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PIONEER IN SHORT

HC RESTORES WB TEACHERS JOBS

The West Bengal State Government received major relief on Wednesday as a Calcutta High Court Division Bench set aside a 2023 single-Bench order that had cancelled the appointments of 32,000 primary school teachers recruited through the 2014 Teachers' Eligibility Test (TET). The recruitment process had been marred by allegations of large-scale corruption, leading to the arrests of former Education Minister Partha Chatterjee, former TET chairman Manik Bhattacharya and several senior officials. Justice Tapabrata Chakraborty's Bench ruled that while irregularities existed, there was no evidence proving wrongdoing in all appointments, making it unfair to terminate teachers who have served for nine years. The court upheld ongoing CBI and ED investigations, noting that the agencies had identified irregularities in only about 360 cases. Trinamool Congress leaders called the case politically motivated, while the BJP said it would challenge the verdict in the Supreme Court.

The Bystander



COAL MINE PROTEST TURNS VIOLENT

More than 30 police personnel and several villagers were injured on Wednesday when protests against the expansion of the Amera open-cast coal mine turned violent in Chhattisgarh's Surguja district. Residents of Parsodi Kala village, who have long opposed the South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL) project despite earlier land acquisition, clashed with police and pelted stones as officials attempted to resume mining operations. Authorities said some villagers had accepted compensation, while others refused and obstructed work. Police used lathi and teargas to disperse the crowd.

MUMBAI INDIANS EXPAND TO UK

Reliance Industries and Surrey County Cricket Club on Wednesday formally announced their joint ownership of The Hundred franchise, which will be rebranded as MI London from 2026. The partnership — first outlined in July — gives Reliance a 49 per cent stake and Surrey a 51 per cent stake, marking the transfer of ownership from the England and Wales Cricket Board. The team, currently known as the Oval Invincibles, is the most successful in the tournament's history, with five titles in five years across the men's and women's competitions. The move expands the global footprint of Mumbai Indians, Reliance's flagship franchise, which now owns seven teams across five countries.

Sanchar Saathi mandate revoked



Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia speaks during the Winter Session of Parliament, in New Delhi

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

The Union Government on Wednesday withdrew its mandate to manufacturers and importers on pre-installing the Sanchar Saathi app on all smartphones. The move comes after the order was widely criticised for infringing on privacy. "Given Sanchar Saathi's increasing acceptance, the Government has decided not to make the pre-installation mandatory for mobile manufacturers," the Ministry of

Communication, parent ministry for the Department of Telecom (DoT), said in a statement. "Just in the last one day, 6 lakh citizens have registered for downloading the app, which is a 10x increase in its uptake. Given Sanchar Saathi's increasing acceptance, the Government has decided not to make the pre-installation mandatory for mobile manufacturers," the DoT statement read. However, earlier in the day, after Union Minister for Communications Jyotiraditya

Scindia defended the order mandating the app in the Parliament. "Snooping is neither possible, nor will it ever be. Sanchar Saathi app *se na snooping sambhav hai, no snooping hoga*", he said responding to a question on snooping concerns by Congress leader Deepender Singh Hooda. The Government defended the app in its statement, insisting it is "secure and purely meant to help citizens from bad actors in the cyber world" with no other function

beyond user protection. "The number of users has been increasing rapidly, and the mandate to install the app was meant to accelerate this process and make the app available to less aware citizens easily," officials said. Addressing a press conference, Congress leader Pawan Kheda had accused the BJP-led Government of "brazenly snooping" on citizens and giving a deceptive clarification when caught "red-handed." "Their Communications Minister confidently claimed that the Sanchar Saathi app can be deleted, a statement that collapses instantly under the weight of the Government's own direction, where Section 7(b) categorically states that the pre-installed app cannot be removed, nor can any of its 'functionalities be disabled or restricted,'" Khera said at a press conference. According to the Government, the Sanchar Saathi app was conceived as a citizen-centric cybersecurity tool aimed at protecting users from online fraud and other malicious activities. It stressed that the app is secure, has no functions beyond safeguarding users, and can be removed by them at any time.



Defence minister Rajnath Singh and his Russian counterpart, Andrey Belousov

Delhi to seek tight Moscow timelines

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

India will push for faster delivery of critical Russian defence systems on Thursday when the defence ministers of the two countries meet. The talks between Rajnath Singh and his Russian counterpart, Andrey Belousov will be held a day ahead of the meeting on Friday between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin. With New Delhi seeking to maintain combat readiness across key military platforms, the upcoming

talks are expected to place strong emphasis on clearing delivery backlogs and strengthening long-term defence cooperation. According to senior military officials, India's procurement priorities — including additional S-400 air defence systems, upgrades for Sukhoi-30 MKI fighter jets, and other essential equipment — will be central to the dialogue. Ensuring that Russia adheres to prescribed delivery schedules is likely to be a major point of focus.

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RUPEE PLUMMETS TO RECORD 90-A-DOLLAR

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

The rupee breached the 90-a-dollar level for the first time to settle at a fresh all-time low of 90.21 (provisional) on Wednesday, down 25 paise from its previous close, amid sustained foreign fund outflows and higher crude oil prices. Uncertainty over the India-US trade deal, along with the lack of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) effort to stop the slide, put further pressure on the rupee, according to traders. At the interbank exchange, the rupee opened at 89.96 against the USD and fell to a record intraday low of 90.30 during the session before closing at a new all-time low of 90.21, down 25 paise from its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee settled 43 paise down at a lifetime low of 89.96 against the USD, largely owing to continued short-covering from speculators and sustained importer demand for USD.

DETAILED STORY ON ►► P11

Corruption allegations galore in Neyveli Lignite Corporation



FILE PHOTO

J GOPIKRISHNAN ■ New Delhi

A series of corruption charges are levelled against the big public sector undertaking Neyveli Lignite Corporation India Limited (NLCIL). The major allegations ranging from construction township for Talabira Thermal project in Odisha at an escalated

cost without tender, fake documents with Exim Bank for a joint venture in Malaysia and Singapore, sale of pond ash without tender at a cheap rate and kickback allegations in providing funds under Corporate Social Responsibility schemes. As per the documents submitted in Madras High Court,

CONTINUED ON ►► P4



PIONEER PHOTO

Shikaras to debut in Upper Lake today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bhopal

Bhopal is set to witness a new chapter in its tourism landscape today as 20 newly crafted Shikaras arrive on the Upper Lake for their formal launch by Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav. The ceremony, to be held in the presence of MLAs and senior officials, signals the first major step in Madhya Pradesh's effort to introduce Kashmir-style lake experiences while maintaining strict environmental safeguards. The initiative - designed as a blend of Kashmiri aes-

thetics and Bhopal's rich water heritage — follows months of preparation by the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation. With the National Green Tribunal's 2023 ban on motorised boats and cruise vessels still in force, the Shikaras offer a sustainable, non-motorised option suited to the ecological sensitivity of the Upper Lake, a Ramsar-designated site. The inaugural fleet is part of the StateGovernment's plan to deploy 30 Shikaras in total, with the remaining ten scheduled to arrive soon.

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Har Pal Aapke Saath

CM flags Ladli Laxmi dropouts, C-section surge in key reviews

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav on Wednesday conducted extensive review meetings of the Health, Cooperatives, and Women and Child Development departments at the Ministry as part of the government's ongoing appraisal of its two-year performance. During the sessions, he expressed strong dissatisfaction over dropout cases recorded under the Ladli Laxmi Yojana, terming the issue serious and instructing officials to carry out a detailed inquiry. He directed the department to strengthen monitoring systems to ensure that eligible girls continue receiving scheme benefits without interruption. Dr Yadav also called for complete transparency in the tendering process for Anganwadi procurement and warned that

any irregularities would result in strict action against responsible senior officials. The Women and Child Development Department informed him that Madhya Pradesh has become the first state in India to introduce a fully online and transparent recruitment system for Anganwadi workers. The state has also secured the top national ranking in the FRS process for take-home rations, earning appreciation at the national level, while 20,243 children benefited under the Sponsorship Scheme, placing Madhya Pradesh second in India. Officials further highlighted that the innovative 'Moti Aai' initiative from Jhabua received the Prime Minister's Excellence Award, and the Centre praised the state's advanced real-time monitoring system for PM Janman Bhawans, which features geofencing-based attendance

tracking. The department presented its three-year action plan, which includes the introduction of centralised hot cooked meals for urban Anganwadi centres from 2026, major investment in pre-school education under Vision 2047, expansion of Ladli Laxmi benefits, and provision of scholarships and incentives to 34 lakh girls. The plan also envisions the construction of 9,000 new Anganwadi buildings and more than 1.47 lakh community awareness activities focused on gender, safety, and legal literacy. Significant achievements were also shared, including Rs 512 crore in assistance to 9.70 lakh pregnant women under the PM Matru Vandana Yojana, Rs 36,778 crore disbursed under the Ladli Behna Yojana between January 2024 and November 2025, support extended to 1.72 lakh women through helplines and One-Stop Centres, and the

upgradation of 12,670 Anganwadi centres to 'Saksham Anganwadi' status. Under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative, the state facilitated 1.89 lakh plantation activities, issued 6,520 driving licences to girls, and trained 8,637 for competitive examinations. During the review of the Cooperatives Department, the Chief Minister asked officials to examine the legal and financial implications of merging district cooperative banks into a single state-level cooperative bank. He announced plans to strengthen six district cooperative banks - Jabalpur, Rewa, Satna, Gwalior-Datia, and Shivpuri - with a capital infusion of Rs 50 crore each. In a lighter moment, he joked about the department's seed brand 'MP Cheetah', asking humorously how a "forest creature" became part of agricultural cooperatives.

In the Health Department review, Dr Yadav said that recruitment rules for bonded doctors would be amended, and the proposal would soon be placed before the Cabinet. Taking note of complaints about rising C-section procedures in private hospitals, he instructed officials to establish strong regulatory measures. He also sought strict monitoring of cases where 108 ambulances allegedly transported patients to private hospitals without consent. Highlighting Madhya Pradesh's rapid progress in medical education, he noted that while the state had only five medical colleges in 2003-04, the number has now risen to 52. A new Rs 383-crore hospital is set to come up in Satna, 14 nursing colleges are being established, and cardiac cath labs have begun operations in Bhopal and Rewa, with Gwalior and Jabalpur expected to follow.



Mahila Congress National President Alka Lamba with newly appointed Mahila Congress State President Reena Borasi Setia and outgoing President Vibha Patel while taking charge at PCC headquarters in Bhopal on Wednesday. Pioneer photo

Young woman slapped by Tehsildar, Singhar says 'shameful'

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Leader of the Opposition in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly, Umang Singhar, strongly condemned the incident in Chhatarpur where a Naib Tehsildar allegedly slapped a woman student standing in a queue to collect fertiliser. Calling the act 'shameful, unacceptable, and reflective of the government's insensitivity', Singhar demanded the immediate suspension of the officer and criminal proceedings for assault. According to eyewitnesses, the young woman - who had been waiting for hours in the scorching sun - was reportedly struck by the revenue officer during a heated exchange about the slow pace of fertiliser distribution. The video of the incident, which has since gone viral, has sparked widespread outrage across the state, draw-



ing criticism from political leaders, farmers' groups, and student organisations. Singhar said the incident highlights the growing frustration among farmers struggling to access fertiliser during the peak agricultural season. "Instead of ensuring smooth distribution, officers are behaving like bullies. This government has failed to respect farmers, women, and students. An officer hitting a woman is not merely misconduct; it is a crime," he said. He further accused the state

administration of shielding errand officials and claimed that such incidents have become frequent due to a lack of accountability. "The Chief Minister must answer why officers feel empowered to assault civilians. Strict action must be taken, and the victim should be provided protection and compensation," he added. Opposition leaders have demanded a judicial inquiry into the fertiliser distribution system in Chhatarpur and neighbouring districts, alleging widespread mismanagement and preferential allotment. They warned that if the government does not act swiftly, the matter will be raised aggressively inside and outside the Assembly. Notably, the district Collector later in the day on Wednesday issued a show-cause notice to Naib Tehsildar Ritu Singhai.

Muskaan drive restores lost daughters to their families across Madhya Pradesh

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Police reunited 1,903 missing minor girls with their families during the month-long "Muskaan Special Campaign", conducted statewide from November 1 to 30 in one of the most extensive coordinated recovery efforts in recent years. The drive, led by the Women Safety Branch, involved police stations, cyber cells, the Government Railway Police, Railway Protection Force and Women & Child desks working in close coordination. Teams travelled across multiple states - including Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Bihar - and extended their search up to the India-Nepal and India-Pakistan borders to trace abducted and missing girls. Officials said the scale of

inter-agency and interstate cooperation played a central role in the operation. The campaign resolved several longstanding cases. Police located girls who had been missing for 17 years in Neemuch, 13 years in Vidisha, 12 years in Guna and nine years in Jhabua. Many other cases were solved swiftly, with several girls found within six to 24 hours of being reported missing. Alongside recovery work, officers carried out a major public-awareness effort. They held programmes in 13,108 schools, reaching more than 16.15 lakh students with sessions on women's safety, cybercrime, child rights, the distinction between good and bad touch and gender equality. Officials said the outreach was intended to strengthen early awareness and prevention.

Bridge safety must be treated as an absolute priority: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav on Wednesday said bridge safety must be treated as an absolute priority and asked officials to enforce strict technical standards across all state highways. He said public confidence in roads and bridges depends on timely inspections, transparent reporting and disciplined maintenance. Following his remarks, the Madhya Pradesh Road Development Corporation (MPRDC) ordered divisional managers to conduct a condition survey of every bridge maintained by the corporation and submit reports by December 8. The instructions require geo-tagged photographs and complete assessments based on prescribed technical and safety norms. Managing Director Bharat Yadav, who headed the review, told officers that no bitu-

minous overlay should be placed on the cement concrete wearing coat of any bridge, as this increases dead load. He said DPRs must follow IRC:SP:59-2019 guidelines and include a mastic asphalt layer where required. The corporation has linked the renewed push for compliance to the December 1 collapse of a span of the Bareilly-Pipariya bridge during maintenance work. A preliminary inquiry found failures in observing safety standards and ensuring safe traffic movement. On Wednesday, the corporation suspended in-charge Assistant General Manager Vikram Singh Thakur for gross negligence under state civil service rules. His headquarters during suspension will remain Bhopal. Officials have been instructed to close severely damaged or unsafe bridges to traffic after consulting district authorities. Diversions must be arranged immediately wherever required. All repair or

rehabilitation work must be carried out only by qualified and experienced agencies, with restoration methods cleared by senior engineers and bridge consultants. The corporation said bridges listed in the 'very poor' and 'poor' categories must display warning signs and speed breakers at both ends. General managers and chief engineers have been told to prioritise these structures during inspections. Officers must also ensure regular cleaning of expansion joints, proper upkeep of deck and approach drainage, and continuous monitoring of High Flood Levels. Vegetation around sub-structures must be cleared, and river and nalla training carried out to keep natural flow unobstructed. Mandatory structural tests, including UPV, core sampling, carbonation checks and seismic vulnerability assessments, must be conducted for distressed or transferred bridges.



Ministers Kunwar Vijay Shah, Krishna Gaur, BJP MLA Bhagwan Das Sabrani and Mayor Malti Rai pay homage to victims of the 1984 gas tragedy during an all-religion prayer meeting on the 41st anniversary of the gas disaster, in Bhopal on Wednesday. Pioneer photo

Drone patrols take flight as police tighten grip on city's shadow zones

PNS ■ Indore

Police have rolled out an infrared drone to monitor crime-prone pockets at night, launching a new surveillance drive under Police Commissioner Santosh Singh. Police officials say the initiative aims to bring tighter oversight to areas where drug peddling, illicit liquor sales and the movement of habitual offenders often slip past routine patrols. The drone, supplied by Police Headquarters Bhopal, was flown from the MIG police station area. It can scan a five-kilometre radius, detect movement in complete darkness and stay airborne for about 30 minutes. The live feed is relayed directly to ground teams to allow faster intervention in narrow lanes and densely built neighbourhoods. During its first deployment,

the drone surveyed Vijay Nagar, Khajrana, Tukoganj, Pardesipura and parts of MIG. Beat constables were dispatched to locations flagged on the feed for verification, and several isolated corners and abandoned stretches were examined for suspicious activity. Searches extended to Rustam ka Bagicha, Pancham ki Phel, Devnagar, Nandanagar, Chhoti Khajrani, Swarnbag, Sethinagar, Bhusamandi and the wider Khajrana belt. These localities have previously reported late-night gatherings and recurring trouble spots. The operation was supervised by DCP Zone 02 Kumar Prateek, with Additional DCP Amarendra Singh and ACP Pardesipura Himani Mishra monitoring the drone feed. MIG station in-charge CB Singh coordinated the field response and said more night flights will follow.

Toddler's chess moves earn FIDE rank

PNS ■ Indore

Not yet three years and four months old, Sarvagya Singh Kushwaha of Sagar has stunned the chess world by defeating far older rated players, earning a 1572 rapid rating and emerging as India's youngest ever rated player. He achieved the landmark at the Dr Ajit Kasliwal Memorial Rapid Championship in Indore, where his performance against higher-ranked opponents placed him directly on the international rating list. Tournament officials submitted his results after he scored cleanly against experienced adult competitors. Sarvagya's fascination with the game surfaced unusually early. While most toddlers reached for toys, he gravitated to chess pieces, recognising patterns and moves long before he could read. Sensing the spark, parents Siddharth and Neha Singh Kushwaha enrolled him at Olympio Sports Arena in Sagar,

where structured training turned curiosity into discipline. There, coaches Nitin Chaurasia and national trainer Akash Payasi refined his understanding of openings, endgames and positional play. Both say his rare strength lies in his temperament - the ability to sit still, assess positions calmly and absorb lessons from losses with composure uncommon in children his age. International Master Akshat Khamparia called the feat a proud moment for Madhya Pradesh and said Sarvagya's rise would inspire more parents to introduce children to chess early. Committee president Anil Fatehchandani said the Indore event had shown how quickly young talent can advance with the right support. For now, the Sagar toddler who can barely reach the table edge has taken his first step onto the world stage - and given Indian chess a prodigy whose early promise hints at an exceptional future.

Contempt plea filed over yatra at BTR

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

In a significant environmental controversy, wildlife activist Ajay Dubey has filed a contempt petition before the National Green Tribunal (NGT) against senior forest officials of Madhya Pradesh, accusing them of openly violating the Tribunal's explicit directives on regulating the Kabir Yatra inside the core zone of the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR). The petition will be heard on Thursday, December 4, 2025, and the conservation community across the country is watching the case closely. The dispute centres on the Forest Department's decision to permit an estimated 4,000-5,000 pilgrims to travel by vehicles to the Kabir Cave - located deep within BTR's ecologically sensitive core - despite the absence of mandatory rules governing the pilgrimage. On August 12, 2025, the NGT had directed the Forest Department to frame detailed guidelines for the religious yatra within three months, acting on an earlier petition filed by Dubey. However, Chief Wildlife Warden Shubhnanjan Sen failed to meet this deadline, and no regulatory framework was created. In what Dubey describes as "open contempt" of the Tribunal's order, the Chief

Wildlife Warden issued a permit on November 25, 2025, allowing thousands of people to enter the protected zone using motor vehicles. This was done without adhering to the mandatory online booking process prescribed by the NGT and without obtaining the statutory recommendations of a three-tier committee, despite instructions issued by the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department on October 8, 2025. These recommendations were particularly important because Bandhavgarh lies in a tribal-dominated region, where traditional access must be balanced with conservation imperatives. Matters escalated further when Field Director Anupam Sahay, acknowledging errors in the earlier permission, attempted to issue a last-minute permit for a foot pilgrimage on December 4. According to Dubey, this last-ditch attempt not only violated NGT directions but also breached several provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, as neither the original permit nor the revised one had any legal standing. Dubey alleges that the negligence of the Chief Wildlife Warden and the Field Director has resulted in a situation where thousands were allowed to enter a fragile tiger habitat without proper safeguards.

Free hearse service for govt hospitals

PNS ■ Ujjain

As part of a state government initiative to ensure that families do not face financial or logistical distress after the loss of a loved one, a free hearse service has been launched for patients who die during treatment in government-run hospitals. In Ujjain district, four dedicated vehicles have been placed at the District Hospital, Ujjain (Charak Bhawan), where they will remain available round the clock. Officials said the service is intended to offer comfort and support to families by ensuring that the deceased are taken home, or to the cremation or burial site, with dignity and without cost. The service will operate strictly within district limits and will cover only deaths that occur in government health institutions. It will not be available for cases involving deaths in private hospitals, at home or at any other location. Authorities said the effort is designed to ease a difficult moment for families and ensure that no one seeking treatment in a government hospital is left arranging transport for the final journey of their loved one.

MP braces for colder weather as northerly winds arrive today

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

A fresh Western Disturbance and a new push of northerly winds are set to drive temperatures down across Madhya Pradesh from tonight, with the IMD warning of a sharper fall over the next two days. Night temperatures are expected to drop by another 2-3 degrees Celsius from December 4-5 onwards, particularly in Indore, Gwalior-Chambal, Ujjain and Sagar divisions, where cold-wave conditions are likely over the weekend. Pachmarhi reported the state's lowest temperature in the past 24 hours at 6.7 degrees Celsius, followed by Kalyanpur in Shahdol at 7.1 degrees. Bhopal recorded 8.2 degrees early Wednesday. Daytime temperatures stayed 4-5 degrees below normal, and thick morning fog reduced visibility to 500-1,000 metres in Gwalior-Chambal. Bhopal's air quality also worsened on Wednesday evening, slipping into the 'unhealthy' category with an AQI of 193. Readings reached 160 at Paryavaran Parisar, 218 at Idgah Hills and 200 at TT Nagar, posing added risks for children and the elderly. As the cold tightened after sun-



set, street vendors, auto-rickshaw drivers and daily-wage labourers lit small bonfires at major crossings, a sight that has become common across the city this week. Meteorologists said the cold is likely to intensify further. After an unusually cold November, December is expected to be harsher, with Bhopal - which touched 3.3 degrees last year and 3.5 degrees in 2021 - likely to slip below 4 degrees again. Officials said the conditions could challenge existing records in the coming weeks. With the state preparing for a prolonged cold spell, residents, especially schoolchildren, are hoping for some relief as they layer up for what may be one of the sharpest winters in recent years.



