal statistics.

This inequity forces many women to decline job opportunities or accept lower-paying, informal roles closer to home. Furthermore, career interruptions for maternity and caregiving reduce lifetime earnings, creating a persistent "care penalty" that limits long-term economic empowerment.

The transformative potential of the OSH labour code

The OSH Code, 2020, consolidates 13 labour laws, standardising safety provisions for all establishments with 10 or more workers. It directly addresses barriers at the intersection of employment and care work. Aligning with the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, the Code emphasizes maternity entitlements and ensures nursing breaks to facilitate workforce retention.

Crucially, the Code promotes equity in the informal sector by bringing contract and informal workers under a uniform safety umbrella,

benefiting women in construction, agriculture, and domestic work. By mandating non-discrimination in recruitment and working conditions, it makes workplaces safer and more responsive to gendered challenges that have historically excluded women.

Global comparisons and lessons

Evidence from other regions confirms that gender-sensitive OSH frameworks are powerful levers for change. Sweden and Iceland achieve female workforce participation rates above 70 per cent through social protection frameworks integrating workplace safety, subsidised childcare, and parental leave.

Japan and South Korea are slowly improving female LFPR by expanding workplace protections and crèche facilities. In Sub-Saharan Africa, legal safeguards in agriculture have propelled female participation to 70 per cent.

Latin American examples, like Chile and Uruguay, show that state-funded childcare enhances female employment without sacrificing child development. For India, these lessons reinforce that OSH protections combined with care infrastructure investments

will yield transformative outcomes.

Economic rationale for women's inclusion

Prioritising women's participation is a macro-economic necessity. The McKinsey Global Institute estimates that bridging gender gaps could add \$12 trillion to global GDP by 2025, with India standing to gain approximately \$770 billion - an 18 per cent increase from baseline projections. The IMF notes that narrowing participation gaps can boost GDP by up to 35 per cent.

Women's employment also strengthens inter-generational human capital through higher investments in children's health and education. Failing to integrate women effectively results in significant opportunity costs, undermining India's potential demographic dividend.

OSH code as a bridge to inclusivity

The OSH Code situates women's inclusion as an economic imperative rather than just a welfare measure. By addressing structural risks and eliminating discrimination, the Code reduces attrition by ensuring safe, flexible workplaces.

Extending protections to the informal sector incentivises the transition to formal employment. A diverse, secure workforce strengthens productivity and macroeconomic resilience, aligning with SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

Way forward

The OSH Code, 2020, is a strategic lever for long-term, gender-inclusive growth. To realise its potential, it must operate within an ecosystem that addresses both workplace conditions and the care burden.

Strengthening childcare infrastructure is a key pillar; expanding initiatives like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and the National Crèche Scheme can ensure women are not forced to choose between caregiving and employment.

While the Code protects formal workers, women in the unorganised sector need expanded access to benefits like the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC). Grassroots awareness campaigns are essential to inform women of their entitlements. Employers must also be engaged as stakeholders to adopt gender-sensitive practices, including flexible scheduling and ergonomic design.

Global experience confirms that robust OSH frameworks, integrated with care infrastructure, significantly enhance economic participation and GDP. For India, navigating demographic and structural transitions, this integration is urgent. Swift implementation of the OSH Code, supported by inclusive policies, will unlock the female workforce's potential, driving the vision of *Atmanirbhar Bharat* and ensuring a competitive, resilient economy.

Author is a Head of Group HR, Arvind Limited, Gujarat

A new economic moment for India: The Modi-economics behind India's muscular growth



JAGMOHAN SINGH RAJU

India stands at a remarkable moment in its economic journey — one marked by high growth, macroeconomic stability and structural depth that had long eluded its economy.

Official estimates place GDP growth at over 8 per cent in Q2 FY26, one of the strongest performances among major economies. Manufacturing has expanded robustly, services have remained buoyant, construction has strengthened and private consumption continues to revive steadily. Inflation — which destabilised advanced economies in the post-pandemic period — has remained largely within the RBI's tolerance band for most of the past two years.

Domestic consumption reinforces this momentum. Passenger-vehicle sales crossed 4.3 million units in FY25, while two-wheeler sales approached nearly 20 million units. Urban housing transactions reached their highest levels in more than a decade. Festive-season retail spending surged past expectations, reflecting spirited household confidence. These indicators confirm that India's growth trajectory is anchored in broad-based demand rather than a statistical rebound.