Congress State President Jitu Patwari, leader of opposition Umang Singhar, senior party leader Sajjan Singh Verma and others during the inauguration of a podcast studio at PCC headquarters in Bhopal on Wednesday. Pioneer photo

GRP cop suspended for assaulting differently-abled man

PNS ■ Ujjain

A Government Railway Police head constable has been suspended after a video showing him assaulting a differently-abled elderly man at Nagda Railway Station went viral, triggering widespread outrage. The incident took place on Tuesday morning on Platform No. 1. A passenger in an AC coach recorded the assault as the train passed

through the station. The video shows the constable slapping the man and then beating him with his shoes while the victim cries and apologises. Officials began verifying the clip soon after it drew attention online. GRP later identified the accused as Head Constable Man Singh, who was on duty at the time. GRP SP Rail Shukla ordered his immediate suspension and shifted him to Rail Line Police, Indore. Shukla said the

conduct seen in the video "severely tarnished" the force's image and amounted to gross negligence and indiscipline. Authorities initiated action after Nagda Municipal Councillor Prakash Jain flagged the viral video to GRP SP Ratlam. In his defence, Man Singh told senior officers the differently-abled man was intoxicated and abusing people on the platform. The claim has not been independently verified.

Survivors renew demands as Bhopal marks 41 yrs of gas disaster

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Schools and colleges in the Madhya Pradesh capital remained closed Wednesday as Bhopal marked the 41st anniversary of the gas disaster with protests, memorial events, interfaith prayers and renewed calls for a scientific clean-up of toxic waste that remains at the former Union Carbide plant. Survivors and their organisations gathered at the Bhopal Gas Disaster Memorial, where they wore black bands and held a pledge and remembrance meeting. They accused the state government of promoting the idea of a "Clean Bhopal" even though thousands of tonnes of hazardous material, including mercury-bearing chemicals, continue to lie in and around the abandoned factory. They said families in nearby neighbour-

hoods still rely on groundwater that has been affected by decades of seepage from contaminated soil. Sadhana Karnik Pradhan of the Bhopal Gas Peedit Sangharsh Sahayog Samiti said the waste has never undergone a full scientific audit. Representatives of CITU, the Students Federation and the Jan Vigyan Andolan joined her in calling for a global tender to ensure waste disposal under international standards. Speakers said covering the waste with concrete would not prevent contamination and would mislead residents into believing the site was safe. Aarambh, a survivors' organisation, conducted its annual eye-care camp at the memorial. Volunteers examined survivors and distributed 100 free spectacles. Members said eye disorders remain among the most common long-term

effects reported by affected families. Tributes were held across the city. At Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre, acting medical superintendent Dr Anurag Yadav led staff in laying flowers at the memorial and observing two minutes of silence. Yadav said the disaster remained a reminder of the importance of long-term health monitoring and treatment, and said the hospital continues to focus on respiratory and neurological conditions that many survivors still face. BHEL Bhopal marked the anniversary with a silence across all its units and inaugurated Industrial Safety Week. The programme includes safety lectures, inspections, mock drills and fire-safety sessions. Company officials said the observance was intended to reinforce work-

place safety and emergency preparedness. The West Central Railway, Bhopal Division, also paid tribute. Divisional Railway Manager Pankaj Tyagi and other officials placed floral tributes at the railway memorial at Bhopal station. The memorial honours 45 railway employees who died during and after the disaster. Officials recalled how Station Manager Harish Dhurve and his team stayed at their posts on the night of 2-3 December 1984, stopping more than two dozen trains approaching from the Bina and Itarsi directions. Their actions kept thousands of passengers from entering the gas-affected zone. Dhurve died that night, and many of his colleagues succumbed in the days and years that followed. An interfaith prayer meeting was held at Barkatullah

Bhavan, where political leaders, officials and religious representatives recited verses from different scriptures and paid tribute to the victims. A public holiday was observed in Bhopal, though government offices and schools in Berasia and surrounding rural areas functioned as usual. Political leaders issued statements marking the anniversary, but survivor groups said symbolic gestures fall short. They accused successive state and central governments of failing to ensure a complete clean-up, sustained medical research or fair compensation. They said the anniversary should serve as a reminder that residents near the plant continue to live with the consequences of the disaster and that outstanding environmental and health issues require action, not commemoration alone.



Survivor gas victims protest during a rally on the 41st anniversary of the gas disaster in Bhopal on Wednesday. Pioneer photo



Police personnel seize an effigy of Dow Chemicals with an RSS-associated figure taken out in a rally by the survivor gas victims following the clashes with the RSS workers on the 41st anniversary of the gas disaster in Bhopal on Wednesday.

New markets open for artisans as five crafts secure GI tags

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Five traditional crafts of Madhya Pradesh have received the Geographical Indication tag, giving the state a major boost in preserving and promoting its artisanal heritage. Khajuraho stone craft, Chhatarpur furniture, Betul Bhareva metal craft, Gwalior stone carving and Gwalior papier-mâché craft were formally added to India's intellectual property registry after the GI status was updated on the Chennai-based registry's website on Wednesday. MSME Minister Chaitanya Kumar Kashyap thanked Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav for supporting the effort and congratulated departmental officials for securing what he called a "historic identity" for the state's craft traditions. Padma Shri



awardee and GI expert Dr Rajani Kant described the recognition as a moment of "immense pride". Officials said a wave of celebration swept through artisan communities as the "registered" status appeared online, marking the culmination of a year-long process supported by NABARD and SIDBI. NABARD Madhya Pradesh funded applications for Khajuraho stone craft, Betul metal craft, Gwalior stone craft and Gwalior papier-mâché, while SIDBI supported the appli-

cation for Chhatarpur furniture. All submissions were made with technical guidance from Dr Kant. The state recently secured a GI tag for Panna diamond in November, and officials said around 25 more products are in the final stages of certification. Experts said the recognition is expected to strengthen the crafts' commercial and cultural standing. By legally linking each product to its place of origin, the GI tag helps ensure authenticity, prevents unauthorised imitation and gives artisans an edge in domestic and export markets. The certification can also help local craftsmen gain better bargaining power, access government support schemes more effectively and market their work with the assurance of a protected, traceable identity attached to their region.

Rally halted after effigy sparks political row, FIR lodged

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

A rally by survivors of the 1984 Union Carbide disaster descended into confrontation on Wednesday after protesters carried an effigy dressed in khaki shorts and a white shirt resembling the RSS uniform alongside one of former Union Carbide CEO Warren Anderson. The march, heading toward the JP Nagar Gas Tragedy Memorial on the 41st anniversary of the disaster, was stopped when local BJP leaders arrived and objected to the display. Led by BJP leader Ashish Singh, party workers questioned the intent behind burning an effigy that appeared to mimic RSS attire. Heated arguments broke out between BJP workers and activists representing gas victims. ACP Rakesh Singh Baghel said

The dispute derailed the protest march amid charges of political interference

both effigies were removed from a handcart following objections. He said the march had permission, but carrying the effigies violated conditions. Police registered a case under Sections 196(1) and 233 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita at Mangalwara police station against organiser Rachna Dhingra. Activists denied the effigy represented the RSS, saying it symbolised "associates" who they claim have enabled Dow Chemical - which acquired Union Carbide in 2001 - to

expand operations in India over the past 11 years. They said the protest targeted corporate and political enablers, not the RSS. Despite the clarification, police diverted the rally and later postponed it amid heavy deployment. BJP leaders called the effigy "highly offensive" and an attempt to malign the organisation. In a press statement, survivor groups criticised what they called the government's "unholy nexus" with Dow Chemical, accusing the company of benefiting from policy support and investment opportunities while Union Carbide remains a fugitive in the criminal case. They alleged Dow has expanded operations in Gujarat and Maharashtra, where it is being promoted through government schemes, even as toxic waste from the 1984 disaster remains unaddressed.

Teen on errand for ailing father killed by speeding SUV at Shyamla Hills

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

An 18-year-old Class 12 student was killed on Wednesday afternoon after a speeding SUV rammed into his scooter near the Polytechnic petrol pump in Shyamla Hills, police said. The victim, Atif of Ginnori under Talaiya police station, had stepped out to buy medicines for his ailing father. Police said he was returning home when the SUV struck his scooter from behind; the impact threw him onto the road. According to witnesses, the driver accelerated instead of stopping, running over Atif and killing him on the spot. Locals and passing motorists chased the fleeing vehicle for nearly two kilometres before intercepting it near the Retghat outpost. An

angry crowd pulled the driver out and thrashed him before handing him over to police. The SUV is registered to Bhopal Builders, helmed by KL Mulani. Sources said the vehicle was being driven by a close relative of the builder, who has been detained. The SUV has been seized and is parked at Shyamla Hills police station. Bhupendra Kaul Sidhu, in-charge of Shyamla Hills police station, said a case has been registered and an FIR will be filed after the completion of formalities. "The accused will be arrested thereafter," he said. Atif's body was sent for post-mortem and handed over to the family by evening. A video of the SUV being intercepted, in which a woman is seen seated in the back, also circulated on social media.

Madhav College launches 'Saathi' cell with mental-health training for staff

PNS ■ Ujjain

Government Madhav College has launched a mental-health support cell, Saathi, alongside a day-long training programme aimed at strengthening psychological safety on campus. The workshop, held for teaching, non-teaching and administrative staff, focused on Psychological First Aid, identifying distress signals and responding sensitively to students in vulnerable situations. Renowned counsellor Priyamvada Parmar led the session, using interactive activities to break down complex concepts into practical, usable tools. Dr Rajshree Sheth, Head of the Department of English, intro-

duced the counsellor and said such initiatives were becoming essential in higher-education settings. Principal Dr Kalpana Virendra Singh, who presided over the programme, said mental-health awareness and social sensitivity help prevent crises and promote safer academic spaces. She commended staff members for their active participation. Delivering the vote of thanks, Dr Murial Singh said the strong response from employees showed a growing commitment to student wellbeing. College authorities said the launch of Saathi marks a step toward building a more inclusive and responsive campus, setting an example for institutions in the region.

Armed robbers loot Rs 20L from trader

Bhopal: Four masked men robbed a trader of Rs 20 lakh in broad daylight on the Ashoknagar-Guna road on Wednesday, ramming his scooter near Nagu Khedi railway crossing and firing warning shots before escaping on two motorbikes. Ashoknagar police said maize trader Neeraj Sahu had withdrawn the cash from ICICI Bank in Shadhora around 2 pm and was riding home when the assailants surrounded him, assaulted him and broke open his scooter's locked trunk to seize the bag of money. Sahu suffered head and hand injuries. Shadhora police announced a Rs 10,000 reward for information under Section 309 (6) BNS, while SP Rajiv Kumar Mishra declared an additional Rs 10,000 reward.

ABVP accuses IIM Indore student panel member of sexual harassment

Indore: The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad on Wednesday accused a member of the IIM Indore placement committee of sexually harassing female students during an off-campus event and held a protest alleging the institute had failed to act on complaints filed by the students. In a memorandum to Director Professor Himanshu Rai, ABVP said the episode came to light more than a month ago and claimed the accused student continued to remain active on campus. The organisation said the placement committee's silence suggested an attempt to shield him. Prof Rai told local media that no such complaint had come to his notice. ABVP said the institute's website still listed the student as a committee member and

alleged that some individuals were trying to suppress the matter to protect the institute's image. The right-wing student outfit demanded the immediate suspension of the student from all roles, an inquiry into those who allegedly defended him, dissolution of the current placement committee, and a fair, time-bound investigation with support for the affected students. The organisation warned that any delay would harm the institute's reputation and said it would escalate its agitation if the demands were ignored. The accused student purportedly told media outlets he had responded to an email from the institute and maintained he was being framed. He said the matter was about two months old and denied the allegations.

Fuel leak halts traffic near Gulmohar Garden

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

A major disaster was averted on Wednesday afternoon after a petrol tanker carrying about 5,000 litres of fuel developed a serious leak while crossing an Airport Road bridge near Gulmohar Garden, officials said. The bridge reopened only after authorities confirmed that the damaged tanker had been emptied, inspected, and all safety measures were in place. Police and municipal teams stayed deployed, and officials said the driver's quick response helped prevent a potentially catastrophic incident. An investigation is underway.

BMC fire teams and municipal staff worked for more than two hours to contain the spill and transfer the fuel to another tanker under strict supervision. Traffic in both directions remained halted throughout the operation. The bridge reopened only after authorities confirmed that the damaged tanker had been emptied, inspected, and all safety measures were in place. Police and municipal teams stayed deployed, and officials said the driver's quick response helped prevent a potentially catastrophic incident. An investigation is underway.

Police move to curb petty fights with preventive bonds

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Police Commissioner Harinarayanchari Mishra on Wednesday ordered all police stations in the state capital to initiate bound-over proceedings in every minor quarrel to prevent small disputes from escalating into violent crimes. Officials said the directives make it compulsory for station heads to place both complainants and accused in petty scuffles, roadside arguments or ego-driven clashes on preventive bonds invoked through relevant BNSS sections. SHOs have been told to register such incidents promptly and forward com-

pleted files to the ACP office without delay. Senior officers said the move is meant to create an early intervention system to stop simmering hostility that often resurfaces as serious offences. Mishra said recent months have seen trivial altercations turn into knife attacks and attempt-to-murder cases involving first-time offenders, especially college students. He warned that station heads who fail to act swiftly on preventive cases will face strict departmental action, including public parading. The Commissioner has also directed officers to identify habitual

preventive bonds

troublemakers, even those inactive for years, and serve them with district banishment orders. The orders follow several incidents in which unresolved petty enmity later resulted in violent retaliation in parts of Bhopal. Police sources said more than 120 preventive actions were initiated in the past week, mainly targeting youth involved in parking rows, eve-teasing complaints and college-area disputes. Authorities say that sustained use of preventive sections is crucial to breaking the cycle of escalation that has drawn criticism of the city's law and order system.

EPFO launches doorstep digital life certificate service

Jabalpur: The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation has introduced a doorstep facility allowing EPS-95 pensioners to generate their digital life certificates without visiting banks or EPFO offices. Regional PF Commissioner Rakesh Sahrawat said the service, offered jointly with India Post Payments Bank, uses Aadhaar-linked biometric or facial authentication and is fully free. Trained postmen and Gramin Dak Sevaks will visit pensioners' homes to complete the paperless process. Pensioners can also book the service through the Post Info app or the postal website, or contact the toll-free numbers. Sahrawat said pensioners must provide their Aadhaar and PPO details and will receive a confirmation message and certificate ID once the process is complete.

Winter blues worsen as unhealthy haze hangs over Bhopal

ANKUSH SINGH ■ Bhopal

Bhopal's winter is turning harsher by the day. Temperatures are falling, the haze is drifting in and out without warning, and the city's AQI remains in the Poor category, often above 200. The pollution isn't spiralling, but its return in short, sharp spells is enough to sting throats, cloud mornings and unsettle residents already battling the cold. Hospitals report a steady rise in patients with cough, cold, fever and breathing discomfort. Doctors warn that children, older adults and people with weaker immunity are reacting fastest to the shifting conditions, with intermittent haze trapping pollutants close to the ground. Patients managing chronic illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension and asthma are reporting flare-ups whenever the haze settles back over the city. At JP Hospital, doctors say they treat seven to ten such cases a day. Many are unable to shake off a persistent cough or throat irri-



tation, while others find their breathing tightening after short exposure to cold wind or dusty streets. "The cold irritates, the haze aggravates," a doctor said. Across neighbourhoods, the pattern is familiar: clear skies in the morning, a thin layer of dust and smoke by afternoon, and a gritty haze by early evening. "I can tell when the air turns heavy," said Vinod Kumar, a vegetable vendor from Karond, who said metro construction dust drifts over his stall daily. "By evening, the burning in the eyes starts and the cough follows." Families say the season has added

fresh strain. In Jahangirabad, Heena Khan took her mother to JP Hospital after her gastric condition worsened in the cold. She said she was unable to get treatment at BMHRD and had to seek care elsewhere as her mother's discomfort grew. Doctors advised her mother to stay warm and remain indoors after sunset. "The cold settles in quickly," she said. Parents say schools shifting their timings has helped only marginally. Sunita of Ayodhya Nagar said her children struggle with foggy mornings and frequent bouts of fever and cough. "They recover for a few days and then

fall sick again," she said. For outdoor workers, the season offers no adjustment. Newspaper distributor Dinesh Kumar Rane begins his rounds long before daybreak. "After 4 a.m., the cold bites hard," he said. "Even with gloves and a jacket, your face goes numb. The haze makes breathing heavier when you're riding uphill." As temperatures drop, small fires have resurfaced in several neighbourhoods, with residents burning wood and waste for warmth. The Municipal Corporation has banned outdoor fires, but waste burning continues in many areas. Residents say enforcement is weak. Smoke from burning waste pushes up PM2.5 levels - the most harmful pollutants - and winter air traps these particles at breathing height. Bhopal's Chief Medical and Health Officer, Dr Manish Sharma, said the Health Department has issued an advisory urging older adults to maintain regular medication, wear adequate warm layers and avoid

stepping out before sunrise. Parents have been asked to limit children's outdoor exposure and watch symptoms closely. He urged immediate medical attention for anyone with worsening cough, cold or breathing difficulty. Health experts say the city is dealing with a seasonal double hit - sudden cold snaps and recurring haze. The two together can irritate the respiratory system, trigger underlying conditions and strain those already vulnerable. They recommend avoiding early-morning outings, keeping indoor spaces clean, wearing layered clothing and steering clear of dust-heavy or smoke-prone areas. Residents say the city needs stronger enforcement against waste-fuelled bonfires and stricter dust control at construction sites. As Bhopal heads into deeper winter with intermittent haze returning without warning, hospitals remain under pressure and doctors warn that precaution and timely treatment will be essential until the season steadies.



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DEMAND NOTICE
Under Section 13(2) of the Securitization 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 Authorized 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 address 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.

Sr. No.	Name of Borrowers/Guarantors with address	Amount claimed As per Demand Notice*	Description of the Secured Asset	Date of NPA
1.	Borrower: Mrs. Priya Bharti W/o Mr. Mukesh Bharti H No. 60, Near Kirana Store, Chandmari B-Sector, Pipilani, Barkheda, BHEL, Bhopal, M.P.-462022	As on 03-12-2025 ₹ 11,84,171.00 (Rs. Eleven Lakh Eighty Four Thousand one hundred seventy one only) interest & other charges	Flat No-404, Kings Block, Fourth Floor, King's Park City, Village-Pipaliya Gajju Road, Tehsil Goharganj, Mandideep, Dist-Raisen With Super Built Area Of 559.52 Sq.Ft. Boundaries: North- Colony Road, South- Flat No. 405, East-Common Area, West- Colony Road	29/11/2025

*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 60 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which the undersigned will be constrained to initiate action under SARFAESI Act to enforce the aforesaid security. Further, the attention of borrowers/guarantors is invited to provisions of Section 13(8) of the Act, in respect of time available to them to redeem the secured assets.

Date: 03/12/2025
Place: Mandideep

Authorised Officer
Can Fin Homes Ltd

IN FOCUS



Colombian dance delegation members perform during the 12th Amritsar International Folk Festival in Amritsar

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RERA orders full refund for Chintel buyer

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Gurugram

The Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA), Gurugram has granted major relief to Kumar Mangalam Dalmia, a homebuyer from Chintel Paradiso, Sector 109, by ordering a full refund of his investment along with compensation and interest.

Dalmia had approached the adjudicating officer at RERA Gurugram in 2023, seeking refund of the principal amount paid for his flat in Tower H of the project, along with interest based on the current market value. He had purchased the unit from an original allottee but had not been offered possession until the time of filing the complaint. Chintel Paradiso came into national focus on February 10, 2022, after a tragic structural collapse in one of its towers, where 6-7 floors caved in sequentially. Following the incident, Dalmia—who had already paid more than the

total sale consideration of ₹1,00,38,750 under a construction-linked plan—opted to seek his money back.

After examining the case, the adjudicating officer ruled in Dalmia's favour on merit. As per the order, the complainant is entitled to a refund of ₹1,70,51,397, as assessed by a committee appointed by the District Magistrate. Additionally, RERA has awarded him ₹2 lakh for mental agony and ₹50,000 towards litigation expenses.

The authority further directed the developer to pay interest at 10.85 per cent per annum on the compensation amount, calculated from the date the DM-appointed committee assessed the valuation of Dalmia's flat until full realisation of the dues.

The order brings a significant measure of relief to the complainant, who had been awaiting redressal following the 2022 structural failure that left several residents and homebuyers distressed.

Clean industrialisation a catalyst for economic expansion: Yadav

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Union Environment Minister Bhopender Yadav on Wednesday asserted that clean industrialisation is not a constraint, rather a catalyst for economic expansion, innovation, resilience and prosperity.

Decarbonising India's manufacturing sector is a strategic imperative to enhance the country's export competitiveness and avoid future carbon-related trade concerns, he said during a session at IndiaEdge 2025 summit, organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on the theme of "Green growth: Aligning sustainability with competitiveness".

Yadav noted that India's progress toward energy independence has been remarkable. "Non-fossil power now accounts for over 50 per cent of installed capacity, enabling us to meet the revised Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) target five years ahead of schedule," he said.

NDCs are national climate plans under the Paris Agreement that set targets to cut emissions and adapt to climate change, guiding global efforts to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Addressing the summit, the environment minister said, "India now ranks ninth globally in total forest area, third in annual net forest gain, and fifth among top global carbon sinks with forests removing 150 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide annually during 2021-2025. But these numbers tell only one part of the story."

"Amid anthropogenic and geopolitical turbulence,



Union Minister Bhopender Yadav speaking in the Rajya Sabha during the Winter session of Parliament

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India has emerged as a trusted global partner, redefining development to correct imbalances, prioritising green technologies, embedding circularity, promoting sustainable manufacturing and integrating nature-based solutions," he said. Yadav said that aligning sustainability with competitiveness was the key to powering enduring, resilient and inclusive development.