India's evolving socio-economic profile further strengthens this shift. According to the World Bank's Spring 2025 Poverty and Equity Brief, India lifted 171 million people out of extreme poverty between 2011-12 and 2022-23. Extreme poverty fell from 16.2 per cent to just 2.3 per cent, one of the steepest declines recorded globally. This expanding middle class is increasingly driving consumption across automobiles, housing, electronics and digital services.

The architecture of Modi-economics

This transformation is not the result of favourable global conditions but of a decade of purposeful and, at times, politically difficult reforms under Prime Minister Narendra Modi — the Modi-Economics. It rests on fiscal discipline, institutional strengthening, manufacturing-led growth, digital governance and strategic continuity. Few democracies of India's scale have pursued reforms with such consistency.

The rollout of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) marked a landmark shift.



After years of debate, Modi delivered a unified indirect tax structure that replaced a maze of State-level levies with a national market. Subsequent rate rationalisations — often termed GST 2.0 — lowered compliance burdens and simplified the structure for MSMEs and manufacturers. Institutions such as NCAER note that GST has significantly improved logistics efficiency and reduced costs across value chains.

Modi's call for Vocal for Local and a renewed emphasis on *Swadeshi* further reinforced this architecture. These initiatives encouraged consumers to support made in India brands and strengthened domestic supply chains. Local products across electronics, textiles, coir, home appliances and processed foods have gained substantial market share, while MSME clusters report stronger output and wider market access.

Reforming the financial backbone

Sustained high growth is impossible without a stable and well-capitalised financial system. When Modi took office, public-sector banks were saddled with

high NPAs and stalled projects. The Government opted for structural repair rather than temporary fixes. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code brought credit discipline. Bank mergers created stronger institutions. Recapitalisation bolstered balance sheets. An asset-reconstruction mechanism addressed legacy stress.

The clean-up has been transformative. As NPAs fell to their lowest levels in many years, credit to infrastructure, MSMEs and manufacturing revived decisively. A healthier banking sector now provides the foundation for the next phase of investment-driven growth — a long-standing aspiration finally materialising.

Turning crisis into opportunity

The Covid-19 crisis tested leadership globally, and Modi's economic instincts were evident in how India navigated the shock. The world's largest vaccination drive, a phased reopening and the use of digital public infrastructure enabled a swift recovery. More significantly, Modi used the crisis to accelerate India's manufacturing transition through the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI)

schemes — the largest and most targeted industrial-policy initiative in India's history. PLI spans 14 strategic sectors including electronics, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, EVs and solar modules. It incentivises incremental domestic production and has attracted global supply chains to shift capacity to India.

The outcomes are spectacular. According to official data reported by The Economic Times, Apple exported nearly \$10 billion worth of iPhones in the first half of FY25 - a 75 per cent year-on-year increase. Apple produced \$22 billion worth of iPhones in FY25, of which \$17.5 billion were exported, and India now reportedly accounts for around 20 per cent of global iPhone production. This marks a profound shift in India's role in global electronics manufacturing. The automobile and electric-mobility sectors echo this momentum. India remains the world's largest two-wheeler producer, with several companies reporting strong export growth.

EV and battery production have expanded rapidly, supported by PLI incentives and proactive state policies. India is emerging as a preferred export base for compact vehicles and electric

two-wheelers across Asia, Africa and parts of Europe.

A resilient economy in a disrupted world

Rising protectionism globally including tariff uncertainties linked to political developments in the United States could have posed serious risks to emerging markets. Yet India has remained comparatively stable. Strong domestic demand, a more diversified export basket and predictable policy-making have shielded the economy from external shocks.

Manufacturing has reported consistent expansion, services remain strong and construction continues to benefit from public and private capital formation. Agriculture, too, has shown resilience, supported by improvements in irrigation, procurement digitisation and risk-mitigation schemes.

A major driver of this broader resilience has been the unprecedented expansion of infrastructure over the past decade. The national highway network has grown from about 97,000 kilometres in 2014 to over 146,000 kilometres in 2024, with daily highway construction

rising from 12 kilometres to nearly 30 kilometres. The number of operational airports has doubled from 74 in 2014 to 149 today, dramatically improving regional connectivity under UDAN. Railway capital expenditure has increased almost five-fold - from ₹54,000 crore in 2013-14 to around ₹2.6 lakh crore in 2023-24 — enabling faster freight movement through dedicated corridors and modernised stations. Port capacity has expanded significantly, and India's ranking in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index improved from 54 to 38. This infrastructure boom has lowered logistics costs, strengthened supply chains and enhanced India's global competitiveness.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) now estimates that India will cross the \$4-trillion GDP milestone in FY26, reach around \$4.96 trillion in FY28, and touch \$5.46 trillion in FY29. The IMF projects that India will exceed \$6 trillion by 2030, setting it firmly on track to remain one of the world's fastest-growing major economies.

The Modi-economics dividend

What distinguishes India's current moment is not the headline numbers alone, but the qualitative shift beneath them. The economy is transitioning from a consumption-heavy, import-dependent model toward one anchored in investment, manufacturing, technology and exports. Banks are healthier, inflation is better managed than in many peer economies, fiscal policy is more credible and the reform pipeline is deeper and more coherent than at any point in recent decades.

This is the essence of Modi-Economics: structural reforms delivered with political will, administrative consistency and a long-term national vision. A decade ago, India was often described as a country of untapped potential. Today, global institutions increasingly identify it as one of the world's most reliable and resilient growth engines.

If India now has the confidence to target sustained high growth, attract global supply chains, expand domestic entrepreneurship and aspire to become a developed nation by 2047, it is because the foundations have been systematically rebuilt under Prime Minister Modi's leadership. The momentum is real, the trajectory unmistakable. And that is why, when one reflects on India's economic transformation, the phrase carries renewed force: *Modi Hai Toh Mumkin Hai*.

Author is a former IAS officer

PROSPECT



Minister Pijush Hazarika along with Minister Bimal Borah and others join the 'Asom Divas' celebrations in Nazira to honour the legacy and acknowledge the contribution of Chaolung Su-Ka-Pha in shaping cultural and political character of Assam



Nai Asha by Leher Foundation, a learning and therapy centre for children with special needs, celebrated its 4th Annual Day on 29th November 2025. Mr Amit Kumar Yadav, IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, (GOI) graced the occasion as the Chief Guest, in the presence of Dr Vikas Kumar, Managing Director, DMRC. The event featured a vibrant cultural programme by the children at the centre

Aadhaar authentication transactions grow 8.5% YoY to 231 crore in November

Aadhaar authentication transactions grew by 8.5 per cent year-over-year to 231 crore, indicating a growth in the digital economy in the country, an official statement said on Tuesday. In October, 219.51 crore Aadhaar authentication transactions were recorded. "Aadhaar number holders executed 231 cr authentication transactions in November 2025, clocking a growth of almost 8.5 per cent as against the same period last year. It is indicative of the growing usage of Aadhaar, as well as the growth of the digital economy in the country," the statement from the Electronics and IT Ministry said.

The November 2025 authentication transactions are the highest so far when compared with any of the previous months this fiscal year, the statement said.

"The Aadhaar Face Authentication solutions are also witnessing consistent traction. Nearly 60 per cent of the Digital Life Certificates generated by pensioners during November used Aadhaar face authentication," the statement said. The AI-based face authentication modality of UIDAI works both on Android and iOS platforms and enables users to verify their identity with just a face scan, ensuring convenience while upholding stringent security standards.

Shah says ₹6,841.86 crore refunded to 35.44 lakh depositors of Sahara Group Coop Societies so far

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said a refund of ₹6,841.86 crore has been disbursed to ₹35.44 lakh depositors of Sahara Group Cooperative Societies so far.

The refund has been given to 35.44 lakh depositors out of 1.41 crore who have submitted applications through the Sahara Refund and Re-submission Portals, he said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

Presently, a payment of up to ₹50,000 is disbursed to each genuine depositor of the Sahara Group of Cooperative Societies against verified claims through Aadhaar-seeded bank accounts.

"The Ministry is taking all possible steps for payment to the genuine depositors....," Shah said.

The Supreme Court has extended the time till December 31, 2026 for disbursement to the genuine depositors of the Sahara Group of Cooperative Societies.

According to the minister, applications received on the portal are processed in a transparent manner, on



proper identification and on submitting proof of their identity and deposits.

The disbursement process is guided by the Standard Operating Procedure and amendments made to it from time to time.

In case of any deficiency found in the application of the depositor on the portal, deficiencies are being conveyed to them for resubmission of their application through the "Re-submission portal" already launched on

Successful joint operations by security forces in Manipur



TONY DAS
■ Kohima, Nagaland

During 23 Nov to 28 Nov 2025, the Indian Army and Assam Rifles formations under Spear Corps, in conjunction with Manipur Police executed a series of precise, intelligence-driven joint operations across Canchipur, Saikul, Thoubal, Kangpokpi, Tengenoupal, Imphal East and Imphal West Districts of Manipur. The operations led to the apprehension of 11 cadres from hill and valley-based groups and recovery of 14 weapons, illegal contraband, explosives and other war-like stores.