"India is the world's fourth-largest economy and is poised to become the third by 2030 with a projected GDP of \$7.3 trillion. Our real growth reached 7.8 per cent in the financial year 2025-26, up from 7.4 per cent, the fastest in seven quarters." Pointing at the figures, the minister said, "Clean industrialisation is not a constraint, it is a cata-

lyst for economic expansion, innovation, resilience and future prosperity. Decarbonising our manufacturing sector is a strategic imperative to enhance India's export competitiveness and avoid future carbon-related trade concerns." Yadav asserted that India continues to advance ambitious initiatives across renewable energy, disaster resilience, biodiversity conservation and industrial transformation. Recent policy reforms reflect this holistic approach.

"GST 2.0 reforms launched in October reaffirmed green growth by reducing tax rates from 12 per cent to 5 per cent on renewable energy equipment, biodegradable plastics, effluent treatment plants and electric vehicles. By accelerating clean

power adoption, strengthening waste management and protecting ecosystems, the Government has made sustainable options more affordable.

"Industry must seize this opportunity to invest in green manufacturing, integrate eco-friendly practices across supply chains and collaborate to scale technologies for global competitiveness. Industry can participate by investing in facilities, innovating across electric vehicles and renewable value chains, and scaling green manufacturing through technology integration," he said.

Yadav also called upon the industry to actively partner in these efforts to propel India's sustainable ambitions by carving a global competitive edge.

PK Mishra delivers inaugural address at ISM Centenary Foundation Week

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dhanbad

Prime Minister's principal secretary Pramod Kumar Mishra on Wednesday delivered the inaugural address at the Centenary Foundation Week of the Indian Institute of Technology (Indian School of Mines), Dhanbad. Speaking to faculty, students, alumni, and distinguished guests, Dr Mishra underscored the pivotal role of IIT Dhanbad in India's journey towards becoming a Viksit Bharat by 2047. Dr PK Mishra was also conferred Doctor of Science earlier this year by IIT (ISM) Dhanbad.

Expressing delight at joining the celebrations of the institute's 100-year legacy, noting its immense contributions to mining, energy, earth sciences, and applied engineering, Dr Mishra recalled that IIT Dhanbad has been a pioneer in mining education in Asia and has consistently provided expertise to national institutions such as Coal India, ONGC, GSI, CMPDI, and NTPC.



"A centenary is not merely a milestone, but a reminder of what sustained commitment can achieve when knowledge is used as a public good for positive social outcomes," Dr Mishra remarked.

He urged the institute to reflect on its role in advancing India's long-term vision of becoming a developed nation.

Highlighting the Prime Minister's vision for India 2047, Mishra said the goal is to achieve the status of a developed country while balancing nature and culture and leading globally in

science and technology. Reflecting on India's economic trajectory over the past 11 years, the Principal Secretary to the PM described the Prime Minister's approach as rooted in innovation and reinvention.

During his other engagements on his maiden visit to Dhanbad, Mishra also reviewed the rehabilitation and development work at Bharat Coking Coal Limited's (BCLL) Ura Mines fire project and urged officials to strengthen community outreach. He also emphasised

the need to win the confidence of families affected by the underground mine fire.

The Ena Mines project is a fire control and mitigation effort in Jharia coalfield of Jharkhand, managed by BCLL, a subsidiary of Coal India. Mishra was accompanied by Coal India Limited (CIL) Chairman Sanjoo Kumar Jha and other senior officials. He was briefed in detail on safety measures, rehabilitation progress and welfare initiatives for residents displaced by the Jharia coalfield fire zone, officials said.

UAE embassy celebrates 54th National Day in New Delhi, showcasing deepening strategic ties

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

The Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in New Delhi celebrated the UAE's 54th National Day, Eid Al Etihad, with a grand diplomatic reception attended by senior Indian Government officials, foreign diplomats, business leaders, and representatives from leading institutions.

The event highlighted the UAE's remarkable national progress under the leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, while underscoring the growing strategic partnership between the UAE and India. Piyush Goyal, India's Minister of Commerce and Industry, attended as the Chief Guest. Guests were welcomed with a vibrant cultural program showcasing the UAE's heritage through traditional, artistic, and historical performances — reflecting the nation's rich identity and deep-rooted legacy. This year's celebration placed special emphasis on the accelerating momentum in UAE-India relations. Bilateral



trade has surpassed \$100 billion, a milestone largely driven by the transformative UAE-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

The achievement further cements the UAE's position as one of India's most significant, dynamic, and forward-looking economic partners.

Over the past year, cooperation between the two nations broadened across key sectors, including energy,

logistics, food security, technology, and investment. Among the standout developments was the launch of the IIT Delhi Abu Dhabi campus—an education and innovation milestone that reflects the scale of ambition shaping the partnership.

Addressing the gathering, H.E. Abdunnasser Alshaali, PhD, UAE Ambassador to India, emphasized the depth and future potential of the relationship. "This day reflects

the UAE's enduring commitment to progress, openness, and partnership. Our relationship with India continues to grow from strength to strength, guided by mutual trust, shared values, and a common vision for prosperity. Crossing the \$100 billion milestone in bilateral trade this year is not merely a statistic; it is a reflection of the depth of our partnership and the opportunities that lie ahead. Together, the UAE and India are shaping a future defined by innovation, resilience, and meaningful cooperation across every sector."

The UAE-India partnership remains one of the region's most comprehensive and future-focused, driven by strong leadership-level engagement, robust economic ties, and vibrant people-to-people connections.

With CEPA opening new pathways for collaboration and both nations investing steadily in shared priorities, the bilateral relationship is poised for even greater achievements in the years to come.

FROM PAGE - 1

Delhi to seek tight Moscow timelines

The armed forces have repeatedly flagged long delays in the supply of critical spares, affecting maintenance and operational availability of Russian-origin platforms.

Belousov is travelling as part of President Vladimir Putin's delegation for the annual India-Russia summit. The defence ministers' meeting comes a day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Putin convene to review the broader strategic partnership, including military, trade, technology, and geopolitical cooperation.

India is also considering procurement of additional S-400 missile systems after their effective performance during Operation Sindoor, officials said. New Delhi had signed a \$ 5 billion contract in 2018 for five S-400 units despite US warnings of potential CAATSA sanctions. Three squadrons have already been delivered, and discussions on future purchases — including the more advanced S-500 system—may surface during the talks.

On advanced fighter aircraft, the Kremlin indicated that the possibility of supplying Su-57 fifth-generation jets to India may be discussed. India is currently evaluating options for next-generation fighters, with the Rafale, F-21, F/A-18, and Eurofighter Typhoon also in contention.

This week's Modi-Putin summit will mark the con-

tinuation of a long-standing mechanism under which the Indian prime minister and the Russian president meet annually to review the full spectrum of bilateral ties. The two nations have held 22 such summits alternately in India and Russia. President Putin last visited New Delhi in 2021, while Modi travelled to Moscow for the meeting in July last year.

With Russia remaining a long-standing and reliable defence partner, India is expected to use the high-level engagement to reinforce the partnership while pushing for greater efficiency, predictability, and modernization support across its Russian-origin military inventory.

IndiGo disrupted by staff shortage

In a statement, IndiGo acknowledged the disruptions and attributed them to "technology issues, airport congestion, and operational requirements." The airline said it was offering alternative flights or refunds where possible and added, "We regret the inconvenience caused to our valued customers... Our teams are working diligently to normalise operations." Frustrated passengers shared their experiences on social media. One traveller stuck in Hyderabad wrote, "I have been stranded since 3 a.m. and missed an important meeting." Another posted, "My Hyderabad-Udaipur flight was pushed from 1:55 PM to 2:55 PM and now 4:35 PM. Is this a joke? I was

updated only three minutes before entering the airport."

At Delhi Airport, a slowdown linked to the widely used Amadeus system — responsible for check-ins, reservations and departure control — added to the gridlock, further slowing processing at a time when IndiGo was already wrestling with staff shortages.

Corruption allegations galore in Neyveli...

Housing provision for CISF battalion is also avoided in the new controversial project, approved by the top NLCIL top management. The petition filed by one H Manikandan also produced another set of documents showing that a housing colony project given to RSB Projects Private Limited created a loss of ₹38 crore by increasing the tender cost by granting supplementary expenses. Initially tender was awarded for ₹137 crore and later the request of the private company was allowed to increase the cost. These are clear-cut bribes, said the petition pending before Madras High Court.

Other documents show that pond ash was sold for just one rupee per ton without tender, when the current market rate is ₹150. The petition seeking CBI says that all the controversial decisions involving huge bribery are taken with the approval of Chairman and Managing Director Prasanna Kumar Mottupalli and other Directors in charge of Power, Finance. NLCIL is a Navratna status PSU under Coal Ministry, having

many subsidiaries across the country. The petition also pointed out the role of the vigilance department of NLCIL in hushing up many cases. The documents show that Pond Ash contractor was smuggling tons of Red Sand also and the vigilance department diluted the case by saying "a warning" has to be issued to the contractor instead of registering a criminal case. Per year, six lakh tons of Pond Ash is removed from Neyveli headquarters unit.

Tamil Nadu Police had already registered a case giving forged documents to get EXIM Bank's Bank guarantee for getting a loan of ₹1600 crore to start a joint venture with a Malaysia/Singapore-based firm in the graphite project. The petition said that this case must be taken over by CBI as the issue involves many foreign stakeholders. The documents show a series of email trails from the company in the forgery in providing bank guarantee to an international joint venture.

The documents show that clear bribery is happening in allowing grants to NGOs under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Scheme. NLCIL agreed to grant Rs five crore to Kolkata-based NGO Voice of World, engaged in the empowerment of girl child. But the case got murky after the treasurer of the NGO wrote to NLCIL that they can't pay back half of the money agreed between the NGO's promoter and one of the Directors of the PSU. The petitioner argued in the Madras High Court seeking CBI probe, citing a series of documents exposing corruption in Neyveli Lignite Corporation India Limited.

72,000 foreign students study in India: Centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Government on Wednesday informed the Rajya Sabha that there are 72,218 foreign students currently in India from about 200 countries. Minister of State for Education Sukanta Majumdar also informed that ₹6,198.99 crore has been sanctioned for 8 public institutions.

He also highlighted that as many as 54 higher education institutions have been ranked in QS World University Rankings (QS WUR) 2026 as against 11 institutions in 2014-15 when the BJP came to power in the Centre. "Now, 54 Indian institutions have been ranked in the QS WUR 2026," the minister said, adding this is India's highest ever representation in QS WUR.

Bihar Government targets one crore jobs: Governor



Bihar Governor Arif Mohammad Khan on Wednesday asserted that the Nitish Kumar Government in the State has set a target of creating 1 crore jobs in the next five years. He was addressing a joint session of both Houses of the State legislature.

Telangana CM Reddy briefs PM on State economic goal

Telangana CM A Revanth Reddy on Wednesday invited PM Narendra Modi to the Telangana Rising Global Summit and apprised him about the State's goal of achieving a \$3 trillion economy in line with the Centre's Viksit Bharat 2047 vision. Reddy, accompanied by Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka, met Modi in Parliament premises and handed over a specially printed invitation for the summit scheduled to be held on December 8-9 at Bharat Future City in Hyderabad.



President Murmu praises wins of persons with disabilities



President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday praised the achievements of persons with disabilities and urged society to ensure their full and equal participation. Speaking at an event honouring achievers in the field of 'Divyangjan Sashaktikaran' with National Awards, the President said she was "especially pleased" to present the awards.

CM Majhi highlights abilities beyond physical limitations

Asserting that physical limitations never hinder the development of talent in a person, Odisha CM Mohan Charan Majhi on Wednesday called upon industries and other job providers to encourage persons with disabilities by providing them employment. Majhi said this while addressing the valedictory ceremony of the three-day state-level celebration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities-2025.



Opposition MPs protest against new labour codes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Several Opposition MPs, including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, protested in Parliament House complex on Wednesday against the new labour codes and demanded their scrapping. MPs of the Congress, DMK, TMC, Left parties, among others, participated in the protest in front of the Makar Dwar of Parliament.

Slamming the Centre, Kharge accused the Modi Government of being "anti-labour, anti-worker and pro-ronies". In a social media post after the protest by the opposition, Kharge said the Opposition parties protested against the Modi Government in Parliament premises, expressing strong objection about the newly implemented labour codes. "Some of the serious concerns in the New Codes are — threat to job security. Layoff threshold raised from 100 to 300 workers iE More than 80 per cent of factories in India can now lay off or retrench workers without Government approval, reducing job security. Expansion of Fixed Term Employment (FTE) will end many permanent jobs. Companies can now hire workers on short-term contracts, avoiding long-term benefits," the Congress



Congress leader Sonia Gandhi and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge with others during a protest at the Parliament complex during the Winter Session in New Delhi on Wednesday

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chief said.

He further said that although the code keeps an 8-hour day on paper, States can allow 12-hour shifts through flexible scheduling. "Coupled with State-determined overtime limits, this effectively permits much longer workdays, increasing fatigue and safety risks even when labelled 'consensual,'" he said.

"Workers must wait 60 days before striking, plus a 14-day cooling-off period. This prevents quick action against unsafe or unfair conditions. Requiring one union with 51 per cent membership to be the sole negotiator

sidelines smaller unions and reduces representation for diverse worker groups," Kharge said.

He pointed out that standing orders will not apply to units with fewer than 300 workers. "Basic rules on working hours, leave, and termination will not be mandatory. This may increase arbitrary 'hire and fire' practices in medium-sized units," the Congress chief said.

Alleging that the codes weakened safety and welfare of workers, Kharge said that by raising the definition of a factory to 20 workers (with power) and 40 workers

(without power) where violations and unsafe conditions are most common, they fall outside the law's safety net.

"The Code fails to extend safeguards for migrants, removing the displacement allowance and retaining a restrictive Rs 18,000 income cap that leaves many migrants without protection. Mandatory Aadhaar-based registration risks leaving out migrants and informal workers who often face documentation errors or limited digital access, creating barriers to social-security enrolment," Kharge said.

By allowing offences to be

settled for a fee, the Code turns wage violations into a payable cost, weakening accountability and effectively monetising illegality, he said.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who also participated in the protest, said that in the name of simplifying labour laws, the central Government has brought in four new labour codes but under this pretext, the Government has snatched away all the rights that workers had in their hands.

Carrying posters and placards against the new labour codes, the opposition MPs raised slogans demanding their rollback.

Besides Kharge, Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, TMC's Dola Sen, DMK's K Kanhimozhi and A Raja, CPI(M)'s John Brittas, CPI(ML) Liberation's Sudama Prasad, among others, participated in the protest.

The MPs also held a large banner which read — 'No to Corporate Jungle Raj, Yes to Labour Justice'.

The Centre had last month notified the four labour codes, pending since 2020.

The Congress had alleged that the 29 existing labour-related laws have been repackaged into the four codes.

The four labour codes are the Code of Wages (2019), Industrial Relations Code (2020), Code on Social

Security (2020) and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code (2020).

Key reforms include mandatory appointment letters to workers to ensure formalisation and job security; universal social security coverage, including to gig, platform, contract, and migrant workers, with PF, ESIC, and insurance benefits; statutory minimum wages and timely payment across all sectors; expanded rights and safety for women, including night-shift work and mandatory grievance committees; and free annual health check-ups for workers aged 40 and above.

The codes, however, had earlier come under criticism from trade unions over unclear provisions on retrenchment and possible discretionary behaviour during the implementation by the central or State Governments.

The rules raised the ceiling for mandatory Government approval for carrying out closures, layoffs or retrenchment.

Against the existing provision of establishments employing 100 or more workers needing Government nod, the new code raises the cap to 300 workers. It also increases working hours in factories from 9 to 12 hours and in shops and establishments from 9 to 10 hours.

Fake news threat to democracy: Vaishnaw

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Terming fake news as a threat to democracy, Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting and IT Ashwini Vaishnaw said in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday that there is a need for strict action against those who create AI-generated deep fake videos and spread false information.

Vaishnaw also informed the House that the Government is working on framing new rules for curbing fake news and AI-generated deep fake videos and strengthening the institutional mechanism for that. "I sincerely want to say that fake news is a threat to our democracy today. We need to take strict action against fake news and AI-generated deepfakes on social media," he said during the Question Hour.

The minister said that some social media platforms have been used to create many such ecosystems that do not want to follow the Constitution and abide by the laws made by Parliament.

"There is a need to take very strict action against them and to create stringent rules. Recently, some new rules have also been created; that is, a new rule for



Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw speaking during the Winter Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Wednesday

PTI

takedown within 36 hours has recently been made," he said.

Appreciating the recommendations made by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology, headed by BJP member Nishikant Dubey, he said the panel has given many good suggestions, and the Government is working on framing new rules and regulations.

"Ultimately, there is a very fine, delicate balance between freedom of speech and protecting our democracy so far as fake news and social media are concerned. The Government is working with this fine balance in mind," he said.

Replying to a question on online betting activities, Vaishnaw said Prime Minister

Narendra Modi's Government has enacted a very strong law to curb the online money games.

"Modi Government never shies away from taking strong action against such misconduct," he said.

On another question regarding some media outlets indulging in disseminating alleged false information, the minister said the Government and the Press Council of India actively look into such complaints and take action wherever required.

"The Government and the Press Council of India have been very actively looking at any complaint that comes against any TV channel or any newspaper. This is something which is very important for protecting our democracy," he said.

BJP MPs raise power, banking issues in Rajya Sabha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday saw BJP MPs raise issues ranging from power infrastructure in Uttar Pradesh to banking services in Bihar during Zero Hour, while a Congress MP sought increase in deposit insurance cover from ₹5 lakh to ₹25 lakh.

Raising the issue of rising power demand in Uttar Pradesh, BJP's Tejveer Singh said initiatives like smart city, data Centre parks and electric mobility have led to

record power consumption in the State, creating a burden on meeting energy needs during peak demand hours in many districts.

He called for strengthening the transmission network and energy supply, giving priority to expansion of the green grid in the State through solar parks and rooftop panel installations.

BJP's Dharmshila Gupta sought further strengthening of banking services in Bihar, saying despite positive changes through schemes like Jan Dhan, Mudra, Kisan Credit Card

and Self-Help Groups (SHGs), credit flow remains below expectations.

BJP member Shambhu Sharan Patel demanded restoration of halts for trains, including Muzaffarpur-Bhagalpur Express (13420), Banka Intercity Express (13242) and Rourkela-Barbil Intercity Express (18403), besides upgrade of Mankatha Railway Station in Lakhisarai district.

Another BJP member Dinesh Sharma raised the issue of roads and public places still bearing Mughal

and British-era names, citing examples like Akbar Road, Lodhi Road and Minto Bridge in Delhi.

Congress MP Neeraj Dangi called for increasing the deposit insurance limit from ₹5 lakh to ₹25 lakh, noting that with more banks becoming defunct, there is need for enhanced protection for depositors under the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation.

The insurance limit was last raised from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh in February 2022 following the Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative

Bank crisis, he said.

AIADMK member IS Inbadurai flagged the impact of cyclone Ditwah on Tamil Nadu's farmers during Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha, urging the Centre to immediately dispatch an assessment team as thousands of acres of cropland remains submerged.

BJP member Medha Vishram Kulkarni demanded withdrawal of "halal certification" to non-meat products, saying it is against the Constitution, which gives the right to all to practise one's own faith.



Rajya Sabha Chairman CP Radhakrishnan conducts the proceedings in the House during the Winter Session of Parliament in New Delhi

PTI

DGCA questions IndiGo over flight cancellations in November

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Wednesday questioned airline IndiGo over its drop in performance in November and has asked the airline to submit the reasons for the current situation as well as the plans to reduce flight cancellations and delays.

Citing recent operational performance information provided by IndiGo, DGCA said a total of 1,232 flights were cancelled in November, including 755 flights due

to crew and FDTL (Flight Duty Time Limitations) constraints.

As many as 258 flights were cancelled due to "airport/air-space restrictions", 92 flights were cancelled due to the ATC (Air Traffic Control) system failure and 127 flights on account of other reasons, the statement said.

In a statement, the DGCA said it is currently investigating the situation and evaluating measures along with the airline, to reduce cancellations and delays, in order to minimise inconvenience being caused to passengers.

"IndiGo has been asked to report to DGCA, Headquarters, to present the facts leading to the current situation along with plans to mitigate the ongoing delays & cancellations," it said.

"A large share of cancellations arose from crew/FDTL compliance and airport/airspace/ATC-related factors, many of which lie beyond the operator's direct control," DGCA said, and mentioned that the airline's overall On Time Performance in November was 67.7 per cent compared to 84.1 per cent in October.

Industrial materials used in cough syrup: ED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

The manufacturer of Coldrif syrup, whose consumption is alleged to have killed at least 20 children in Madhya Pradesh, used industrial-grade raw materials instead of pharma-grade sans quality checks to prepare the medicine, an Enforcement Directorate (ED) probe has found.

The federal probe agency further claimed that officials of the Tamil Nadu Drugs Control Department were in "frequent touch" with propri-

etor G Ranganathan of the accused company, Chennai-based Sresan Pharmaceuticals — but the mandated annual inspections of the firm were "not" conducted.

The ED said this in a statement issued on Wednesday as it attached two flats in Chennai belonging to Ranganathan and his family members. The assets are located at Kodambakkam in Tamil Nadu's capital city and are worth ₹2.04 crore, the statement said.

The agency alleged Sresan Pharma indulged in "rampant unfair trade practices to sup-

press its manufacturing costs and increase profits which are nothing but proceeds of crime under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act".

Probe found, that the manufacturer used industry-grade raw materials in the manufacturing of medicines instead of pharma-grade raw materials "without" proper quality checks. "Such materials were being purchased in cash without invoices to avoid creation of records," the ED said.

Though the officials of the Tamil Nadu Drugs Control Department were in frequent touch with the propri-

etor of Sresan Pharma, the annual inspections mandated as per the Drug and Cosmetic Rules were "not" conducted, it added.

The ED booked a money laundering case against the accused taking cognisance of two FIRs, one filed by the Madhya Pradesh Police and other by the Tamil Nadu Police. The Madhya Pradesh Police complaint alleged that Coldrif contained toxic glycol compounds and caused multiple incidents of acute renal failure in children leading to the death of at least 20 children in the State.

Congress slams Rajnath for Nehru-Babri mosque claim

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

The Congress on Wednesday termed as "lie" and "WhatsApp university story" Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's claim that India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to build Babri masjid using public funds, and said Singh should not walk on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's path.