On 23 Nov, a joint team of Assam Rifles and Imphal West Police Commandos apprehended an active KCP (PWG) cadre from Canchipur, Imphal West.

On 25 Nov, Assam Rifles during an operation in the general area Shonglung, Kangpokpi district, recovered one Heckler and Koch

G3 rifle with magazine, two bolt-action rifles, four Pull mechanism rifles, one Improvised mortar, two Hand Grenades, with detonators, two G3 Live rounds and one Hand Held Radio set.

On the same day in the general area of Galbung village, Saikul district, Assam Rifles recovered one carbine with magazine, one 303 Rifle, six 9 mm rounds, one 303 magazine, two .22 pistols with magazines, two Single Bolt Action Rifles, various types of ammunition and explosives, two Radio sets (Baofeng) four Pompey, three PEK, cordex, and detonator.

On 26 Nov, Assam Rifles and Imphal East Police Commandos apprehended one KYKL (SOREPA) cadre from Porompat Soibam Leikai, Imphal East. On the same day, Assam Rifles and Nambol Police arrested a UNLF (Koireng) cadre in Heigrujam, Imphal West. One 9mm pistol and 12 live

rounds were recovered.

In another major operation, Assam Rifles and Imphal West Police Commandos apprehended three KCP (MFL) cadres from Imphal East, Imphal West, and Thoubal foiling a threat to the Sangai Festival. Individuals were handed over to the concerned authorities for further legal action.

On 28 Nov, Assam Rifles seized foreign-origin liquor and cigarettes worth ₹80 lakh during routine MVCP checks at Yangoubung, Tengenoupal where two vehicles were intercepted and two individuals were apprehended.

In another operation on the same day, Assam Rifles unearthed five live IEDs hidden in an underground bunker in a forested stretch of Tengenoupal.

The explosives were safely neutralised. All items and individuals were handed over to the concerned authorities for further legal action.

The apprehended individuals and recovered items were handed over to the concerned authorities for further legal action.



ED puts up seized business jet for auction in Hyderabad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A seized business jet, purchased in 2024 for about ₹14 crore, has been put up for auction by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in Hyderabad as part of its effort to restore funds to the victims of a investors' "fraud".

The Hawker 800A aircraft, bearing registration number N935H, was seized by the federal probe agency in March during raids conducted at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) in Telangana's capital city.

The searches were part of a probe against the Falcon Group (Capital Protection Force Private Limited), its chairman-cum-managing director (CMD) Amardeep Kumar and others for "defrauding" investors in a bogus invoice-discounting scheme involving an amount of ₹792 crore.

The plane was purchased by Kumar in 2024 for \$1.6 million, the ED said in a statement on Tuesday.

It said Kumar "fled" the country using the said aircraft and is currently "absconding". The plane was seized by the sleuths of the ED's Hyderabad zonal office after it came back and was parked at the RGIA.

The aircraft is currently parked at the Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad and is available for inspection till December 12, according to the agency. Its auction will be conducted by the Metal Scrap

Trade Corporation Limited (MSTC) on December 9. "The proceeds from the sale of the aircraft shall be eventually used for the purpose of restitution to the victims of the scam," the ED said.

The Adjudicating Authority established under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) confirmed the ED's provisional attachment order in August and the agency subsequently moved an application before the authority to take possession of the movable asset so that it can be sold.

The authority allowed the ED to auction the plane via an order issued on November 20.

A specific section in the PMLA provides for the sale of a confirmed attached property if it is subject to speedy and natural decay or if its maintenance costs are likely to exceed its value.

The ED case stems from an FIR filed in February by the Cyberabad Police which alleged that Kumar launched an invoice-discounting scheme under the name and style of "Falcon Invoice Discounting" and duped gullible investors of ₹792 crore.

The agency arrested three people in the case — Kumar's brother Sandeep Kumar, chartered accountant Sharad Chandra Toshniwal and Capital Protection Force COO Aryan Singh Chhabra. It also filed a chargesheet before a special court in Rangareddy in September.

Metropolis healthcare launches scientifically curated GLP-1 monitoring test packages

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Ameera Shah-led Metropolis Healthcare Limited (NSE: METROPOLIS | BSE: 542650), India's second-largest and the most respected pathology laboratory chain, today announced the launch of three specialised metabolic health packages under its TruHealth portfolio.