Addressing a gathering at Sadhli village in Gujarat's Vadodra district on Tuesday, Singh had said Nehru wanted to build Babri masjid using

public funds, but Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel didn't allow his plans to succeed.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said the remarks were aimed at distracting attention from real issues that need to be discussed. "These are all distractions. There are many other real issues that need to be discussed. They create a new distraction every day so that we are unable to discuss the real issues of the people," the Wayanad MP told reporters.

Asked about the issue at a press conference, Congress' media and publicity depart-

ment head Pawan Khara said, "We would like to tell the defence minister — *aap toh aise na the* (you weren't like this). We can understand others, the PM is very learned, we can understand him making such statements Show us evidence."

"They do not have evidence of it but we have evidence that an 800-year-old temple is being demolished because RSS office's parking has to be constructed. They make such weird statements, Babri masjid, when was it constructed? Probably 1560. When was Nehru ji born? When did

Sardar Patel die, in 1950...Nehru ji was there even 14 years after that, did he build Babri mosque? Sardar Patel was not there then to stop him."

"So Rajnath Singh should not walk on the path of Modi ji. Modi ji has caused big harm to the BJP, now if others also follow the same path, we will benefit, they will finish the party," he said.

Congress' whip in the Lok Sabha Manickam Tagore said it is very surprising to see Rajnath Singh "running these kinds of fake news factories and WhatsApp university stories".

■ States Focus ■



CM SHARMA SLAMS CONGRESS ON DISABILITY SUPPORT

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma on Wednesday took a dig at the Congress party and asked what it had done for persons with disabilities despite being in power for decades. Addressing a State-level award ceremony in Jaipur on International Day of Persons with Disabilities, he said the Congress only made hollow announcements and did not work on the ground. “Despite being in power for decades, Congress did nothing for the differently-abled. I do not wish to make this a political issue, but the kind of indifference they showed towards the disabled in this State is unacceptable. Not a single substantial initiative was taken; they only made hollow announcements,” Sharma said.



CM NAIDU SAYS FPOs KEY TO RURAL ECONOMIC GROWTH

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday said FPOs are essential to transforming farmers into entrepreneurs and strengthening rural economic activity across the State. Addressing farmers during the ‘*Raitanna Meekosam*’ (for farmer brothers) programme in East Godavari district, Naidu said agriculture must expand beyond cultivation and move into value addition through agro-based industries and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) at the village level.

Relief for West Bengal Govt in teachers’ job case

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

Facing corruption charges for years in every field of administration the Mamata Banerjee Government on Wednesday got a big relief — particularly in an election year — with a Division Bench of Calcutta High Court setting aside a previous single Bench order annulling appointments of 32,000 primary school teachers.

These teachers were recruited through the Teachers’ Eligibility Test (TET) of 2014.

The exams had seen then Education Minister Partha Chatterjee, MLA and TET Chairman Manik Bhattacharya and several senior Government employees including a sitting

Vice Chancellor and a Chairman of West Bengal Board of Secondary Education going to jail.

The Division Bench of Justice Tapabrata Chakraborty held that as corruption and irregularities had not been proved against in all the recruitments it would not be fair to cancel the entire panel throwing 32,000 teachers off jobs after nine years of service causing great hardships to them and their families.

The Court however would not quash the investigation orders or rule that no corruption had taken place in the appointment process.

It did not touch the previous orders of investigation conducted by the



CM Mamata Banerjee during a public meeting in Malda district in West Bengal on Wednesday PTI

Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Central Bureau of Investigation.

The CBI had initially identified 264 appointments in which irregularities took place, following which the names of another 96 teachers came under the agency’s scanner but there was no evidence that all the candidates obtained their jobs through illegal means, the Court observed adding the entire selection process cannot be cancelled.

A single Bench of then Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay had terminated the appointments of these 32,000 primary teachers in 2023.

While senior advocate and Trinamool Congress MP, Kalyan Banerjee appearing

on behalf of the petitioners later said that the “entire case was politically motivated ... it being the product of conspiracy hatched by the BJP and the CPI(M).” BJP leader and counsel Tarunijyoti Tewari said that the order would be challenged in the Supreme Court. “We respect the Court and the order but an SLP will be preferred in the Supreme Court,” he said.

Incidentally in a similar instance case concerning 26,000 teachers and school staff the Supreme Court had earlier this year cancelled the entire panel of the ‘successful’ candidates after eight years of service and ordered a fresh examination to be conducted by the School Service Commission.

J&K reservation policy rationalised: Omar Abdullah

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday announced that his Government has successfully “rationalised” the Union Territory’s reservation policy in the “best possible manner” to ensure justice for every community, fulfilling one of the National Conference’s biggest election promises.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an event immediately after chairing an over-hour-long cabinet meeting at his official residence in Jammu, the Chief Minister said, “We have rationalised the existing Reservation Policy in the best possible manner so that every section gets justice. This was a major poll promise, and we have delivered on it.”

However, when pressed for specifics — including percentages, categories, etc, Abdullah refused to divulge any details.

“The file has been sent to the Lieutenant Governor for



Jammu and Kashmir CM Omar Abdullah addressing the gathering during the distribution of appointment letters in Jammu on Wednesday PTI

approval. Until he gives his consent, it would be inappropriate for me to say anything further.”

The reservation issue has remained one of the most politically charged topics in Jammu and Kashmir after the formation of the popular Government headed by Omar Abdullah.

Last year, when the Centre

brought in more groups under STs in Jammu and Kashmir, Lt Governor Manoj Sinha amended the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Rules, 2005, enhancing the ST-reserved seats/jobs from 10 per cent of the total to 20 per cent. Alongside, reservations for Other Backwards Classes (OBC) were also increased, with 15 new groups added to

the OBC list.

Following this, the total reservations increased from 43 per cent to 70 per cent of the total in Government jobs/seats, leaving only 30 per cent in the general category, though a majority of the Jammu and Kashmir population falls in this category.

The chief minister said the reservation policy was one of the 22 items on the agenda for the cabinet meeting.

“We discussed many things like construction of the new Kashmir House in Delhi’s Dwarka, proposal of chief engineers in the roads and buildings department, and how to revive co-operative societies in a new way, besides the reservations,” Abdullah said.

Last year, the Government had constituted a cabinet sub-committee to look into grievances raised by various sections of aspirants against the existing reservation policy in the UT.

sub-committee forwarded its report in October, and accordingly, the report and its

review by the law department were completed. Abdullah justified the time taken, saying it was because “the issue is such that it is very easy to do politics with it.”

“The cabinet has tried to adopt a transparent and fair process. Now, the matter will go to the LG. I will not say anything more until the file reaches him. Whatever you want to believe, you can believe it. We could not have done a more detailed exercise than this.

Referring to the posturing by the National Conference MP Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi on the reservation issue, the chief minister said, “This is not about an individual. This is about the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and we have fulfilled another election promise by completing this process.”

Abdullah added that people who were “taunting” the Government, claiming it did not do anything about the reservation, are threatening protests if injustice is done to any section.

Fadnavis launches work on Orange Gate–Marine Drive tunnel

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

In yet another significant step forward towards easing traffic congestion in the country’s commercial capital, Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday kicked off the work on the ambitious 9.96 km Orange Gate to Marine Drive Urban Tunnel Project, with the formal launch of the Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM).

Estimated to cost ₹8,056 crore, the country’s first urban tunnel project aims to ease Mumbai’s traffic congestion and enhance connectivity, particularly for citizens travelling from South Mumbai to the Navi Mumbai International Airport.

Terming the launch of the Orange Gate-Marine Drive tunnel as an “engineering marvel”, Fadnavis said the upcoming tunnel would “revolutionise commuting in Mumbai” — as the project would create a swift and smooth link between the eastern corridor and the picturesque western sea-front.

Slated for completion in December 2028, the tunnel



project will reshape the city’s daily grind for lakhs of motorists who struggle while travelling along the Eastern Freeway and other roads from the suburbs to downtown south Mumbai where most Government offices exist.

“Once the Worli-Sewri Sea Link opens next year and the Coastal Road connection is established, people from the western suburbs will have two options to reach the Navi Mumbai Airport. This project will save thousands of hours for thousands of

people, making today a historic day for Mumbai’s transport,” the chief minister said.

The project, which involves mind-boggling scale and complexity, is being implemented by the State-run Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA).

Being developed below the ground, the twin tunnel will quietly navigate a dense urban landscape, passing underneath roughly 700 properties, including several heritage structures, including some iconic ones, plus crucial

transport networks like the Western Railway, the Central Railway and even the underground Metro Line 3, without disrupting existing operations.

According to the MMRDA, there will be a 6.51-km long twin-tube underground tunnel of 3-lanes each and pedestrian walkways, a viaduct for vehicle access at the Eastern Freeway Orange Gate, open cuts and access roads on both sides of the corridor. The left-side tunnel will pass beneath the seaway and resurface after BD Somani Chowk.

This project is planned after taking into consideration the safety of the underground Mumbai Metro Line-3 project. The average tunnel depth will be 40-metres — to avoid disturbing the railway lines above or the foundations of high-rise buildings, implementing high levels of safety measures considering the dense population in the region, while slashing travel time by around 20 minutes or thousands of hours for lakhs of commuters.

At one section, the TBM engineers will sink bore

nearly 50 metres underground to ensure the Mumbai Metro’s safety, each tube will have spacious traffic lanes and cross-passages at every 300-metres to provide escape routes in case of emergencies.

The project will feature intelligent features such as AI-enabled traffic control, smart monitoring, and advanced ventilation to maintain smooth flow and quick responses in all conditions, fire-resistant materials, refined illumination and a robust evacuation system further strengthen safety.

Fadnavis said that though completion is planned for December 2028, efforts would be made to finish it six months early for the benefit of the masses.

“MMRDA’s commitment to drive this project is commendable. This initiative will play a major role in strengthening Mumbai’s infrastructure and supporting the city’s long-term growth vision,” the chief minister said.

Once it becomes operational, the tunnel will offer a critical new route for resi-

dents of both south Mumbai and the suburbs travelling to the Navi Mumbai International Airport, which will take-off this month-end.

With the parallel work on the Sewri-Worli connector the tunnel will become another essential strand in the fast-evolving network of the Mumbai Coastal Road, the Atal Setu Mumbai Trans Harbour Link, the Bandra-Worli Sea Link and its extensions planned upto Borivali and beyond.

The additional benefits of the project would be the sharp reduction in fuel consumption and emissions, with huge environmental benefits like easing air and noise pollution across some of the city’s most congested pockets.

MMRDA Metropolitan Commissioner Dr Sanjay Mukherjee, who has consistently battled for strengthening transport infrastructure to boost economic progress and sustainable growth, is supervising the implementation of development of the tunnel — which is being constructed by Larsen & Toubro.

BJP slams Telangana CM Reddy over Hindu remarks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The BJP on Wednesday slammed Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy’s remarks on Hindu gods and accused the Congress of spreading hatred against Hindus with its “Muslim League” mindset.

Addressing the executive meeting of the ruling Congress in Telangana on Tuesday, Reddy had said the party takes everyone along, and it is home to people with different mindsets, while drawing an analogy with the Hindu religion. The Congress leader said there are many gods worshipped by the devotees. “How many gods are there for Hindus? Three crores? There is Hanuman for those who are not married. There is another god for those who marry twice,” he said.

Reacting sharply, BJP Rajya Sabha MP and national spokesperson Sundhanshu Trivedi said that the Telangana chief minister’s remarks were an insult to

Will not visit Delhi without invite, says Siddaramaiah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mangaluru

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said he would not travel to New Delhi unless he is formally invited. His comments come after Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar’s visit to New Delhi on Wednesday to attend a wedding and to plan for a party event.

The two leaders recently displayed bonhomie by hosting breakfast for each other at their residences in Bengaluru to quell speculation about leadership change in the State.

While the Deputy CM flew to Delhi, Siddaramaiah reached Mangaluru to take part in an event to commemorate centenary of social reformer Narayana Guru’s meeting with Mahatma Gandhi.

Congress general secretary KC Venugopal also attended the Mangaluru event. Later, Siddaramaiah had a meeting and lunch with Venugopal.

Before heading to Kaveri Guest House here, Siddaramaiah told media that he would not go to Delhi without an invitation. When reporters pointed out that Shivakumar was going to Delhi, he replied, “Let him go. Has anyone said no to him?” Asked if he would go, he firmly said, “I will go only when I am invited. I was not invited, so I am not going.”

He added that if there is any direction from the party high command for a meeting in Delhi, it would be conveyed through Venugopal.

Sarguja girls sold in Ujjain spotlight MP’s missing-girl crisis

GIRISH SHARMA ■ Bhopal

The revelation that two girls from Sarguja (Chhattisgarh), were trafficked and sold in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh for ₹2.50 lakh each has once again thrown a harsh spotlight on the State’s long-unresolved crisis of missing girls.

While the case itself is under investigation, it has revived urgent questions about the scale of disappearances in Madhya Pradesh and the vulnerabilities that allow traffickers to operate with impunity.

According to official data presented in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly earlier this year, the State currently has more than 23,000 women and girls still untraced — a staggering figure that includes 21,175 women and 1,954 girls missing for over a year. Human-rights groups say these numbers place Madhya Pradesh among the worst-affected States in India

when it comes to missing females and trafficking-linked disappearances.

A 2022 national report by Child Rights and You (CRY) underscored the scale of the crisis, finding that 32 children went missing every single day in Madhya Pradesh — the majority of them girls. Experts warn that although not all missing cases end in trafficking, the overlap between the two categories is disturbingly high.

“The Sarguja-Ujjain case is deeply alarming but not surprising,” said a senior CRY representative who works closely on trafficking prevention. “When tens of thousands of women and girls remain untraced for years, it is clear that Madhya Pradesh is facing a structural crisis. Traffickers exploit poverty, migration and weak monitoring systems and they do so repeatedly.”

Activists also point to the vulnerabilities of tribal and marginalised communities,

2 GIRLS FROM CHHATTISGARH WERE TRAFFICKED TO UJJAIN, EXPOSING MADHYA PRADESH’S CRISIS OF OVER 23,000 MISSING WOMEN AND GIRLS

where missing cases often go unreported or are not investigated with urgency.

Within the police department, there is growing acknowledgement that existing systems have failed to keep pace with the problem. A senior Madhya Pradesh police officer, speaking off the record, admitted: “Follow-up in missing-girl cases remains inconsistent across districts. Tracking mechanisms need strengthening. Without a coordinated, State-wide response, traffickers continue to find gaps.”

The Sarguja incident has triggered renewed calls for a

dedicated anti-trafficking task force in Madhya Pradesh, mandatory inter-State coordination for missing-child inquiries and real-time monitoring of high-risk districts. NGOs are also urging the State to prioritise rehabilitation and compensation for survivors rescued from trafficking networks.

As the investigation into the Ujjain case progresses, the larger picture it exposes is difficult to ignore: behind every statistic is a life interrupted — or lost. The numbers, the patterns and the testimonies point to a crisis far deeper than a single incident.

For Madhya Pradesh, the challenge is not only to bring the perpetrators of this latest case to justice, but also to confront a long-standing reality that thousands of its missing girls remain unaccounted for and each absence is a reminder of a system that has failed to protect its most vulnerable.

Rahul accuses Government of betraying Bahujans

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accused the Narendra Modi Government on Wednesday of openly betraying the country’s Bahujans by having “no concrete framework, no time-bound plan, no discussion in Parliament and no dialogue with the public” on the caste census exercise to be undertaken. His criticism

came after the Government’s response in the Lok Sabha to his question on the next census and caste enumeration.

“In Parliament, I asked the Government a question about the caste census — its response is shocking. No concrete framework, no time-bound plan, no discussion in Parliament and no dialogue with the public. There is not even any desire to learn from the strategies of successful caste surveys in other States,”



Rahul Gandhi said in a social media post in Hindi.

“This stance of the Modi Government on the caste census is an open betrayal of the country’s Bahujans,” the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha added.

Rahul Gandhi posed three questions in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, asking for the details and tentative timelines of the key procedural steps to prepare for the decadal census, including the preparation of questions

and setting schedules.

He also asked whether the Government has any proposal to publish the draft census questions and seek inputs from the general public or people’s representatives on these queries.

The Congress leader further asked as to whether the Government is taking into consideration the best practices from previous exercises, including the caste surveys conducted in various States, and if so, the

details thereof.

In a written reply to his posers, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said, “The Census 2027 will be conducted in two phases, namely Phase I House Listing and Housing Census from April to September, 2026 in a period of 30 days as per the convenience of the State/UT Governments, followed by Phase II Population Enumeration (PE).”

Population enumeration will be done in February 2027 with the reference date of 00:00 hours of March 1, 2027, except for the Union Territory of Ladakh, the 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 the reference date of 00:00 hours of October 1, 2026, the minister informed.

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No money moved abroad; all assets of Sunjay Kapur disclosed: Priya



The case filed by Bollywood actor Karisma Kapoor's children before the Delhi High Court over their father Sunjay Kapur's Will witnessed another interesting hearing on Wednesday as Sunjay Kapur's wife Priya Sachdev Kapur rebuffed the allegations that she transferred Sunjay Kapur's assets abroad.

Senior Advocate Rajiv Nayar appeared for Kapur and challenged her mother-in-law Rani Kapur's assertion that she (Priya Kapur) had concealed the details of Sunjay Kapur's assets from the Court. "I have filed a detailed list of assets, and every transaction is in the list of assets... No money has been moved abroad," Nayar said, adding that the allegation is baseless. He also challenged the argument by Rani Kapur's lawyer that Sunjay Kapur was receiving a salary of ₹60 crore from just one company.

Disability inclusion not an act of charity: Justice Vikram Nath



Supreme Court judge Justice Vikram Nath on Wednesday said disability inclusion was "not an act of charity" but affirmation of "equal personhood".

Justice Nath was delivering his keynote address at a webinar organised by the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

The top court judge, also the executive chairman of NALSA, said, "Inclusion (of people with disabilities) is not an act of charity; it is an act of affirmation of equal personhood. When we remove the barriers, we do more than create accessibility; we unlock human potential."

Underlining that inclusion meant creating a new and better space where every individual could participate meaningfully, Justice Nath said that legal aid outreach must be disability-inclusive. He said that District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs) had to regularly visit places, like mental health institutions, special schools, community centres and others, besides ensuring that mobile legal services vans and legal literacy camps reached people who could not approach the system.



Supreme Court directs UPSC to assist differently-abled

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court directed the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on Wednesday to incorporate in the notification for examinations a provision allowing eligible candidates to request a change of scribe till at least seven days prior to the test.

The court also asked the UPSC to file within two months a comprehensive compliance affidavit delineating the proposed plan of action, timeline and modalities for the deployment and use of a screen-reader software for visually-impaired candidates in the exams conducted by the commission.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta said the rights guaranteed to differently-abled people are not acts of benevolence, but expressions of the constitutional promise of equality, dignity and non-discrimination.

"Before parting, this court deems it appropriate to observe that the true measure of inclusivity in governance lies not merely in the formulation of progressive policies but in their faithful and effective implementation," the bench said.

The top court delivered its verdict on a plea filed by Mission Accessibility, an organisation engaged in the advancement of rights of differently-abled people, seeking a modification in the timeline for scribe registration in the Civil Services Examination conducted by the UPSC.

The plea had also sought a direction to allow the use of laptops equipped with a screen-reader software, along with accessible digital question papers, for eligible candidates. In its verdict, the bench directed that the UPSC shall "ensure



that in every notification for the examinations conducted by it, a clear provision is incorporated permitting candidates eligible for a scribe to request a change of the scribe up to at least seven days prior to the date of the examination".

It said such requests be objectively considered and disposed of by a reasoned order within three working days of the receipt of the applications.

The bench directed the UPSC to file a comprehensive compliance affidavit, "clearly delineating the proposed plan of action, timeline and modalities for the deployment and use of a screen-reader software for visually-impaired candidates in the examinations to be conducted by it".

It said the affidavit shall also specify the steps proposed for the testing, standardisation and valida-

tion of the software and related infrastructure across all centres or at the designated examination centres.

The bench said the affidavit shall also indicate the feasibility of ensuring that the said facility is made operational and available to all eligible candidates from the next cycle of examinations.

It directed that the UPSC shall, in coordination with the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities and the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities, formulate uniform guidelines and protocols for the use of the screen-reader software and other assistive technologies to ensure standardisation, accessibility and security of the examination process.

It also directed the Centre, through the Department of

Personnel and Training and the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, to extend all necessary administrative and technical support to the UPSC for an expeditious implementation of these measures.

The bench said the Centre shall also facilitate coordination with the states and the examination authorities, wherever required.

"It is further directed that the implementation of these measures shall be undertaken in a manner that ensures full accessibility to eligible candidates while maintaining the sanctity, confidentiality and fairness of the examination process," the bench said.

It said these directions are being issued to ensure that the constitutional mandate of equality, non-discrimination and the right to live with dignity enshrined under

Articles 14 and 21, read with provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, is meaningfully implemented.

The bench said these directions are also being issued so that facilitative measures envisaged by the UPSC are operationalised in both letter and spirit within the stipulated timeframe.

It said being the premier body entrusted with upholding the values of merit and fairness in public recruitment, the commission must ensure that its processes are accessible, transparent and sensitive to the needs of every segment of the society.

"It is therefore imperative that the directions issued herein are carried out with utmost earnestness, sensitivity and expedition, so that the constitutional vision of equal opportunity and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities is not reduced to a distant aspiration, but is realised as a living, enforceable and enduring reality in the conduct of all public examinations in the country," it said.

The bench posted the matter to February 16 next year for receiving the UPSC's compliance affidavit.

It said the measure of a just and inclusive society lies not merely in the freedoms it proclaims, but in the opportunities it ensures for all its citizens to realise their fullest potential.

"Equality, in its truest sense, demands not uniformity but the removal of barriers that prevent individuals from standing on equal footing," it said.

"The law, as an instrument of justice, must therefore move beyond formal equality to ensure substantive inclusion, transforming rights from written promises into lived realities," the bench said.

Growth takes time, hard work and commitment needed, says CJI Kant

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Wednesday advised first-generation lawyers to focus on building credibility through hard work and patience.

He was speaking at a panel discussion on the topic — "WE (Women Empowerment in Law): on Strength, Struggle and Success" organised by the Supreme Court Bar Association.

"Initially, when I joined the profession, there was a complete sense of uncertainty. As a first-generation lawyer in the family, there was nobody to guide me. The system was also completely strange and unknown to me. But I was a very passionate student when I was doing law and had a lot of curiosity to know about the system and how it operates. "I was very clear that growth takes time. It knew that no magic was

going to happen. I was mentally determined and ready to face the struggle. I would like to tell all the first-generation lawyers that a lot of patience, hard work and commitment to create your own identity work is required. Though the world is crowded, you have to create space for yourself," the CJI said.

Sharing her experience, Justice BV Nagarathna said she faced a lot of difficulty in starting her law practice after completing her LLB degree as her father (Justice ES Venkataramiah) was a Supreme Court judge, and it was mutually decided that she would not even enrol as an advocate in Delhi.

"I had to go to Bengaluru, and I had no house there. For three months I sat at home. But on October 24, 1987, I left for Bengaluru. So, this first is always there.

"There is an adage that behind every successful man there is a woman, but I would like to say that behind

every successful woman there is a family," she said.

Justice Nagarathna said institutional support is very necessary for the retention of women lawyers in the legal profession.

"The seniors must give cases to talented women juniors, not just domestic violence or family court cases, but challenging, complex civil and criminal matters, so that they can show their talent.

"The court must give support by giving an opportunity and appointing them as amici curiae. Thirty per cent of law officers of the central Government should be women advocates. If women are given the opportunity, they will definitely appear before the courts," she said.

Justice Nagarathna spoke about the challenges faced by women lawyers in their personal lives. "What the family will say to the women — "you are going out of the home from morning to evening.

SC allows entry of pregnant woman, her child into India from Bangladesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday allowed on "humanitarian grounds" the entry of a pregnant woman and her eight-year-old child into India, months after they were pushed into Bangladesh.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi asked the West Bengal Government to take care of the minor and directed the chief medical officer of Birbhum district to provide all possible medical assistance to the pregnant woman Sunali Khatun, including free of cost delivery.

The bench noted the submission of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, that the competent authority has agreed to allow the woman and her child into the country purely on humanitarian grounds without prejudice to rights and contentions, and they would be kept under surveil-

lance. The top court was hearing a plea of the Centre challenging the September 26 order of the Calcutta High Court by which it had set aside the central Government's decision to deport Khatun and others to Bangladesh and termed it as "illegal".

The bench further said they would eventually be brought back to Delhi from where they were picked up and deported to Bangladesh. However, senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Sanjay Hegde, appearing for the woman's father, said it would be appropriate that she and her child are brought to their home district Birbhum in West Bengal, where her father resides.

The senior counsels urged the court that there were others also, including Khatun's husband who are in Bangladesh, and need to be brought back to India for which Mehta may seek further instruction. Mehta contended that he would be contesting their claim of being Indian

citizens and maintained that they were Bangladeshi nationals and it was only humanitarian grounds that the union Government was allowing the woman and her child into India.

Justice Bagchi said if the woman establishes credentials that she is daughter of Bhodu Sheikh, then it would be sufficient to establish her Indian citizenship.

The top court posted the matter for hearing on December 10. The woman's father alleged that the families, working as daily wage earners in Sector 26 of the Rohini area in Delhi for over two decades, were picked up by police on June 18 on suspicion of being Bangladeshis and subsequently pushed across the border on June 27.

On December 1, the top court asked the Centre to consider allowing the woman and her child into India while keeping her under "surveillance".

Sabarimala gold theft: Kerala High Court grants SIT six more weeks to complete probe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kochi

The Kerala High Court on Wednesday granted six more weeks to the SIT constituted by it to complete the probe into the irregularities in gold plating of the 'Dwarapalaka' idols and Sreekovil door frames of Sabarimala Lord Ayyappa temple.

A bench of justices Raja Vijayaraghavan V and KV Jayakumar asked the SIT to proceed with the probe "with uncompromising meticulousness, heightened diligence, and scrupulous adherence to every legal requirement".

The bench said that if the Special Investigation Team (SIT), in the course of the investigation, stumbled upon any facet, transaction, or material circumstance, which went unnoticed or undiscovered till now, the same should be forthwith brought to the court's notice by filing an appropriate report.



Sabarimala temple

satisfaction with the manner in which the SIT was carrying out its probe. The bench further said that in compliance with its directions issued on November 5, the SIT had collected samples from the gold-plated artefacts in the shrine, but the analysis reports have not yet been received. The SIT told the court that the forensic analysis report is expected in a week.

The team also told the bench that the probe, with regard to the transactions of 2018 and 2019 relating to the main door of the Sreekovil and the subsequent series of transactions spanning 2014-

2025 concerning the transportation of Dwarapalaka idols to Chennai for gold plating, was in its infancy.

In view of the "volume, complexity, and interconnected character of these transactions" and as only six weeks were granted to the SIT to complete its probe, it sought further time to complete the investigation.

The bench, after examining the progress report, said that in view of the "scale, seriousness, and potential ramifications of the allegations under inquiry", the time sought by the SIT was "justified and deserves to be granted". "Accordingly, a further period

of six weeks from today is granted to the Special Investigation Team to conclude the investigation," the court said. With the direction, the bench listed the matter for further consideration on January 5, 2026.

The order came in a writ petition initiated by the court on its own to monitor the probe into the irregularities. After the registration of the writ petition, the court closed the earlier litigation initiated by it in connection with the taking of the Dwarapalaka idols to Chennai for gold plating without informing the High Court or the Devaswom Special Commissioner.

Restrict arguments to 15 minutes: SC tells accused in 2020 Delhi riots case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Observing that a time schedule is required to be fixed for arguments, the Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the lawyers appearing for the accused in the February 2020 Delhi riots to restrict their oral arguments to 15 minutes.

A bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and NV Anjaria said any clarification by Additional Solicitor General SV Raju on the arguments put forward by accused's lawyers shall not exceed 30 minutes.

"Arguments have been advanced by both sides substantially. We are of the view that a time schedule is required to be fixed.

Oral arguments shall not exceed 15 minutes each and clarification by ASG will not exceed 30 minutes," the bench said, while posting the matter for hearing on December 9.

The court also directed the lawyers appearing in the matter for the accused to submit their permanent addresses.

Seeking bail in the case, activist Sharjeel Imam expressed anguish before the apex court on Tuesday over being "labelled" a "dangerous intellectual terrorist", without a full-fledged trial or a single conviction.

"I would like to say that I am not a terrorist, as I have been called by the respondent (police). I am not an anti-national as called by the State.

I am a citizen of this country, a citizen by birth and I have not been convicted for any offence till now," senior advocate Siddhartha Dave, represent-



ing Imam, said. He contended that Imam was arrested on January 28, 2020, which was before the communal violence that rocked northeast Delhi, for his speeches that alone cannot constitute the offence of "criminal conspiracy" in the riots case.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Umar Khalid, submitted that his client was not in Delhi when the riots broke out in February 2020 and that he cannot be kept incarcerated "as if to say that I will punish you for your protests".

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Gulfisha Fatima, told the court that the activist has spent under six years in incarceration and termed the delay in the trial "astounding and unprecedented".

Strongly opposing the bail pleas of Khalid, Imam and others, the Delhi Police said the February 2020 riots were not something spontaneous, but an "orchestrated, pre-planned and well-designed" attack on India's sovereignty.

Khalid, Imam, Fatima, Meeran Haider and Shifa Ur Rehman have been booked under the stringent anti-terror law Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for allegedly being the "masterminds" of the riots, which left 53 people dead and more than 700 injured.

The violence erupted during widespread protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC).



Editor's
TAKE

Defining fake news: What is it, after all?

Fake news erodes trust, distorts public perception and threatens democratic stability, making a clear legal definition essential to protect national interests

Winston Churchill once famously said, “A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to put its pants on.” Today, in the age of social media, that lie may well travel around the world ten times over. A lie packaged as fake news has now become a major menace – an industry unto itself. Savour this: between April 2020 and April 2025, in a span of five years, the PIB Fact Check Unit received over 1.6 lakh queries and debunked more than 2,200 fake news items. These numbers reveal the vast scale of the problem. And this is just the tip of the iceberg, as it is only a small fraction of the misinformation circulating each day. The rot runs deep and is increasing with every passing day, thanks to social media and AI-generated deepfakes that make it more authentic and believable than ever before.

Now, at last, some headway is being made to understand it and define it to put it into legal terms. The parliamentary panel led by BJP MP Nishikant Dubey has rightly recognised a central challenge: India still lacks a precise, legally enforceable definition of fake news. This ambiguity makes regulation inconsistent and largely ineffective. It is used to describe everything from satirical content to state-sponsored propaganda. This looseness allows harmful misinformation to slip through the cracks while also enabling powerful actors to misuse the label for news inconvenient to them.

Fake news should be understood as any content that is wholly or partially false, presented as genuine news, and created deliberately to mislead or manipulate public opinion. The key element here is intent – not mere error or opinion, but deliberate fabrication. The problem gets compounded when celebrities and influencers – politicians, film stars, sportsmen, Godmen – indulge in it, distorting perception and creating confusion in the minds of the people.

For India to regulate fake news without compromising constitutional freedoms, especially the freedom of speech, the definition must be crafted with precision. It should be narrow enough to prevent misuse, yet broad enough to capture the spectrum of harmful, deceptive content. The committee has rightly noted that striking this delicate balance is essential.

Fake news is not a simple case of misinformation; it is engineered deception. Once these falsehoods take root, they distort public perception and poison democratic discourse. In recent years, misinformation in India has fuelled mob violence, stoked communal tensions, undermined faith in public health measures, and intensified political polarisation. A nation can survive disagreements, but it cannot function amid disorientation and distrust. In this sense, fake news behaves like cancer: spreading silently, affecting vital systems, and weakening the entire democratic body.

If India does not act now – by defining fake news clearly, ensuring checks against misuse, and strengthening accountability – misinformation could grow into a threat far beyond regulatory control.

Between Washington and Moscow, India chooses itself

For India, the message is equally blunt: it will not be pressured into choosing sides in a conflict that it did not create, and it will not sacrifice its own strategic autonomy at the altar of Western expectations



UTTAM
KUMAR SINHA

In a world splintering into rival blocs, Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to New Delhi today is far more than diplomatic theatre. In an era when sanctions, tariffs and coercive alignments are redrawing the global order, the optics and outcomes of this trip will resonate well beyond the India-Russia relationship.

This is Putin's first trip to India since the Ukraine war began. For Moscow, which has endured unprecedented sanctions and isolation from the West, the visit signals something fundamental: Russia refuses to be trapped in a binary world where its only strategic anchor is China. For India, the message is equally blunt: it will not be pressured into choosing sides in a conflict that it did not create, and it will not sacrifice its own strategic autonomy at the altar of Western expectations.

Breaking Out of the China Corner

Since 2022, Western policy has had an unintended, though entirely predictable, consequence. By weaponising SWIFT, imposing a record number of sanctions and seeking to expel Russia from global markets, the US and Europe have pushed Moscow into Beijing's strategic embrace. The irony is stark; Stalin once dismissed Mao Tse-tung as a “caveman Marxist”, yet today Russia finds itself leaning heavily on a China whose economic weight far exceeds its own. The partnership has deepened, especially in energy and defence, but it remains asymmetrical. Beijing's dominance in trade, finance and technology risks reducing Moscow to the status of a ‘junior partner’, a role the Kremlin is acutely aware of and eager to avoid.

Putin's trip to New Delhi must be read in that context. India, till recently the leading purchaser of discounted Russian oil, has seen its imports fall by nearly a third in the wake of stringent US sanctions.

But more importantly, India offers Russia strategic diversification – a way to balance Chinese influence without needing to confront it. For Moscow, the symbolism matters. In the middle of a grinding war and near-total Western hostility, India is one of the few major powers willing to host Putin without apology or hesitation. The optics of a warm and public welcome from the world's largest democracy undermine the narrative of global isolation that Washington and its allies have sought to construct.

India's Strategic Autonomy, Asserted Yet Again
India's message to the world is equally clear –



THE INDIA-RUSSIA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP SIGNALS SOMETHING LARGER THAN THE RENEWAL OF AN OLD FRIENDSHIP; IT TELLS THE WORLD THAT NEW DELHI WILL SHAPE ITS FOREIGN POLICY BY ITS OWN INTERESTS, NOT BY INHERITED LOYALTIES, IDEOLOGICAL NOSTALGIA OR EXTERNAL PRESSURE

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and perhaps even more consequential. New Delhi refuses to be confined by the West's “with us or against us” binary. It has never accepted that global politics can be reduced to a moralistic scoreboard curated in Washington or Brussels. Instead, it has revived and modernised the credo of nonalignment, reframed today as ‘multi-alignment’ and maintaining simultaneously strong ties with the US, Europe, Russia, Southeast Asia and West Asia, while aligning fully with none.

Putin's visit is a sharp reminder that India's choices are its own. And the timing could not be more deliberate.

One of the most significant outcomes of the visit is likely to be the creation of new payment mechanisms that bypass the Western-controlled financial order. India and Russia are expected to finalise channels that avoid the SWIFT system altogether, insulating bilateral trade from American and European sanctions.

Such efforts are not new, but this time they carry an unmistakable momentum. The weaponisation of the dollar during the Ukraine war – from freezing Russia's foreign reserves to blocking banks from SWIFT – has shaken the world's confidence in the neutrality of global finance.

Countries across the Global South are exploring alternatives, from local-currency settlements to regional payment systems.

India, which imports billions of dollars' worth of Russian oil monthly, has already experimented with rupee settlements, though they have limitations. The new mechanisms discussed during the visit are expected to be more

durable and technologically robust. If they work, they will not just deepen India-Russia trade; they will contribute to a slow but steady erosion of the dollar's monopoly in global finance.

A Relationship Driven by Interests, Not Nostalgia

The India-Russia relationship is often explained through history: the Soviet Union's support on Kashmir, military cooperation since the 1970s, the memory of the 1971 veto. But this visit shows something different. The relationship endures today not because of nostalgia, but because it serves current interests on both sides.

For India, Russia remains central to defence diversification. Despite Western hopes, India cannot switch overnight from Russian-origin platforms to NATO systems without jeopardising readiness. Moreover, Russia remains a crucial supplier of discounted oil, helping India maintain energy affordability at a time of global volatility. For Russia, India represents a major market, a diplomatic partner that refuses to toe the Western line, and a counterweight to China. The relationship allows Moscow breathing space –politically, economically and strategically.

What This Means for the Global Order

Putin's visit is ultimately a reflection of a larger transition. The post-Cold War order, built on US financial primacy and Western political norms, is no longer universally accepted. Countries are carving out their own spheres of autonomy, building parallel institutions and hedging against the uncertainties of an increasingly unpredictable superpower.

India sits at the centre of this transformation. It is deeply engaged with the West, but not dependent on it. It maintains ties with Russia but is not beholden to Moscow. It partners with China in multilateral forums even as it confronts it in the Himalayas.

This is not contradiction. It is strategy. The India-Russia strategic partnership signals something larger than the renewal of an old friendship; it tells the world that New Delhi will shape its foreign policy by its own interests, not by inherited loyalties, ideological nostalgia or external pressure. India is neither retreating into Cold War alignments nor succumbing to the new bipolarity imposed by the West and China.

Instead, it is asserting a model of autonomy that other mid-sized and emerging powers increasingly find compelling – a refusal to be drafted into somebody else's conflict, somebody else's sanctions regime or somebody else's worldview.

The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

Studying the Gita's frameworks for today's world



SAKSHI
SETHI

2ND OPINION
THE PIONEER

The Gita is regarded as one of the most respected and insightful sacred texts, known for its ability to guide individuals toward a clearer and more purposeful life. Though profound, the Gita is a layered scripture, composed of ‘shlokas’ that carry meanings requiring interpretation. Only a limited number of scholars and spiritual teachers are able to explain these nuances with precision. Among them is Sudhanshu Ji Maharaj, whose work focuses extensively on the teachings of the Gita. His discourses present these ideas in a manner accessible to a wide audience, combining scriptural references with practical application.

Sudhanshu Ji Maharaj places particular emphasis on the Gita's principle of selfless action. For him, Karma Yog – the path of performing one's duties without attachment –

forms the core of meaningful living. He teaches that an individual's karma shapes both present circumstances and future outcomes. According to his interpretation, transformation occurs through the combined role of sustained effort, prayer or meditation, and grace. He often states that life is influenced by eighty percent ‘karma,’ ten percent prayer or ‘dhyān,’ and ten percent blessings (kripa) from a Guru or the Divine, suggesting that disciplined action remains central to progress. In his framework, *karma* (righteous action), prayer or meditation (inner discipline), and *kripa* (divine support) operate together as essential components of a balanced life. While prayer and blessings contribute to emotional and spiritual grounding, he maintains that committed action is necessary for walking the path of ‘Karma Yog’ and for contributing positively to society. Another major aspect of Sudhanshu Ji Maharaj's work is his effort to highlight the values of Sanatan culture for contemporary times. His more than 8,000 discourses draw from the Vedas, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Upanishads, presenting traditional ideas in language suitable for modern listeners. He frequently states that service to humanity is a fundamental form of worship, expressed in the idea that serving people is equivalent to serving the Divine. On meditation, he explains that grace (*kripa*) is understood to arise from a deeper connection with

higher spiritual energy, and that meditation (*dhyān*) is a key method for cultivating such awareness. Motivated by concern for marginalised and underprivileged groups, Sudhanshu Ji Maharaj founded the *Vishwa Jagriti Mission* in 1991. The Mission was created with the objective of supporting vulnerable populations, including the elderly, orphans, and economically disadvantaged individuals.

It works on 7s principles given by Sudhanshu Ji Maharaj drawn from Indian traditions namely: *Seva* - Serve, *Simran* – Divine remembrance, *Swadhyaya* – Self-study, *Satsang* – company of truth, *Sadhana* – Practice, *Samarpan* – dedication; *Santosh* – contentment. Through initiatives in education, healthcare, women's empowerment, and community support, the Mission aims to address both immediate social needs and long-term development goals.

Beyond its social programmes, the Mission also seeks to encourage personal growth and ethical awareness among individuals. His teachings emphasise introspection, recognition of one's inner potential, and acting in ways that contribute to social welfare. Today, the VJM continues to operate across various regions, and its work reflects the ideas and values promoted by Sudhanshu Ji Maharaj.

The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

The writer is an educator

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Social media needs responsible use

Social media is undoubtedly the fastest means of communication, yet the same speed has turned it into a powerful instrument for spreading rumours and misinformation. Deepfake content, the circulation of old incidents as if they were new, and the forwarding of unverified posts have become increasingly common. These irresponsible practices have created an environment where falsehood spreads far more rapidly than truth.

Some individuals misuse these platforms to provoke violence, generate animosity, and incite hatred between groups or communities, which is extremely dangerous and deeply damaging to social harmony. Therefore, social media platforms must be monitored with care, and fake news should be identified and removed promptly to prevent harm. Equally important is public awareness. People need to be trained and educated about the responsible use of social media, including understanding the impact of sharing unverified information. Digital literacy should be promoted so that users can recognise misleading content and avoid contributing to its spread. Every individual carries a responsibility to verify information before forwarding it to others. Used wisely, social media strengthens communication; misused, it undermines trust and social harmony.

MD ARSHAD | UTTAR PRADESH

Election promises rarely become reality

After the two major Assembly elections in Delhi and Bihar, the nation is set for yet another major electoral season in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam and West Bengal next year. Even before that, intense political activity is already under way in Kerala and Maharashtra for the local body polls. Whether in national, Assembly, or local elections, candidates and their parties make numerous promises in their manifestos. But are these promises fulfilled? The answer is, unfortunately, a resounding no. Election assurances remain confined to manifesto pages and are rarely implemented by winning parties. For the common people, long-standing issues persist unchanged. We forget this pattern and fall for the same promises during every election cycle. Politicians thrive because of the gullibility and credulity of the electorate.

However, the public has begun to recognise this, and changes are emerging. Recent election results show that if people are ignored, they will certainly ignore those who ignored them.

Citizens now expect action rather than rhetoric. Politicians must understand that voters remember those who stand by them during crises. People are increasingly expressing their preferences and disapproval with clarity when choosing their representatives.

M PRADYU | KANNUR

Mandatory app order raises concerns

Apropos “Sanchar Saathi app: Govt spells out the mandate”, December 3. The government's order directing mobile handset manufacturers to pre-install the Sanchar Saathi application on every device made or imported for use in India is not only poor governance but also unsound economics. Though presented as an effort to “strengthen cyber security and anti-spam measures”, such a diktat raises legitimate concerns regarding surveillance and intrusion. The directive initially specified that users would not be able to delete the app, effectively making it a permanent fixture on all devices.

Following public backlash, Union Minister for Communications Jyotiraditya Scindia clarified that the app is “optional” and deletable. However, this reassurance is insufficient. Genuine consent must be based on opting in, not opting out – a fundamental principle underpinning the right to privacy.

Cybercrime is real, and Sanchar Saathi offers useful services, but mass adoption must be built on trust, not compulsion. India's successful digital platforms thrive because users choose them voluntarily. Instead of imposing mandates, the government should withdraw the order and focus on awareness and voluntary participation.

N SADHASIVA REDDY | BENGALURU

PIC TALK



Artists dressed as Lord Hanuman during the ‘Hanuman Jayanti’ celebrations in Bengaluru.

PHOTO: PTI

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE



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INDIA FACES RISING THREAT FROM ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE CRISIS

Around 83 per cent of patients in India are now found to have Multidrug-Resistant Organisms (MDROs), meaning bacteria that no longer respond to multiple antibiotics. As a result, many patients fail to recover even after taking commonly prescribed medicines. Across the country, a widespread lack of seriousness regarding health is clearly visible. Medicines continue to be easily obtained at chemists without a doctor's prescription. Numerous individuals take antibiotics on their own or rely on the advice of pharmacists instead of consulting qualified medical practitioners.