These have been designed to support individuals preparing for or undergoing GLP-1 based therapies for diabetes, obesity and related metabolic conditions. Developed through rigorous scientific evaluation, the packages offer stage-specific assessments that strengthen therapeutic decision-making and promote long-term metabolic safety.

India continues to witness a sharp rise in metabolic disorders such as early-onset obesity, insulin resistance, fatty liver disease and elevated cardiovascular risk.

With GLP-1 agonists emerging as a preferred therapy for weight management and glycaemic control, consistent metabolic tracking has become essential. Insights from Metropolis' in-house data indicate a steady increase in abnormal metabolic markers across major cities, underscoring the need for robust, clinically designed monitoring frameworks.

To address this need, Metropolis has introduced three structured, scientifically curated test packages under its GLP-1 series-TruHealth GLP-1 Ready, TruHealth GLP-1 Monitor and the TruHealth GLP-1 Monitor (3-Pack Subscription)-each tailored to distinct pre-therapy and during/post-therapy needs. TruHealth



GLP-1 Ready offers a comprehensive baseline assessment that maps an individual's metabolic status before initiating GLP-1-based or any advanced weight-management or diabetes intervention, covering glucose-insulin balance, lipid and cardiac risk markers, liver and kidney health and key nutritional indicators.

The package also includes vitals and an ECG assessment to offer clinicians a holistic pre-therapy fitness overview. For individuals already on GLP-1 therapy, TruHealth GLP-1 Monitor provides a dedicated biochemical monitoring framework to track evolving metabolic biomarkers, identify early signs of deficiencies or organ-related changes and support clinicians with timely, data-driven insights for refining treatment decisions. To strengthen continuity and improve long-term outcomes, the TruHealth GLP-1 Monitor (3-Pack Subscription) offers structured evaluations at recommended intervals, giving patients and clinicians a clear longitudinal view of metabolic progress and ensuring interventions remain precise and responsive over time.

Commenting on the launch, Mr Surendran Chemmenkotil, Managing Director, Metropolis Healthcare Limited, said: "As GLP-1 therapies gain traction across India, it is increasingly evident

that they must be supported by a reliable diagnostic framework. Many individuals start or continue treatment without clear insight into their metabolic status or how their body is responding. These specialised GLP-1 packages address that gap by offering dependable, stage-appropriate assessments that enhance clinical decision-making. Our focus is on making metabolic monitoring accessible and meaningful, enabling safer and more informed care for every patient on a GLP-1 journey."

Dr Kirti Chadha, Chief Scientific and Innovation Officer, Metropolis Healthcare Limited, said: "Developing meaningful GLP-1 diagnostics requires scientific precision, not just broader test menus. All three packages have been designed through a rigorous test-selection framework aligned with clinical evidence and physician protocols and powered by our high-sensitivity platforms and robust validation systems.

This ensures that every parameter included delivers real clinical value-whether assessing metabolic balance, therapeutic response or nutritional status. By emphasising relevance, depth and quality, the TruHealth GLP-1 series offers clinicians reliable insights to guide safe, effective and personalised care."

Finance Minister grants Navratna status to Numaligarh Refinery

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has granted Navratna status to Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL). Prior to the upgrade, NRL, a Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, held Miniratna status.

"Hon'ble Finance Minister has approved the upgradation of Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL) to Navratna CPSE. NRL will be the 27th Navratna amongst the CPSEs. NRL is a Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas CPSE



Numaligarh Refinery, Assam

with an annual turn over of ₹25,147 crores and net profit of ₹1,608 crores for FY 2024-25," Department of Public Enterprises under the Finance Ministry said in a post on X on Tuesday.

NRL's majority shareholder is Oil India Ltd with 69.63 per cent holding, while the Assam Government has 26 per cent and Engineers India Ltd 4.37 per cent.

Navratna status will significantly enhance financial and operational autonomy. This autonomy is designed to empower the company to compete more effectively in the domestic and global markets by making faster, independent deci-

sions without needing explicit Government approval for every strategic move. It will empower the company to invest up to Rs 1,000 crore or 15 per cent of its net worth on a single project without seeking Government approval.