Even for minor ailments, the routine use of antibiotics is causing harm. Increasingly, bacteria are developing resistance to these medicines. This concern has been highlighted by researchers in a study

published in The Lancet eClinical Medicine. Consequently, questions are being raised about the nation's disease-fighting capacity. Researchers warn that once bacteria stop responding to low-intensity antibiotics, stronger medicines are administered, yet microbes are gradually becoming resistant to those as well.

If this situation persists, the health of citizens – as well as their overall immunity, may face serious risk. Misuse of antibiotics, easy availability of medicines without prescriptions, incomplete treatment courses, the habit of stopping medication midway, and self-medication remain major contributors. Although medical science has advanced remarkably in recent years, the excessive and unregulated use of antibiotics will undoubtedly harm public health.

DATTAPRASAD SHIRODKAR | MUMBAI

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

Colonised minds: Modi didn’t speak the whole truth

When, amid Vedic rituals on November 25, the PM raised the standard of Sanatan in Ayodhya, it was a definitive statement about India’s civilisational renaissance and its quest to dismantle the colonial mindset. No wonder the Macaulay-Marxist pack is in a funk



BALBIR
PUNJ

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi vowed to liberate India completely from the Macaulayite mindset. In his words: “Alongside pride in our heritage, one more task is equally vital-and that is the complete eradication of the mindset of slavery.” Nearly 190 years ago, in 1835, a Briton named Macaulay sowed the seeds of uprooting India from her civilisational roots. It was Macaulay who laid the foundation of India’s mental colonisation. Ten years from now, in 2035, that unfortunate episode will complete two hundred years. Only a few days ago, at another event, I urged the nation to adopt the coming decade as a mission-a resolve that in these ten years, we shall free India entirely from this mindset of slavery.”

PM Modi hit the nail on the head, and what better place than Ayodhya to do so. The seven-decade delay in building the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple symbolises the lingering scars of colonised mindsets. The temple could have been constructed soon after independence and marked the conclusion of India’s struggle to reclaim its self-respect and identity.

However, opposition driven by Macaulay-Marxist influences turned it into a Hindu-Muslim issue. Their colonial mindset created misleading narratives, resulting in endless litigation, damage to Hindu-Muslim relations, and the loss of many innocent lives and properties. I have explored this topic in detail in my book-‘Tryst with Ayodhya: Decolonisation of India’.

What Modi said about the Macaulay mindset is true, but unfortunately not the whole truth. India’s influential political, intellectual, and social elite has long been influenced not only by Macaulay but also by the ideological legacy of Karl Marx. Since independence, this powerful network has worked tirelessly-both jointly and separately-to carry forward the unfinished agenda of these two, who never met but shared a hatred for India’s timeless civilisation.

Thomas Babington Macaulay was a staunch capitalist and imperialist. In contrast, Karl Marx was the pioneer of Leftist ideology, focusing on class struggle while sharply criticising capitalism. Despite their



MARX AUTHORED THIS CARICATURE WITHOUT VISITING INDIA, YET MANY OF HIS IDEOLOGICAL SUCCESSORS SPREAD THIS DISDAIN IN INDEPENDENT INDIA. SANATAN PHILOSOPHY VIEWS MAN AS PART OF THE COSMIC ORDER, NOT ITS MASTER

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The Pioneer

ideological differences, both shared a common goal: to diminish India’s presence in the minds and hearts of its people. As a result, when the British, in collusion with the Muslim League, moved the subcontinent towards an inevitable partition, the contemporary Left intelligentsia not only justified it but also mused about breaking India into more than fifteen smaller pieces.

Macaulay’s 1835 education policy aimed at shaping a class of Indians who would be “Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect”-a group that would support British rule. His policies encouraged Indians to look down on their own civilisational roots and to detach mentally from their cultural foundations. So strong was his disdain that he famously claimed the entire “native literature of India” and learning was not “worth” even a “single shelf of a good European library”.

Macaulay’s project was not merely colonial; it was deeply evangelical. Writing to his father on October 12, 1836, he

declared: “...Our English schools are flourishing wonderfully... The effect of this education on the Hindoos is prodigious. No Hindoo who has received an English education ever continues to be sincerely attached to his religion. Some continue to profess it as a matter of policy, and some embrace Christianity... It is my firm belief that, if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence...”

Macaulay’s thoughts aligned with the 1813 Charter Act of the East India Company, which encouraged European missionaries’ evangelical efforts in India. From this colonial origin, divisive ideas like the ‘Aryan Invasion Theory’, the ‘Dravidian Movement’, and the claim that “India is not a nation” arose, still influencing Indian politics and academia.

British rule in India, ironically, fulfilled Marx’s worldview, at least in one way. His satisfaction is evident in his column — ‘The Future Results of British Rule in India’-published on 8 August 1853 in the ‘New York Daily Tribune’, where he wrote: “The

British were the first conquerors superior, and therefore inaccessible to Hindoo civilisation. They destroyed it by breaking up the native communities, by uprooting the native industry, and by levelling all that was great and elevated in the native society.”

Mark these words, “they destroyed it by breaking up the native communities, by uprooting the native industry...” This sentence by Marx, over 170 years old, summarises how India was culturally and economically destroyed by colonial powers. Marx celebrated this destruction of Indian culture and industry as necessary for revolution, as culture and economics are intertwined-destroying one kills the other.

He further added in ‘The Future Results of British Rule in India’: “England has to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive-the other regenerating-the annihilation of old Asiatic society and laying the material foundations of Western society in Asia.”

Marx’s contempt for Indian traditions was further exposed in another New York Daily Tribune article, ‘The British Rule in India’, dated 25 June 1853: “...We must

not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinctions of caste and by slavery, that they subjugated man to external circumstances instead of elevating man the sovereign of circumstances, that they transformed a self-developing social state into never-changing natural destiny, and thus brought about a brutalising worship of nature, exhibiting its degradation in the fact that man, the sovereign of nature, fell down on his knees in adoration of Hanuman, the monkey, and Sabala, the cow...”

Marx authored this caricature without visiting India, yet many of his ideological successors spread this disdain in independent India. Sanatan philosophy views man as part of the cosmic order, not its master. India’s Vedic culture, with deep roots, supported a thriving economy from the first to the seventeenth century, acknowledged by global research.

The liberation from the colonial Macaulay-Marx mindset-an emancipation that should have started immediately after independence-only gained momentum after 2014, with some exceptions. The Guardian’s May 18, 2014 editorial highlighted this shift-“Narendra Modi’s victory in the elections marks the end of a long era in which the structures of power did not differ greatly from those through which Britain ruled the subcontinent. India under the Congress party was in many ways a continuation of the British Raj by other means. The last of midnight’s children are now a dwindling handful of almost 70-year-olds, but it is not the passing of the independence generation that makes the difference.”

Post-independence, there was a unanimous demand in Ayodhya from civil society, the political leadership of United Provinces (as Uttar Pradesh was called then), and the top echelons of state bureaucracy for handing over the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site to Hindus, but the colonialists led by the then Prime Minister Nehru wouldn’t let that happen.

In this context, the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya stands as a living symbol of Sanatan resurgence and a national resolve to break free from colonial consciousness.

When, amid Vedic rituals on November 25, the PM raised the standard of Sanatan in Ayodhya, it was a definitive statement about India’s civilisational renaissance and its quest to dismantle the colonial mindset. No wonder the Macaulay-Marxist pack is in a funk.

India–Russia 2025: A roadmap for building a high-tech strategic partnership



ARVIND
GUPTA



AAKASH
GUGLANI

The forthcoming visit of President Vladimir Putin marks a pivotal opportunity to redefine the India-Russia partnership beyond its long-standing hydrocarbons and defence anchors. While these pillars will remain relevant, they no longer capture the strategic or economic imperatives shaping the next decade. Both countries are investing heavily in digital public infrastructure, cyber-resilience, artificial intelligence and high-technology R&D. India’s emerging IndiaAI Mission, with its focus on compute capacity and AI safety frameworks, and Russia’s deep research base, demonstrate that both states already possess significant building blocks.

At a moment when access to compute, secure chips and AI model governance is increasingly shaped by sanctions, export controls and supply-chain chokepoints, both sides have strong incentives to explore technology cooperation that enhances strategic autonomy. Financial interoperability is also evolving, with the shift of nearly 95 per cent of bilateral trade into national-currency settlements reflecting a structural adjustment and new institutional channels, including integration between Russia’s System for Transfer of Financial Messages (SPFS) and India’s Structured Financial Messaging System (SFMS), and exploratory work on digital-rouble and digital-rupee interoperability (TASS). This moment therefore calls for a structured expansion of the partnership into emerging technologies, supported by clear institutional mechanisms that can guide, finance and sustain long-term cooperation.

First, a bilateral Technology and Innovation Commission should be established to coordinate regulatory frameworks, identify priority technologies and structure multi-year funding. India already manages such frameworks with other major partners. The EU-India Trade & Technology Council works through joint working groups on semiconductors, high-performance computing, trustworthy AI and digital governance, and has published outcomes on coordinated semiconductor value-chain mapping and High-Performance Computing cooperation (EU-India TTC). The India-U.S. TRUST (Transforming the Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technology) Initiative has begun aligning the two countries on AI governance, quantum communication, space technologies



and strategic trade, including joint quantum network testbed work and cooperation on advanced materials. A comparable architecture with Russia would allow both sides to converge on AI governance, cyber norms, export controls and IP-sharing frameworks-prerequisites for responsible co-development in critical technologies. Institutionalising cooperation also insulates critical projects from external geopolitical pressures and cyclical fluctuations in bilateral trade.

Second, India and Russia need joint technical programmes that demonstrate immediate utility and build confidence. Collaborative testbeds for AI safety, hardware design and domain-specific models-especially disaster-response and low-resource language tools-would allow both sides to pool talent and accelerate applied research. India has deployed AI systems for flood forecasting, while Russia’s EMERCOM uses AI for wildfire prediction and remote sensing, creating natural entry points for shared geospatial and emergency-response AI models. India’s Bhashini programme on low-resource languages could be coupled with Russia’s extensive work in Slavic, Turkic and Eurasian languages to develop multilingual models suited for governance and public service delivery across linguistically diverse regions. Cooperative development of secure-by-design telecom stacks and quantum-safe encryption would address vulnerabilities in critical networks, building on India’s indigenous 5G/6G research trajectory and Russia’s established applied-cryptography ecosystem, including research arms at Skolkovo. These initiatives would translate into verifiable metrics and reproducible toolkits so that technical ecosystems in both countries adopt shared

norms rather than isolated experiments.

Third, technology cooperation is sustainable only when it scales into commercial capacity, exports and employment. India and Russia could establish co-investment vehicles that blend public and private capital to support joint ventures in secure chips, telecom hardware, trusted cloud infrastructure and enterprise cybersecurity products. In telecom and cloud infrastructure, Indian manufacturers of 4G/5G radios and Russian producers of secure network appliances could collaborate to serve markets in the Global South seeking sovereign digital-infrastructure alternatives.

Creating mutually recognised certification standards will help firms enter each other’s markets and extend into other geographies.

Talent pipelines-through joint fellowships, translational engineering programmes and start-up incubators-would convert research prototypes into manufacturable products and deepen industrial interdependence in high-innovation sectors. The innovation ecosystems of Start-up India and the Skolkovo Innovation Center, which houses hundreds of deep-tech start-ups, provide platforms for early-stage bilateral ventures.

Diversification into AI, cyber and R&D is a strategic necessity. Reliance on oil and defence hardware confines the relationship to sectors exposed to price shocks, sanctions regimes and procurement cycles. A broader technological partnership builds resilience by embedding cooperation in multiple layers of each economy. It also leverages strong complementarities: India’s scale in digital services, data governance and software talent aligns with Russia’s strengths in fundamental research, mathematical modelling, systems engineering and applied cryptography. Together, these can generate innovations that neither side can achieve independently.

A three-stage roadmap-institutionalising governance, operationalising joint programmes and scaling industrial capacity-provides a structured way into long-term capability. The 2025 Summit offers an inflexion point to embed this approach in the broader strategic partnership. If both countries act with sustained commitment, India-Russia cooperation can move decisively beyond legacy sectors and position itself around the technologies that will shape economic competitiveness and national security in the decade ahead.

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NANDAN
JAIN

When leadership truly possesses the will to solve a problem, even the toughest challenges eventually bow down. The remarkable decline of Naxalism the country is witnessing today is a direct outcome of the unwavering resolve displayed by both the Central and State governments. Permanent peace is now gaining ground in Bastar, which was once known as the epicentre of Naxalism.

Faced with relentless administrative and strategic efforts, Naxal cadres are now surrendering or being eliminated in security operations. On the other side, villages that were cut off from progress for decades are finally witnessing the presence of roads, electricity, healthcare, education, and other essential facilities. The same tribal population that past governments and Maoists misled and kept away from democracy is today stepping into the mainstream of development. Even though Naxalism is now on its last breath, its decades-old wounds are deep and painful. The killing of hundreds of soldiers and innocent civilians, the deprivation of entire generations of development, and the perpetuation of an atmosphere of fear are all horrific legacies of Naxalism. In the early 2000s, Naxalism had reached its peak. Then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh described it as the “most serious internal security threat” to India, yet due to political hesitation and lack of resolve, successive Congress governments failed to take decisive action.

During those years, Naxal terror spread beyond Bastar to Rajnandgaon, Kawardha, and Gariaband. Their goal was to hoist the red flag from Dantewada to Delhi, which was actively supported by an urban ideological network. But the then governments ignored this serious threat, as a result of which about 200 districts came under the grip of Maoist terror and development was badly affected. In contrast, the current Modi government is moving forward with the firm vision of making India a developed nation by 2047. The government clearly understood that the country could not achieve full development by leaving Naxal-affected areas to fend for themselves. The results of strong will and firm action are evident today.

Today, not only Bastar but the entire Dandakaranya region is eager to write a new chapter of development. This region is linked to Lord Rama’s exile. Rampal village in Bastar, the



Ramaram Temple (Sukma), Rakashahara, and Kanger Valley National Park in Bastar are also associated with Lord Rama. Bastar is now freeing itself from the ravages of Naxalism. The glory of Lord Rama is being re-established here once again. Under the guidance of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji and Union Home Minister Amit Shah ji, the Vishnu Deo Sai government is committed to establishing Ram Rajya here. That is the difference between governance driven by intent and governance weakened by indifference. But it is unfortunate that the opposition of the country is also looking at this success through negative lenses. Some politicians are now promoting the idea that the fight against Naxalism is only an excuse to acquire

land for industrial interests. Even more dangerous, some political rhetoric portrays Naxalites as protectors of tribals and forest preservers. This is a clear attempt to keep alive a brutal, violent ideology-a very dangerous sign for the future.

Nurturing violence in the name of Hidma

Some people have emerged as sympathisers of Hidma, the Naxalite commander recently killed in an encounter. Some are even trying to portray him as the protector of Bastar. But there is a need to be cautious of this political move. Hidma was not innocent; his hands were stained with the blood of hundreds of people. To glorify such a violent figure or portray him as an ideal or a symbol is tantamount to fostering Naxalism. How can this notorious killer be a role model for Bastar?

Please read the complete article online at <https://www.dailypioneer.com>

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The Pioneer

FROM THE WORLD

SOUTH SUDAN

Hijacked aid plane rescued

A gunman hijacked a small turboprop plane belonging to an evangelical Christian aid group in South Sudan on Tuesday, demanding the pilot fly the aircraft to Chad, police said. The suspect was arrested hours later after the plane landed in a northern town. No one was injured and an investigation into the incident was underway. The aircraft – a Cessna Grand Caravan, owned and operated by Samaritan’s Purse – left Juba, South Sudan’s Capital, in the morning when the gunman took control of the plane. The aircraft was carrying medical supplies to the far northeast county of Maiwut, where Samaritan’s Purse is providing medical assistance. Police said the gunman had snuck onto the plane and hid in the rear cabin before takeoff.

TUNISIA

Prominent lawyer detained

Tunisian police has arrested prominent opposition lawyer and longtime human rights defender Ayachi Hammami at his home outside the capital, acting on a five-year prison sentence issued against him last week in a prominent “conspiracy against state security” case, his family said. Hammami is among at least 40 individuals, including politicians and business figures, who were handed down sentences of between two and 45 years in prison in the same case. Rights groups including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International condemned the charges as politically driven and part of a broader systematic effort by President Kais Saied to quash dissent in the country once known as the birthplace of the Arab Spring.

The crisis of Western countries closing their doors to immigrants



SURJIT SINGH FLORA

For some time now, Western countries have been under heavy pressure on immigration due to the global economic crisis. Due to the constant opposition of the local people, these countries are continuously tightening and restricting their immigration policies. Although Canada, the US, and other Western countries are trying to maintain their human face by announcing new immigration targets. Actually, the situation of Western nations shutting their borders to immigrants arises from intricate political and social dynamics, resulting in policies that limit immigration due to worries about security, economic pressure, and cultural effects. This has resulted in actions such as heightened border controls, more stringent asylum regulations, and lowered immigration targets, even in nations with significant demand for immigration like Canada. Critics contend that these policies stem from fear and political pressure, undermining the economic and social fabric of nations and possibly pushing migrants toward more perilous routes, thereby benefiting traffickers. Countries, including Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, and Sweden, have increased the length of their border checks as a result of the perceived dangers of “irregular migration.” Furthermore, a statement by US President Trump has created a lot of fear

and doubts in the immigrant communities. After two National Guardsmen were shot dead by a suspected Afghan national in Washington, DC, President Trump has said that he will permanently close the entry of people from the third world into the US. The suspected Afghan national had previously successfully obtained US immigration by claiming compassion for helping US troops in Afghanistan. The president criticized the immigration policies of former President Biden’s administration for bringing such people into the United States. In his second term, Trump’s raids and deportations have ravaged communities across the United States. The administration promised to focus on people with criminal records and those convicted of violence, but many law-abiding residents and even US citizens have sometimes faced ICE and Customs and Border Protection officers. Several judges have criticized the administration for failing to provide due process to people facing deportation. Some who had never been convicted of a crime in the United States were sent to a notorious prison in El Salvador. He announced an immediate ban on immigration from third-world countries, saying that immigrants who pose a threat to the country’s security have no right to live in the United States. They also announced the closure of federal benefits and subsidies to temporary immigrants. Although they did not name any third-world countries, they have announced a ban on immigration applications from all Afghan citizens living in the United States. However, Trump aims to “shut the border” to “developing nations.” This phrase from the Cold War era is no longer

relevant and lacks precision, yet he selected it deliberately. Scholars have consistently criticized the term “third world” for its tendency to homogenize diverse countries based on race. Trump employs it as it primarily serves as a political term for areas with diverse populations. In contemporary political discourse, the phrase “third world” pertains to the restriction of migration from regions predominantly inhabited by Black, Brown, and Asian populations, including Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. The concept lacks originality. This trend signifies a regression to America before 1965, when immigration policies were overtly rooted in racial considerations. Through his executive order, Trump has unified the immigration, asylum, refugee admission, visa, family reunification, and work permit systems under a single goal: exclusion. While talking about “closing the border,” Trump conflates several legal concepts that are essential to the immigration system, including asylum, admitting refugees, visas, family reunification, and employment migration. Substantiating immigration is under the purview of the president under INA 212(f) and 215(a). No president has the authority to do away with the court system. Trump v. Hawaii maintained the Muslim ban without endorsing a freeze, according to the judgment. It made suspensions pertaining to security more malleable. A global ban on non-white areas would violate the rights to equal treatment and due process. The project proves that a president can use racial classifications to exclude entire communities, regardless of what the courts decide. Not only the third-world countries—the

US administration has advised Canada and other Western countries to control immigration through its state message. Although the Canadian Immigration Minister has expressed ignorance of this American directive, the arrival of temporary residents and international students has been further reduced under the immigration policy of 2026-28 announced by Canada. There will be 5 per cent fewer foreign nationals living in Canada temporarily by the end of 2027, according to the government’s plan. In 2026, the goal for new temporary residents is 385,000, and in 2027 and 2028, it rises to 370,000. Of the 33,000 individuals who applied for work permits in 2026 and 2027, the government has decided to award permanent residency. Nevertheless, there are no predetermined goals for those applying for refugee status, study or work permits in Canada, electronic visas, or temporary residence visas. There will be a halt to individual refugee applications until 2027, though. The number of pending refugee applications is 90,000. In the meantime, European nations have implemented significant alterations to their immigration policies. In 2015, numerous European nations dedicated themselves to aiding millions of Syrian and Afghan refugees, along with individuals from various other countries around the globe. Countries such as Germany have embraced a culture of hospitality and compassion towards refugees. In addition to Germany, several other European nations that once embraced refugees are now turning them away. Denmark was among the pioneering nations in Europe to impose stricter immigration regulations. Various other European nations have

adopted the stringent regulations that Denmark implemented in 2019. Frederiksen, the Danish Prime Minister, has unveiled a new deportation law that allows refugees to return to their countries of origin. The Government has shut down and, in certain instances, even razed social housing estates where over fifty percent of the residents were from non-Western backgrounds, which had turned into centers of crime and poverty. In November, the Labour Government under UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced a major overhaul of the country’s refugee policy, which is now among the harshest in Europe. Reforms by the UK Home Secretary have led to 400,000 refugee claims in four years. Since 2023, net migration to Britain has dropped by roughly 80 per cent. The British Government has raised the permanent residency waiting time to 20 years, like Denmark. This period will assess applicants every 2.5 years. Deportation if a country is safe during this time. Legal migrants entering Britain will now take 10 years to become permanent residents, up from five. Employed claimants lose housing and weekly payments. Refugees cannot rely on family to stay in Britain. Many Western countries worry about immigration. This has been a major issue for Western countries. Immigration issues with this problem have centered in Britain. Many residents have protested in the streets. A riot has occurred. Violence against refugees is rising. In this environment, Government rigidity makes sense.

The writer is a freelance writer and journalist who lives in Brampton, Canada

EU updates asylum guidance for Syrians

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Barcelona

The European Union on Wednesday issued updated guidance for asylum applications by Syrian nationals that reflects new conditions in Syria a year after the fall of the Bashar Assad. The changes may influence the result of asylum requests of some 110,000 Syrians who were still awaiting an asylum decision at the end of September. The European Union Agency for Asylum said opponents of Assad and military service evaders “are no longer at risk of persecution.” But the agency said other groups may be considered at risk in the post-Assad Syria, including people affiliated with the former government and members of the Alawites, Christians, and Druze ethnic-religious groups. While decisions on asylum applications are



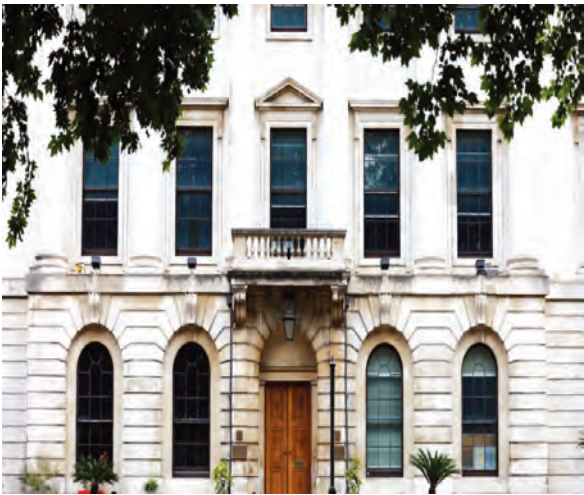
made at a national level, the agency’s guidance is used to inform the 27 EU member states, as well as Norway and Switzerland. The goal is to create greater coherence between the 29 nations granting international protection. The number of Syrians requesting asylum dropped significantly from 16,000 in October 2024, before the fall of Assad, to 3,500 in September 2025. Still, Syrians had the most number of cases awaiting a decision at first instance. Syria’s conflict that began in March 2011 killed nearly half a million people and displaced half the country’s pre-war population of 23 million. More than 5 million Syrians fled the country as refugees. While most sought refuge in neighboring countries like Turkey, many also went to Europe, contributing to the continent’s refugee crisis in 2015. The asylum agency said the situation in

Syria is “considered improved but volatile” since Assad’s fall in December 2024, and that “indiscriminate violence continues to take place” in certain parts of Syria. Many Syrians had high hopes after Assad was brought down in an offensive by insurgent groups in early December. However, sectarian killings against members of Assad’s Alawite minority sect in Syria’s coastal region and against the Druze minority in the southern province of Sweida earlier this year has claimed hundreds of lives. Still, the agency said it now considers Damascus, the capital, to be safe. The agency also cited two other groups living in Syria who should remain eligible for refugee status: LGBTQ+ people and Palestinians in Syria who no longer receive United Nations assistance or protection.

China blasts UK for delaying decision again on massive London embassy

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Beijing

China on Wednesday blasted the UK Government’s latest delay in deciding whether to approve the construction of a huge Chinese Embassy in London. British authorities said Tuesday that a planned decision by December 10 would be pushed back to January 20, following mounting security concerns. “The UK’s repeated delay in granting approval is completely unjustified and the reasons they cited are untenable,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said, when asked about the development. The Government is “strongly dissatisfied,” he added. The plans for the embassy close to London’s financial district and sensitive data cables have been stalled for years. The pro-



posed structure at Royal Mint Court, near the Tower of London, would be the largest embassy in Europe, covering 20,000 square metres (about 215,000 square feet). Critics have raised concerns that the building would be used as a base for

Macron arrives in China for talks with Xi on trade ties

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Beijing

Emmanuel Macron arrived in China on Wednesday for a three-day State visit focusing on trade and diplomatic talks as the French president seeks to enlist Beijing in pressuring Russia toward a ceasefire with Ukraine. Macron will advocate for an agenda of cooperation in economic and trade matters aimed at achieving a balance that ensures “sustainable, solid growth that benefits everyone,” his office said. France is aiming to attract more investment from Chinese companies and facilitate market access for French exports. During the visit, officials from both nations are expected to sign several agreements in the energy, food industry, and aviation sectors. Macron is committed to defend “fair and reciprocal market access,” his office said. He and his wife Brigitte wore open overcoats against the winter chill as they stepped off a plane after nightfall at an airport in Beijing and walked down a red-carpeted jetway. They were greeted by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who spoke with Macron before the French leader and his wife departed in a limousine. They are expected to visit the 18th-century Qianlong Garden complex in the Forbidden City, the former palace of China’s emperors, on Wednesday evening. The garden, which dates from the Qing dynasty, recently reopened to the public after a major renovation. France will host the Group of Seven summit in 2026 involving the world’s most advanced economies, while China will chair the 21-member Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, which includes the United States, South Korea, Japan, Australia, and Russia. The 27-nation bloc runs a massive trade deficit with



China—over 300 billion euros (\$348 billion) last year. China alone represents 46 per cent of France’s total trade deficit. France and the European Union have described China as a partner, competitor and systemic rival. Recent years have been marked by multiple trade disputes across a range of industries after the EU undertook a probe into Chinese electric vehicles subsidies. China responded with investigations into imports of European brandy, pork and dairy products. In July, Macron welcomed exemptions for most cognac producers as a positive step. France is China’s first supplier of wine and spirits. Macron’s talks with President Xi Jinping will also address Russia’s war in Ukraine, particularly following a meeting Monday in Paris with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to discuss potential terms for a ceasefire. “What we want is that China can convince and influence Russia to move toward a ceasefire as quickly as possible and consolidate that ceasefire through negotiations which, in our view, should lead to solid security guarantees for Ukraine,” a French top diplomatic official said. Paris expects Beijing to “refrain from providing Russia with any means whatsoever to continue the war,”

the official said, speaking anonymously in line with the French presidency’s customary practices. China’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said last week that Beijing believes in “dialogue and negotiation” to resolve the Ukraine war and supports “all efforts” leading to peace. Since the beginning of the Ukraine conflict, China “has played a constructive role in promoting a political resolution of the crisis,” she said. On Thursday, Macron will meet with Xi at the Great Hall of the People. Both leaders will then participate in a Franco-Chinese business forum. In the afternoon, Macron’s agenda includes talks with Zhao Leji, chairman of the National People’s Congress, and Chinese Premier Li Qiang. The French presidential couple will then travel to Chengdu in China’s Sichuan province. On Friday, Macron and Xi will have talks in Duijiangyan, on the site of one of the world’s oldest irrigation system. Macron will later meet with students from the Sichuan University. Chengdu is also home to the Conservation and Research Centre for the Giant Panda, where Yuan Meng, the first giant panda born in France that was named by first lady Brigitte Macron, is now staying.

UK medical team to assist in Zia’s treatment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Dhaka

A four-member specialist medical team from the UK arrived in Bangladesh on Wednesday to assist in the treatment of former prime minister Khaleda Zia, who remains in a critical condition in a private hospital. The delegation, led by Dr Richard Buell, visited Evercare Hospital soon after arrival and reviewed the condition of the 80-year-old Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairperson. The UK doctors also held an initial round of discussions with the local medical team treating her, it said, quoting hospital sources. Buell arrived in Dhaka in the morning, BNP media cell member Shayrul Kabir Khan was quoted as saying by the state-run BSS news agency.

Khan hoped the arrival of foreign specialists will mark significant progress in Zia’s ongoing medical care. Meanwhile, Bangladesh’s interim government directed Army and Air Force helicopters to conduct test landings near the hospital where Zia is undergoing treatment. A message from Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus’ Office said the “experimental landings and takeoffs would be carried out between 1200 and 1600 hours” on Thursday at two open fields near Evercare Hospital under the Special Security Force (SSF) protocol, news portal bdnews24.Com reported. The interim government on Monday declared Zia a “very, very important person”, enabling the deployment of SSF for her protection.

Venezuela to continue accepting deported migrants

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Caracas

US-operated flights returning deported migrants to Venezuela will continue despite President Donald Trump’s assertion that the airspace of the South American country should be considered closed. The government of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on Tuesday announced that the twice weekly flights will go on following a request from the Trump administration. That reverses a Venezuelan government Saturday announcement indicating that US immigration authorities had unilaterally suspended the flights. An overflight and landing application submitted Monday by US-based Eastern Airlines requests permission for an arrival Wednesday. The application was made public Tuesday by Venezuela’s foreign affairs minister.



James Solomon elected as Jersey City mayor

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Jersey City

James Solomon has been elected mayor of Jersey City, thwarting former New Jersey Governor Jim McGreevey’s bid for a political comeback. Solomon, a city council member since 2017, defeated McGreevey on Tuesday in a runoff after they finished first and second in a general election last month with seven candidates on the ballot. Neither man received more than 50 per cent of the November 4 vote, sending the contest to an extra round. Solomon, 41, said he ran for mayor to make New Jersey’s second-largest city more affordable, echoing national concerns about the cost of living. New development catering to affluent New York City commuters is driving overall prices higher, and the city is struggling with a budget shortfall that threatens to hike property taxes.



4 senior diplomats honoured at UN for contributions to global peace

ASSOCIATED PRESS
United Nations

Four eminent diplomats have been honoured at the UN for their contributions towards advancing peace and security across the world.

The recipients of the annual Diwali 'Power of One' Awards were former Acting Permanent Representative of US to the UN Ambassador Jonathan Raphael Cohen; President of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly and former Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the UN Dennis Francis; former Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the UN Ambassador Darja Bavdaz Kuret; and former Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the UN Magzhan Ilyassov.

They were felicitated at a special ceremony held in the UN headquarters on Tuesday, co-organised by the Permanent Missions of Andorra, Armenia, Belarus, Chile, El Salvador, Eritrea, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Moldova, Morocco, Sri Lanka, and Zambia to the UN; the UN Alliance of Civilisations; the Diwali Foundation USA and the National Advisory Council South Asian Affairs.

Addressing the event attended by senior UN officials and members of the Indian-American community, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish said even as the world faces difficult circumstances, the spirit of Diwali symbolises the triumph of light over darkness. "We will find ways to work together, to



Permanent Representative of India to UN Parvathaneni Harish addressing the gathering during 'The Power of One - Diwali Awards' at UN Headquarters in New York City

face the challenges and to overcome those challenges, to collaborate for the benefit of our citizens, to collaborate for every person around the world who needs help.

"We will work for solutions to remove conflict... Save our environment and find cooperative solutions so that peace and security shall prevail," he said. Chair of Diwali Foundation USA Ranju Batra, who had spearheaded efforts for over seven years to get a commemorative 'Forever Diwali' stamp issued by the US Postal Service in 2016, said Diwali carries a universal message that hope is stronger than despair, good must prevail over evil, and that light must overcome darkness. "Today we gather to harness

the light of Diwali, a festival that in its essence, celebrates those same very ideals," Batra said.

Ravi Batra, Indian-American attorney and Chair of the National Advisory Council South Asian Affairs, said diplomacy is the difference between war and peace and praised the awardees as "world-class diplomats" inducted into a symbolic "diplomatic Hall of Fame".

Often described as the 'Oscars of Diplomacy', the awards are presented to former Permanent Representatives or senior UN officials who have "toiled selflessly to help form a more perfect, peaceful and secure world for all". Diwali Foundation USA was estab-

lished in 2017 to promote a peaceful and consensus-based process to achieve societal good, a statement said. The Foundation instituted 'The Power of One' awards to celebrate and highlight the important work done in a peaceful manner, especially at the United Nations.

Previous recipients include former UN Assistant Secretary General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women Lakshmi Puri, former UN chief Ban Ki-moon, and several former Permanent Representatives, including Mirsada Colakovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Kim Sook (South Korea), Miroslav (Slovakia), Matthew Rycroft (UK), Kaha Imnadze (Georgia), and Keisha McGuire (Grenada).

Sri Lanka declares 22 districts as disaster zones

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Colombo

Sri Lanka on Wednesday declared 22 of the country's 25 administrative districts as 'disaster zones' even as a special cabinet meeting approved supplementary expenditure estimates for recovery work in the aftermath of Ditwah.

At least 474 deaths and 356 persons went missing as landslides, floods and heavy rains due to the powerful Cyclone Ditwah last week.

As the island nation continues to pick up pieces, the special cabinet meeting, headed by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, was crucial for the handling of the recovery process in the Ditwah aftermath, officials said. Leader of the House and senior minister Bimal Rathnayake told Parliament that the special cabinet meeting approved the supplementary estimates for disaster recovery work to give people relief from this unexpected disaster. It will be referred to Parliament's committee on public finance for approval, he said. He, however, gave no other details.

Earlier in the day, the Government named 22 of the country's 25 administrative districts as disaster zones under an extraordinary gazette under the Registration of Deaths Act of 2010. "All districts other than the three southern districts are included (in the notification). This was done in view of the large number of deaths reported and the number of disappearances recorded so far in the Ditwah devastation," the officials added. As of Wednesday,



Indian Navy distributing relief material brought by INS Vikrant in the aftermath of Cyclone Ditwah in Sri Lanka

over 1.4 million people have been affected, with more than 2,33,000 sheltering in 1,441 relief centres, the Government data said.

Sri Lanka's total economic loss from Cyclone Ditwah is estimated to be between \$6 billion and 7 billion, which is roughly 3-5 per cent of the island nation's GDP, Prabath Chandrakirthi, Commissioner General of Essential Services, told reporters here.

Meanwhile, Disaster Management Centre (DMC) said in a UN and international agencies supported rapid needs assessment report that Ditwah destroyed crops, flooded farmland, damaged fishing and livestock sectors and severely disrupted market access. "These raise serious concerns about worsening food shortages and rising prices across the island," the DMC added.

India expands humanitarian AID

India has continued its humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka under Operation Sagar Bandhu, with extensive air, sea and ground

operations delivering urgent relief to those affected by Cyclone Ditwah, the Indian High Commission said on Wednesday.

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

At least 479 people have been killed and 350 missing as of Wednesday evening due to catastrophic floods and landslides caused by extreme weather conditions since November 16.

The Disaster Management Centre (DMC) said at least 1,614,790 people and 455,405 families have been affected by the disaster. "Indian rescue teams continued large-scale life-saving evacuations across multiple districts, bringing vulnerable residents from remote and inaccessible areas to safety," the Indian High Commission said. In Puttalam, NDRF personnel rescued individuals in distress - including expectant mothers, those requiring immediate medical

attention - and delivered essential supplies to nearly 800 stranded people through difficult, door-to-door operations, it said.

"Across the central region, Indian Air Force helicopters carried out critical missions, air-dropping more than 5.5 tonnes of relief material and conducting high-risk extractions from locations where landing was impossible," the Indian High Commission said. "Several severely injured survivors were winched up from a remote area near Ganthuna and flown to Rivisanda for emergency treatment," it added.

In close coordination with the Sri Lankan Air Force, the Indian Air Force IFC 1885 flew essential relief to Poramadulla and transported personnel from Nuwara Eliya to support ongoing response efforts.

"The IAF IFC 1875 helicopter further intensified these operations by airlifting more than 2,000 kilograms of essential goods to Mandaram Nuwara and evacuating people in urgent need of medical care," it said.

Putin in Delhi: A stress test for India's strategic autonomy



As Russian President Vladimir Putin arrives in New Delhi for the 23rd Annual Summit on December 4-5, 2025, the moment carries significance far beyond diplomatic ritual. This is Putin's first visit to India since the Ukraine war began over three years ago - a conflict that has reordered global alignments and sharpened divisions.

The summit is a defining moment that will test the resilience of a historic partnership and illuminate the contours of India's strategic autonomy amid intensifying great-power rivalry.

India's long-standing "special and privileged" partnership with Russia has deep roots, but the Russia of 2025 is markedly different. Under Western sanctions and increasing global isolation, Moscow has moved closer to Beijing, enhancing China's leverage and shifting Eurasia's strategic geometry. For India, which faces its principal security challenge from China, this altered dynamic complicates the foundations of its Russia policy. The summit thus

becomes a careful balancing act: reaffirming an old partnership while navigating a world in which Moscow's choices are increasingly shaped by Beijing's strategic calculus.

Understanding the weight of Putin's visit requires revisiting the architecture of India-Russia ties. Born out of the 1971 Indo-Soviet Treaty, the partnership has long been anchored in defence cooperation, strategic trust, and diplomatic support. Soviet backing during the Bangladesh War and assistance in India's early defence modernisation created goodwill unmatched by any other major power.

Yet this history is more nuanced than nostalgic narratives suggest. Russian support has been steady but never unconditional. During crises with Pakistan, Moscow condemned terrorism but consistently called for restraint to maintain regional balance and protect emerging ties with Islamabad. This was not betrayal but realpolitik - a reminder that the relationship, while strong, was never an alliance insulated from competing interests.

This complexity endures. Nearly 65-70 percent of India's military platforms still originate in Russia, creating deep interdependence for spares, maintenance, and

upgrades. Defence cooperation remains significant, though no longer the central engine of ties. The recent ratification of the Reciprocal Exchange of Logistic Support agreement by Russia's State Duma underscores ongoing military interoperability, but the relationship is now shaped by broader strategic and economic factors.

The most dramatic shift in recent years has been India's pivot to Russian energy. Since 2022, discounted crude imports surged from \$13.1 billion in 2021-22 to nearly \$69 billion in 2024-25, making Russia India's largest supplier. These purchases cushioned the Indian economy from global shocks while

offering Moscow crucial financial relief.

Simultaneously, India has deliberately reduced its dependence on Russian military hardware. Under Aatmanirbhar Bharat and diversification efforts, India has deepened defence partnerships with the US, France, Israel, and domestic private players. Russia's share in India's arms imports fell from 76 percent in 2009-2013 to 36 percent in 2019-2023. The defence relationship now centres more on sustaining existing joint projects than initiating new ones. Trust remains, but dependency is diminishing.

India's Russia policy has inevitably drawn strong reac-

tions from Washington. The Trump administration has applied overt pressure - imposing tariffs of up to 50 percent on Indian goods and threatening punitive measures under proposed legislation like the Sanctioning Russia Act of 2025. For India, the US is indispensable for technology, digital infrastructure, capital investment, defence co-development, and balancing China's rise. Yet Washington's insistence that India scale back ties with Moscow highlights the tension between India's strategic autonomy and America's alliance-centric worldview.

Against this backdrop, the Putin-Modi summit will priori-

tise stability over dramatic breakthroughs. India will seek clarity on pending defence deliveries such as the final S-400 units, explore joint production under Aatmanirbhar Bharat, and stabilise the rupee-rouble trade mechanism.

With future oil flows uncertain, New Delhi will push for greater export access in pharmaceuticals, agro-products, engineering goods, and machinery. Beyond deals, the summit itself will serve as strategic signalling: India reasserting independent judgement, and Russia demonstrating it retains influential partners beyond Beijing. The China factor is impossible to ignore. China's expanding partnership

with Pakistan, its assertiveness along the LAC, and its growing influence across Eurasia shape the limits of Russian support for India. Moscow cannot afford to antagonise Beijing; its Asian choices are increasingly constrained by dependence on China. This structural reality restricts how far Russia can align with India on issues involving Chinese aggression. India may prefer a Russia more strategically autonomous from China, but today that autonomy is limited.

Ultimately, Putin's visit captures India's larger foreign-policy challenge: preserving a traditional partnership crucial for defence sustainment and energy security while deepen-

ing ties with the West essential for technology, capital, and Indo-Pacific stability. The success of the summit will lie not in the number of agreements signed but in the strategic space India manages to preserve.

By hosting Putin while navigating a complex partnership with the United States, India signals that although the age of non-alignment has passed, the ethos of strategic independence remains central. In an era of geopolitical polarisation, India's refusal to be boxed into camps is not ambiguity-it is strategy.

The writer is a political commentator, former journalist and teaches Political Science at DDU Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur



Can Fin Homes Ltd
(Sponsor: CANARA BANK)

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Website: www.canfinhomes.com CIN No - L85110KA1987PLC008699

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

Sale notice for sale of immovable properties
E-auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002
NOTICE is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the **Physical possession** of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Can Fin Homes Ltd., **Mandideep Branch**, will be sold by holding e-auction on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on **08-01-2025** for recovery of **Rs. 33,01,419 (Rupees Thirty Three Lakhs One Thousand Four Hundred Nineteen only)** due to Can Fin Homes Ltd. from **Rajani Saxena and Manish Saxena (Borrowers)** as on 03-12-2025 together with further interest and other charges thereon. The reserve price will be **Rs. 9,70,000/- (Rupees Nine Lakhs Seventy Thousand only)** and the earnest money deposit will be **Rs. 97,000/- (Rupees Ninety Seven Thousand only)**

DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY
Flat No 403, Four Floor, Plot No 198, Prakesh Tower, Kaushal Nagar, Village Bhairapur, Tehsil Huzur, District Bhopal, pin 462026 M.P. Boundaries : East- other plot, West- Plot No. 402, North- Other plot, South- Stairs & Lobby
The detailed terms and conditions of the sale are provided in the official website of CanFin Homes Ltd., (<https://www.canfinhomes.com/SearchAuction.aspx>). Link for participating in e-auction : www.bankauctionwizard.com
Date : 03-12-2025
Place : Mandideep

(Sd/-) Authorised Officer
Canfin Homes Ltd.

Office of The Executive Engineer P.W.D DIVISION RAISEN (M.P.)
Tender Notice

NIT No. 23/SAC/2025-26/Raisen
Raisen, Date- 28-11-2025

Online Tender for mentioned below are being invited. The Tender have been uploaded on the e-Procurement system of Public Works Department on the Portal www.mptenders.gov.in Tender details are as below :-

S. No.	Tender ID	District	Nature of work	Name of work	Call No.	Cost of Project (PAC) (Rs. In lack)	Remark
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	2025_PWDRB_465249_1	Raisen	Repair work	PATCH REPAIR AND SHOULDER REPAIR ON VARIOUS ROADS DAMAGED DURING RAIN PERIOD SUB DIVISIONS UNDER DIVISION RAISEN	1st	80.00	
2	2025_PWDRB_465300_1	Raisen	Repair work	REPAIR WORK OF CULVERT ON VARIOUS ROADS DAMAGED DURING RAIN PERIOD SUB DIVISIONS UNDER DIVISION RAISEN	1st	80.00	
3	2025_PWDRB_465328_1	Raisen	Repair work	REPAIRING OF CULVERT ON VARIOUS ROADS SUB DIVISIONS UNDER DIVISION RAISEN	1st	30.00	
4	2025_PWDRB_465336_1	Raisen	Repair work	BT PATCH REPAIR WORK IN OBEDULLAGANJ AND GOHARGANJ UNDER SUB DIVISION OBEDULLAGANJ.	1st	25.00	
				Total		215.00	

The document can only be purchased online from the above website after making online payment. The last date & time for purchase of Document on line is **Dated 19.12.2025 up to (17:30.)** Detailed NIT and other details can be viewed on the above mentioned portal. Amendments to NIT, if any, will be published on website only, and not in newspaper.