"Proud moment for Assam! Numaligarh Refinery is now a Navratna PSE. Not too long ago, it was on the verge of losing its PSU status but with the Union Govt's support, we reposed our faith in the enterprise's ability and enhanced our stake in it and within 4 years it has become a *Navratna*," said Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

verka

THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD.
SCO 153-155, SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022. Contact NO. 0172-5041866.
Short term e-Tender Notice Inviting www.verka.coop

| Sr. No. | Name of Work/Item | Period/Tentative Qty |
|---------|--|----------------------|
| 1. | For Verka Amritsar Dairy Hiring of powder plant for conversion of surplus of skimmed milk into skimmed milk powder. | Annual |

NOTE:
1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in.
2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.

General Manager (Purchase)

1018/12/2025-26/5642

BRIEFLY

SENTHILKUMAR, ANAHAT REACH HCL QUARTERFINALS



Velavan Senthilkumar and Anahat Singh, the reigning men's and women's national champions respectively, cruised into the quarterfinals of the HCL Squash Indian Tour 4 with clinical victories here on Tuesday. World No. 46 Senthilkumar dismantled Sri Lanka's Ravindu Laksiri 11-7, 11-8, 11-7, while Delhi teenager Anahat, ranked 29th in the world, eased past Tamara Holzbauerova of Czech Republic 11-7, 11-7, 11-7 in the pre-quarterfinals after both the Indian top seeds received first-round byes. Former women's world No. 10 Joshna Chinappa, women's sixth seed Tanvi Khanna and men's second seed Veer Chotrani were the other Indians who made it to the last-eight.

CHAUFLA WINS INDIAN RACKETLON OPEN



India captain Vikramaditya Chaufla waded through a competitive international field to lift the Willingdon Indian Racketlon Open trophy here. Chaufla, who has multiple World Championship medals to his name, had to dig deep to get the better of compatriot Animesh Kejriwal in the final of the B category held here over the weekend. The final scoreline read 21-18, 21-10, 10-21, 19-18 in Chaufla's favour. The semifinal against Russian veteran Dmitry Dubovenko was an absorbing battle of attrition before the Indian prevailed 9-21, 21-16, 21-16, 21-17.

Nice fans attack players

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Paris

Ligue 1 club Nice has condemned "unacceptable" incidents after angry fans attacked staff and players following yet another disappointing performance from the Riviera side over the weekend.

After suffering a sixth consecutive loss across all competitions on Sunday — 3-1 at Lorient in the French league — Nice players were confronted by a large number of their supporters when they returned to the club's training and academy center.

Fans shouted insults and demanded greater commitment from the squad as tensions escalated, with reports that some supporters even boarded the team



bus. "The club understands the frustration caused by the series of poor results and performances that fall short of its values," Nice said in a statement late Monday. "However, the incidents that occurred during

Khelo India vital to curb teen boredom: Aussie coach

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Jaipur

Australian tennis coach Todd Clark, who has worked in the Indian tennis circuit for close to two decades, is quite impressed with the Khelo India initiative as he feels it has given a sense of purpose to teenagers, who can be "troublesome" when they are "bored".

Clark came to India in 2008 and is presently working for the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) in Odisha as a Director of Tennis. He is guiding his trainees at the ongoing Khelo India University Games.

He was a part of the Indian contingent for the 2025 Summer World University Games in Germany where Vaishnavi Adkar won a historic women's singles bronze. It was India's first-

ever women's tennis medal and second-ever medal at the event. The previous medal, a silver, came in 1979 from Nandan Bal.

"There is nothing more troublesome than a bored teenager. What these games have done all over the country is that they have given these teens opportunities to pick up sports and excel at them and eventually make a career. Sports also inculcate character," Clark told 'SAI (Sports Authority of India) Media'.

"These games are going to promote health and wellness among the youth. Furthermore, the infrastructure will get a boost. I am quite impressed with the facilities that I have seen in Jaipur so far," he said.

After coming to India, Clark worked for the Harvest Tennis Academy in Punjab. He has since worked in



Tennis players Anshuman Singh (left) and Kabir Hans (right) with coach Todd Clark at the Sawai Man Singh Stadium on Tuesday

Gujarat and Haryana. He was with the Indian contingent when Vaishnavi Adkar of Pune won a women's singles bronze medal in the 2025 Summer World University Games.

Clark believes India has a lot of potential in tennis despite the fact that the country has not seen much success in the sport.

"I think India has a lot of talent. Though I believe talent identification could be better. Counselling kids on what sport to pick could also be better. For example, you need to be a certain height to be a good tennis player, 6 feet or thereabouts.

"So if you are, say 5'4", your chances of being a top-class tennis player are very low, so you should pick up another sport that suits you. So, it's important players are advised in the right manner," he said.

Murray disappointed by results of coaching Djokovic

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ London

Andy Murray says he was "disappointed" with Novak Djokovic's results during his time coaching his former rival.

Murray joined Djokovic's coaching team in November 2024 just three months after the 38-year-old Scot ended his own playing career at the Paris Olympics.

But it proved a short six-month partnership as the pair was together for only the Australian Open and five other tournaments this year.

"I look back on it and I'm glad that I did it," Murray told The Tennis Podcast.

"It's an amazing experience that I've had. It didn't last long but I put everything into it. I was disappointed. Probably didn't get the results I would have liked for him.

"It was a good opportuni-



ty because I felt I wanted to coach at some stage and if I didn't take it I might look back and think it would have been really interesting, I could have learned a lot, or potentially regretted it."

Djokovic overcame Carlos

Alcaraz to reach the semifinals at the Australian Open but in the process he tore his left hamstring. The 24-time Grand Slam champion then retired after one set against Alexander Zverev and was booed off the

court.

When he returned, the 38-year-old Serb suffered opening losses in Qatar and Indian Wells. Then he reached the Miami Open final but lost to Czech teenager Jakub Mensik.

Murray initially planned to coach Djokovic to the French Open but the partnership ended in May after first-up defeats on clay in Monte Carlo and Madrid.

"It was going well initially and it was unfortunate what happened in Australia with the injury, but I watched him play ridiculous tennis in that tournament," Murray said.

"After the injury it was certainly a difficult few months for him but also I think for the team and all of us. I learned a lot about what coaching is. I was fully invested, tried my hardest to help, and made some good relationships along the way with his team.

Macario, Shaw score as USWNT beat Italy 2-0 to close 2025

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Ft Lauderdale

Catarina Macario scored in her third straight international match and the United States defeated Italy 2-0 in the final game for the national team this year.

The United States has scored in 16 straight matches, including all 15 this year. The national team wrapped up 2025 12-3-0.

Macario scored the opening goal in the 20th minute with a strike from the corner of the box and up over Italy goalkeeper Francesca Durante's head and into the side netting of the far post.

Jaedyn Shaw added a



second goal before halftime, taking a pass from Alyssa Thompson before squaring up and calmly finishing out of Durante's reach to make it 2-0. Claudia Dickey earned her fifth clean sheet in her sixth appearance in goal for

the United States.

Macario had a pair of goals a 3-0 victory over Italy on Friday night in Orlando, Florida. Olivia Moultrie, who scored the other goal on Friday, was available off the bench Monday.

France book quarterfinal berth at FIH World Cup



SAUMJOYOTI S CHOUDHURY
■ Chennai

Last edition's silver medallist France continued their unbeaten run, eking out a narrow 3-2 win over a fighting Bangladesh to directly qualify for the quarter finals of the FIH Men's Junior World Cup with an all-win record on Tuesday.

France, who had defeated Korea 11-1 and Australia 8-3, topped Pool F with maximum nine points from three matches.

The ever-improving Frenchmen were a treat to watch as they controlled the proceedings against Bangladesh for most part of the match.

France got their first scoring chance in the second minute from a penalty corner but star drag-flicker Amirul Islam made a fine goal line save.

France kept up the pressure and secured two more short corners soon, the second of which resulted in a penalty stroke and Tom Gaillard made no mistake from the spot in the seventh minute.

Two minutes into the second quarter, Bangladesh secured a penalty corner but

this time Amirul fell short as his powerful flick was brilliantly saved by French goalkeeper Antoine Robert.

Bangladesh, however, drew level in the 28th minute through their first field goal of the tournament by Md Abdullah as both the teams went into half-time locked at 1-1.

After the change of ends, France upped their game and scored two quick field goals through Gabin Lorraxuri (32nd) and James Liddiard (38th) to take 3-1 lead.

The match between France and Bangladesh also witnessed some disruptions as it had to be stopped thrice due to floodlight issues from one side.

A resilient Bangladesh, however, continued to impress in the tournament, and didn't give up fight till the end.

With four minutes from the final hooter, Bangladesh secured two more penalty corners, and Amirul converted the second chance to reduce the margin and take his goals tally to seven in the tournament.

Already out of the reckoning, Chile registered a consolation win, beating Oman 2-0 in a Pool B match. (PTI)

AIFF calls for flexibility at Mandaviya's football meeting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) will stick to a "flexible" approach when Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya meets the representatives of all the stakeholders of the sport in the country to find a way out of the current crisis.

The meeting is being called by the sports ministry on the directives of the Supreme Court after the tender floated by the AIFF for the commercial rights of the Indian Super League (ISL) found no takers.

As many as six meetings have been scheduled at the Sports Authority of India (SAI), including separate discussions with the ISL clubs, I-League clubs, prospective commercial partners, Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL) -- which still is technically the AIFF's commercial partner till December 8 -- and some OTT platforms.

It is learnt that the AIFF is amenable to the idea of reduction in the annual minimum guaranteed payment amount of Rs 37.5 crore or 5 percent of gross revenue for the next five

years to be paid by the commercial partner as per the tender, if it gets an assurance of financial support from the government.

If the minimum guaranteed payment amount is reduced, the AIFF would want financial support from the government to fund the national teams and conduct various tournaments, it is learnt. "The AIFF conducts 1700 matches and 21 championships in a year, it needs fund to prepare the national teams and ISL has been its main source of AIFF's income. Moreover, three women teams (senior, U20 and U17) as well as the men's U17 team have qualified for the Asian Cup for the first time," a source told PTI.

The other two tricky issues which have been flagged by the prospective bidders and mentioned by (Retd) Justice Nageswara Rao in his report to the Supreme Court, relate to the structural and operational concerns of the ISL, which are interlinked.

The prospective bidder's participation in the Governing Council is limited (only one member out of six), in addition to the veto power vested in the AIFF representative.



Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya

There are also limitations on the prospective bidder's ability to manage and sublicense rights. Key decision-making powers would remain with the national federation in accordance with the AIFF Constitution.

It is learnt that the national federation wants to tread a cautious path on these two matters as it feels that the concerns (of the prospective bidders) might have to do with the interpretation of an article in the AIFF Constitution.

"These concerns might

have to do with the interpretation of Article 20.9 (m). Under the same framework, Articles 1.21 and 63.1 recognize the AIFF as the original owner of all rights emerging from its competitions. Furthermore, Article 63.3 grants the AIFF full discretion and authority over all such rights," the source said.

Since these two concerns seemingly relate to the AIFF Constitution, the national federation may prefer the sport ministry to apprise or request the Supreme Court, through Amicus Curiae or

Solicitor General, to find a way forward.

Indian domestic football first plunged into chaos after FSDL informed the AIFF in July that it was keeping the country's top-tier league on hold due to a lack of clarity over the renewal of the 15-year Master Rights Agreement (MRA) that ends on December 8.

After the tender for ISL's commercial rights got no takers, Justice Rao recommended to the Supreme Court to strike a balance between "preserving" the AIFF's authority and keeping in mind prospective bidders' commercial interests.

"These concerns, as articulated by various stakeholders, highlight structural, financial, and operational challenges, and have collectively contributed to the non-receipt of bids," Justice Rao had said in his report.

Based on the report submitted by Justice Rao, the SC on November 21 suggested that the matter be resolved expeditiously.

Consequently, the Solicitor General of India stated the government would ensure that the league is conducted in alignment with the FIFA Statutes.

Vardy Brace leads Cremonese to surprise win over Bologna

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Bologna (Italy)

Bologna's 12-match unbeaten run came to an ignoble end when it went down 3-1 at home to Cremonese, for which Jamie Vardy scored his first double in Serie A.

The match pitted a home side unbeaten in 12 games against a visitor that lost its last three league matches by a combined score of 6-2.

Yet it was Cremonese that struck first after half an hour. Matteo Bianchetti's poised through ball put Martin Payero on goal and his assured finish gave the goalkeeper no chance.

Four minutes later, Jamie Vardy made it 2-0 with a carbon copy of the opener. Federico Bonazzoli's pass set him free of a leaden back four and he coolly slotted home from almost exactly the same position as Payero.

Riccardo Orsolini pulled a goal back from the penalty spot on the stroke of halftime for Bologna but Vardy, the summer signing from Leicester City, restored Cremonese's two-goal cushion five minutes into



the second half when he stole in at the near post to tap home an inviting cross from the right.

It was an uplifting night for Vardy, who was reportedly the victim of a robbery last week.

UK Media said thieves entered his home near Lake Garda and made off with 80,000 pounds worth of valuables while he was playing a league game in Rome.

The result was also a boost for his club. After winning its first two matches of the campaign Cremonese had won only one since. Monday's result lifted it two places into 11th.

Bologna fell to sixth, behind Como on goal difference.

It was the first time that Vincenzo Italiano's side allowed three goals in one game all season.