Executive Engineer
PWD Division Raisen

G-22243/25



Canara Bank

Canara Bank, Specialised ARM Branch.
Plot no. 4, PSP Area, Near AIIMS, Saket Nagar Bhopal Tel.: 8989014648

E-AUCTION (SALE NOTICE)

APPENDIX-IV-A (See proviso to rule 8(6) & 6(2))

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF MOVABLE & IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES
E-auction Sale Notice For Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rules 8(6) & 6(2) of The Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) & Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged / charged to the secured creditor, the **Possession** of which has been taken by the authorised officer the **Canara Bank (secured creditor)** will be sold on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS, AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" & WHAT EVER THERE IS" on 24/12/2025 for recovery of bank dues to the **Canara Bank (secured creditor)**

Name and address of the Borrower & Guarantors	Description of Property	Demand Notice Dt. Possession Dt. Outstanding Amt.	Reserve Price EMD Amt. Bid Increment Amt.
Borrower & Mortgagor : M/s Krishna Ware House, Proprietor: Pushpa Bai Thakur W/o Shri Prakash Singh Thakur H No 27 Ward No 1, Tekapur Colony Gairatganj Raisen-464884 Guarantor & Mortgagor : Shri Prakash Singh Thakur S/o Raghunath Singh Thakur	Mortgage of the Diverted land Survey no. 58/1/2 admeasuring 1.2150 hect. Situated at Village-Tekapur Colony, Ward No.-1, Village - Tekapargadi, Patwadi Halka No. District - Raisen - 30, Tehsil Gairatganj, - Boundaries- East: Land of Shri Jawahar Singh, West: Land of Shri Preetam Singh, North: Land of Shri Sachin, South: Road, Symbolic Possession BAANKNET PROPERTY ID: CNRB312829744 COORDINATES: 23.24372, 78.1240	16/10/2024 17/12/2024 as on 04/12/2025	₹ 1,14,00,000/- ₹ 11,40,000/- ₹ 10000/-
Borrowers : M/s Aaradhya Polymers & Packaging Plot No. 13-B, Sector-C, Industrial Area, Mandideep, Distt. Raisen Sagar Khandelwal s/o Brijmohan Khandelwal (Proprietor) Shri Ramesh Chand Gupta S/o Keshav Dev Gupta (Guarantor) Smt. Shantabai W/o Sh. Moolchand Ji Dharamani (Guarantor)	EMT of land situated at survey No. 142/3/2, PH No. 17, Gram Barkheda Kalan, Nasrullaganj, Sehore M.P. Bounded by: East :Other open land West : Road, North :Other open land, South :Other open land Physical Possession BAANKNET PROPERTY ID: CNRBARA COORDINATES: 22.664135, 77.212043	14-12-2018 10-07-2019 as on 04/12/2025	₹ 17,37,000/- ₹ 1,73,700/- ₹ 10000/-
Borrower : Mrs. Vaishali Singh Alias Mrs. Vaishali Talde W/o Rahul Singh 347, Durgesh Vihar, Near CIPET College, J K Road, Huzur Bhopal MP- 462023	Flat no. S-2, 2nd Floor, constructed on Plot No. 133 & 134, situated at Arihant Tower, Amaltes Grih Nirman Sahkari Sanstha Mydr, Swarn Kunj, Katara, P.H. No. 25/43, Ward No- 85, Bhopal, Area- 44.14 sq mt or 475 sq ft. Owner: Mrs. Vaishali Talde Boundaries: East- flat No S-04, West- Road, North-Flat No S-01, South-Other Plot, Owner- Mrs. Vaishali Talde BAANKNET PROPERTY ID: CNRBVAISHALI Symbolic Possession LATITUDE: 23.167187, LONGITUDE: 77.489035	04.03.2025 08.05.2025 as on 04/12/2025	₹ 13,78,000/- ₹ 1,37,800/- ₹ 10,000/-

Last date for submission of online bids is on or before 23/12/2025 upto 5.00 p.m.
Date and Time of e-auction : 24/12/2025, 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM (With unlimited extension of 5 minutes duration each)

1) The intending bidders shall deposit above mentioned Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) being 10% of the Reserve Price in E- Wallet of M/s PSB Alliance Private Limited (banknet.com) portal directly or by generating the Challan therein to deposit the EMD through RTGS/NEFT in the account details as mentioned in the said challan, on above mentioned date of bid submission.
2) The successful bidder shall deposit 25% of the sale price (inclusive of EMD already paid), immediately on the sale being knocked down in his/her favour and the balance within 15 days from the date of confirmation of sale. If the successful bidder fails to pay the sale price as stated above, the deposit made by him shall be forfeited.
3) All charges for conveyance, stamp duty/GST registration charges etc., as applicable and any taxes, revenue/dues to any local authority etc shall be borne by the successful bidder only
4) For sale proceeds of Rs. 50,00,000 (Rupees Fifty lacs) and above, the successful bidder will have to deduct TDS at the rate 1% on the Sale proceeds and submit the original receipt of TDS certificate to the Bank.
For detailed terms and conditions of the sale please refer web portal : <http://BAANKNET.com> or may contact : Chief Manager, SPLSD ARM Bhopal, Canara Bank, Plot no. 4, PSP Area, Near AIIMS, Saket Nagar Bhopal. Contact no. 8989014648, 8057766078, 9755569030 9691096410, 9123403299 (BHOPAL), 7905027805 (JABALPUR AND BILASPUR), 7683068902 (RAIPUR), 9140476074 (GWALIOR), 9830130770 (INDORE), 8073562574 (BHOPAL) during office hours on any working day.
Date: 04-12-2025, Place: Bhopal

AUTHORISED OFFICER, CANARA BANK

Search to resume for MH370 plane

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's transport ministry said on Wednesday that the deep-sea hunt for Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 will resume December 30, renewing hopes of finally locating the jet that vanished without a trace more than a decade ago.

The Boeing 777 plane disappeared from radar shortly after taking off on March 8, 2014, carrying 239 people, mostly Chinese nationals, on a flight from Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur, to Beijing.

Satellite data showed the plane turned from its flight path and headed south to the far-southern Indian Ocean, where it is believed to have crashed. The transport ministry said in a statement that US-based marine robotics firm Ocean Infinity will search intermittently from December 30 for a

total of 55 days, in targeted areas believed to have the highest likelihood of finding the missing aircraft. "The latest development underscores the Government of Malaysia's commitment in providing closure to the families affected by this tragedy," it said. Malaysia's Government gave the green light in March for a "no-find, no-fee" contract with Ocean Infinity to resume the seabed search operation at a new 15,000-sq-km site in the ocean.

Change of Name

My old name was PANKAJ KUMAR GAJRA. Written in My old Passport. Now in My all present documents. My new & correct name is now known as **PANKAJ GAJRA S/O GIRDHAR KUMAR GAJRA**. Resident of Flat no.8, 3rd floor, Gulmohar Apartment, Doctor's Colony, Idghah Hills Bhopal (M.P.) 462001

Kohli, Gaikwad help India set 359-run target in second ODI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Raipur

Virat Kohli's successive hundred, maiden century from Raturaj Gaikwad (105) and KL Rahul's quickfire 66 not out propelled India to a formidable 358 for five against South Africa in the second ODI on Wednesday. Kohli (102 off 93 balls, 7x4s, 2x6s) and Gaikwad (105 off 83 balls, 12x4s, 2x6s) reset the record for highest third-wicket stand for India in ODIs against South Africa as their 195-run association built the platform for the hosts to launch themselves into a big score. And Rahul's (66 not out off 43 balls, 6x4s, 2x6s) second

fifty in a row ensured that, even as India continued to tinker with their batting line-up with the stand-in skipper coming in at number 5 ahead of Washington Sundar, who endured another failure. Rohit Sharma (14) fell to one angling away from his body as Nandre Burger found an outside edge. This was after the India opener hit three consecutive fours earlier in the fifth over. Yashasvi Jaiswal (22) made a promising start, hitting a couple of fours and a six but fell to a left-armer again with Jansen's knack of producing extra bounce inducing a mishit from the Indian opener. Nevertheless, two wickets



India's Raturaj Gaikwad, left, celebrates his century with Virat Kohli during the second ODI cricket match of a series between India and South Africa at Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Stadium in Raipur, Chhattisgarh

Virat Kohli moves up to No 4 in ICC ODI rankings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Dubai

Star Indian batter Virat Kohli on Wednesday moved up to No 4 in the latest ICC rankings with a match-winning hundred against South Africa in the first ODI at Ranchi boosting his ascend. Kohli made his 52nd hundred in the 50-over format, a 120-ball 135 that propelled India to a 17-run win over the Proteas on Sunday. The 37-year-old now has 751 ranking points, and trails former India skipper Rohit Sharma (783), who retained his top spot, New Zealand batter Daryl Mitchell (766) and Afghanistan's Ibrahim Zadran (764). Kohli overtook India ODI captain Shubman Gill, who moved down to number 5 after missing the ongoing three-match series against South Africa with a neck injury. Shreyas Iyer, who is also recovering from an injury that he sustained during India's recent white ball tour to Australia, stood firm on 9th position. Meanwhile, left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav gained one place to move to sixth after picking up four wickets in the first match against the Proteas. In the Test batter's list, India opener Yashasvi



India's Virat Kohli playing a shot during the second ODI cricket match of a series between India and South Africa in Raipur, Chhattisgarh

Jaiswal continued to station at number 9, while Gill slid one place down to 12. Wicketkeeper batter Rishabh Pant was also on a downward spiral, moving down from 12th to 14th. In the rankings for Test bowlers, India's premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah remained on top of the pile with 879 points, well clear of New Zealand pacer Matt

Henry (846). However, modest outings in the two-match series against SA recently affected the rankings of pacer Mohammed Siraj (from 11th to 13th) and Kuldeep (from 13th to 15th). In the T20I list, Indians dominated the top slot with Abhishek Sharma and Varun Chakravarthy keeping their numero uno positions.

FIT-AGAIN GILL PICKED FOR T20I SERIES AGAINST SA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Raipur

Shubman Gill has been picked for the T20 International series against South Africa as vice-captain after recovering from a neck injury that kept him out of the ongoing ODI rubber, a BCCI source said on Wednesday. Gill, who is India's Test and ODI skipper, sustained the injury during the opening Test against the Proteas in Kolkata. He was subsequently ruled out of the second Test in Guwahati and the ODI series that followed. "Gill has recovered fully and has been included in the squad. He will be back as vice captain subject to fitness," the BCCI source said. The selection committee meeting to pick the T20 squad took place on Wednesday. The five-match series begins December 9 in Cuttack. Suryakumar Yadav is the regular T20I skipper for India. The source also denied reports that Board officials are planning to hold a meeting with senior players Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma and head coach Gautam Gambhir on the increasing chatter around dressing room tensions between them.

New Zealand leads West Indies by 96 runs after the second day of the first Test

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Christchurch (New Zealand)

Shai Hope batted in sun-glasses because of an eye infection but saw the ball well enough to compile his first test half century against New Zealand on Wednesday before the West Indies ended the second day of the first test trailing by 96 runs. The West Indies were bowled out for 167 in their first innings, 64 runs behind New Zealand who reached 32 without loss in seven overs before stumps. While it might have been incongruous to see Hope sporting large reflective glasses under his helmet in gloomy conditions, his innings of 56 stabilized the West Indies' first innings after the loss of two early wickets. At the other end Tagenarine Chanderpaul labored diligently over a half century from 165 balls. A 90-run partnership between the pair helped the West Indies towards parity with New Zealand whose first innings ended at 231. The West Indies were 157-6 before a late rain shower forced players from the field. When they returned, the tail had to face the New Zealand pacers in fading light and the last four



wickets fell for 10 runs. Jacob Duffy captured all four to finish with 5-34, his first five-wicket bag in tests. New Zealand then had to bat again under darkening skies and reached 32 without loss with Tom Latham 14 not out and Devon Conway 15. The accomplishments of Hope and Chanderpaul were magnified by the fact it was a day on which the ball constantly beat the bat, where runs had to be grafted for and bowlers explored all aspects of a batter's technique. Matt Henry bowled with pace and accuracy, applying constant pressure around off stump. He dismissed Alick Athanaze (4), then Roston Chase and Justin Greaves

for ducks in the same over and finished the day with 3-39. Zak Foulkes was both the last man out for New Zealand on Wednesday morning when its innings resumed at 231-9 and lasted three more balls. He then dismissed John Campbell (1) with his first ball of the match, for his first test wicket in New Zealand. "It was awesome. I didn't think it would happen as quick as it did," Foulkes said. "I haven't played a lot of cricket (at Hagley Park) but it's awesome to be out and a great place to play cricket." When Athanaze fell to Henry, the West Indies were 10-2 and precariously placed. But Hope joined

one to distinguish who had pierced the gap for those runs — not necessarily boundaries — as Gaikwad even appeared to be matching Kohli in terms of stroke-play. If he was roughed up at the start, Gaikwad grew in confidence to post a fine half-century. Once past the milestone, he picked up pace. Keshav Maharaj was hit over long on for a six and two fours in the 28th over before Gaikwad reached triple figures in the 34th over. Off the blocks with a perfect pull shot which sent the ball sailing over the ropes, it was yet another day in the office for Kohli who did not put a foot wrong on way to a record extending 53rd ODI ton.

Mohit Sharma retires from all forms of cricket



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Veteran India pacer Mohit Sharma on Wednesday announced his retirement from all forms of cricket, bringing an end to a career that spanned 34 international appearances and more than a decade in the Indian Premier League. The 37-year-old pacer, who featured in 26 ODIs and 8 T20Is, made the announcement through an emotional Instagram post, thanking the fans, teammates and officials who shaped his journey from Haryana to the international stage. "Today with a full heart, I announce my retirement from all forms of cricket," Sharma, who featured in four IPL finals without lifting the trophy, wrote on his Instagram page. "From representing Haryana to wearing the India jersey and playing in the IPL, this journey has been nothing short of blessing. A very special thanku to the Haryana Cricket Association for being the backbone of my career.

And my deepest gratitude to Anirudh Sir, whose constant guidance and belief in me shaped my path in ways words cannot express." Mohit, who made his India debut in 2013, took 35 wickets in 26 ODIs and six wickets in 8 T20s. He was part of India's 2015 ODI World Cup squad and later became a dependable death-overs option for Chennai Super Kings under MS Dhoni. "Thanku to the BCCI, my coaches, my teammates, IPL franchises, support staff and all my friends for their love and support. Special thanks to my wife who always handled my mood swings and anger, and supported me through everything. I look forward to serving the game in fresh ways. Thanku so much. Innings over, gratitude forever," he added. Apart from CSK, Mohit also represented Kings XI Punjab (now Punjab Kings), Delhi Capitals and Gujarat Titans. In 2023, he had finished as the second-highest wicket-taker of the season for the Titans.

Rana reprimanded for aggressive behaviour against South Africa

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Dubai

India pace bowler Harshit Rana was on Wednesday reprimanded and handed out one demerit point by the ICC for his aggressive behaviour after dismissing South African batter Dewald Brevis during the first ODI in Ranchi. "Rana was found guilty of breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct," said ICC in a statement. The incident occurred in the 22nd over of South Africa's innings on Sunday, when the India pacer, after dismissing Brevis, gestured in the direction of the dressing room, which "could have provoked an aggressive response from the batter". Rana was found to have breached Article 2.5 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to



'using language, actions or gestures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from a batter upon his/her dismissal during an International Match. "In addition to this, one demerit point has been added to Rana's disciplinary record, for whom it was the first offence in a 24-month period," added ICC

statement. Rana returned figures of 3 for 65 in the match, which India won by 17 runs to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. A Level 1 breaches carries a minimum penalty of an official reprimand, a maximum penalty of 50 per cent of a player's match fee, and one or two demerit points.

India right to back spin-heavy approach, don't pigeonhole Tests: Trott

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Dubai

Former England batter and current Afghanistan head coach Jonathan Trott believes teams must not "pigeonhole" Test cricket into one rigid style, insisting the format's strength lies in its diverse approaches, and noted that there is nothing wrong in India embracing a spin-heavy method that suits their conditions. India's decision to go with a dry, 'underprepared' surface badly misfired in the opening Test in Kolkata, allowing world champions South Africa to seize control and eventually sweep the two-match rubber

which was their first Test series win in India in 25 years. "When you go to India, you know it's going to spin. You go to Sri Lanka, it's going to spin. When you go to Australia, it's going to be pacey and bouncy," said Trott, the head coach of Adani Sportsline-owned Gulf Giants in the ongoing DP World International League T20 during a select media interaction. "You don't want to suddenly have a roll. That's what makes cricket so great. That's what's always a challenge as a player and for somebody like me now as a coach — to be able to coach in those different conditions and excel. That's the most

important thing." The former England batter, who also represented England in 68 ODIs and retired from international cricket in 2015 after a stellar career interrupted by a stress-related Ashes withdrawal, cautioned against nostalgia-driven criticism of modern cricket. "You saw the contrasting styles, the way Shubman Gill the India captain led from the front and then you can see the difference in the way Ben Stokes approached (with Bazball style)," he said referring to India's 2-2 draw in England last summer. "Don't forget there was a day and age where we thought cricket was boring



and there were too many draws. Now we're saying that cricket's too short and there's too many wins and losses. So we've got to be careful that we don't always think the grass is greener," Trott said. "So, I think we've got to be careful in that we don't try and pigeonhole Test cricket and ODI and what we should do is try and embrace the way that this team plays Test cricket or this team plays ODI cricket. "That's what makes cricket interesting, everybody has a different approach to it," said Trott, whose decorated career also saw him rise to the world's No.1 Test ranking with England winning Down Under in 2010-2011.

Desert Vipers beat Dubai Capitals by four wickets in World ILT20 opener

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Dubai

Desert Vipers humbled defending champions Dubai Capitals by four wickets in the opening fixture of World ILT20 here, bringing to an end a six-match losing streak against the same team in a rematch of last season's final. The win was powered by a half-century from Andries Gous and a comprehensive performance with the ball. The result also marked the Vipers' 21st victory across all seasons of the competition — the most by any team. After electing to bowl first, Noor Ahmad (2/25), David Payne (2/26), and Khuzaima Tanveer (2/35) each registered two-wicket hauls to restrict the Capitals to 150/8 on Tuesday night. In the run chase, Desert Vipers were comfortably ahead of the equation with openers Fakhar Zaman (26 off

15) and Andries Gous (58 off 36) putting on a quick-fire 50-run stand. Zaman smashed two sixes and a four before he was dismissed by Mohammad Nabi in the fifth over — the first time the batter has fallen to a spinner in the DP World ILT20. Gous was equally aggressive, hitting three fours off Scott Currie as the Vipers finished the powerplay at 64/1. Max Holden joined Gous as the duo put on a 35-run alliance in the span of 30 deliveries. The Vipers were cruising when Gulbadin Naib dismissed Holden in the 10th over to leave the score at 85/2. Gous brought up his half-century in 32 balls, studded with six fours and two sixes, before he was sent back by Waqar Salamkheil. Salamkheil followed up with the wicket of Sam Curran (7 off 10) to emerge as the pick of the Capitals attack. Scot Currie chipped in with crucial late wickets,

removing Shimron Hetmyer (7 off 6) and Hassan Nawaz (3 off 7), but the damage was done. Dan Lawrence (19 not out off 16 balls) and Khuzaima Tanveer (12 not out off 8 balls) took the Vipers home in 19 overs. Barring first, Dubai Capitals faced early pressure as the Vipers pacers made immediate inroads. Sediqullah Atal (16 off 13) fell to Naseem Shah, Gulbadin Naib (0 off 1) was undone by a fine return catch from Sam Curran, and Jordan Cox (2 off 7) became Dan Lawrence's first scalp, leaving the Capitals at 32/3. Opener Shayan Jahangir (19 off 12) and David Willey (10 off 22) made small contributions. Rovman Powell (39 off 22) and Willey had put on 25 runs in 26 balls, before Willey was castled by Noor Ahmad in the 12th over. Powell's cautious start quickly changed to a counterattack as he joined Gulbadin Naib for a 34-run stand in only 22 balls.

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GRADUATE GRUDGES

It is dismal times for the youngsters, especially fresh graduates, in America. Latest data shows that the unemployment rate for people with bachelor's degrees rose to 2.8 per cent in September 2025, which is half a percentage point higher than the previous year. This means that nearly two million people aged 25 and older, who hold a college degree, have no jobs. They comprise a quarter of the unemployed, which is a level that has never been seen since the official records exist since 1992. Unemployment among young graduates, or those who are between 20 and 24 years, was more than nine per cent, or an increase of more than two per cent a year ago. Such a level is ascribed more to a period of recession, and not growth. The data clearly indicates a slowdown in white-collar jobs, and largely among those who spend four years to get graduate degrees.

Policy-makers, activists, and experts link these trends to the existing visa regime, especially the laws related to H-1B visas. According to many, H-1Bs allow younger Indians and Chinese to enter the American job market through the lottery system, which encourages low-skilled, less-experienced, and lowly-paid foreigners. This eliminates the local college-educated youngsters from entry-level, and mid-level positions. In some cases, the Americans need to compete with the lower salaries that the Indians earn, and are thus less enthusiastic about accepting the available jobs. Hence, there are plans to transform the H-1B regime into a merit-based, and salary-related one, which will only allow the entry of senior professionals. The hike in visa fees to \$1,00,000 is aimed to achieve the same objective. Indian and American firms will possibly hesitate to apply for visas for lowly-paid workers, given the high visa fee. Recent reports indicate that Indian firms reduced their reliance on H-1Bs.

Foreign students form a second category that pushes Americans out of jobs, according to some experts. Most foreigners, who graduate from US colleges, especially higher studies, automatically find jobs under the H-1B visa scheme. They graduate seamlessly from being students to getting work visas, and most either stay back in the US for a few years, or forever as they later manage to get green cards, and citizenship. Thus, there are efforts to force foreign students to not seek jobs immediately after graduation, but to go back to their home nations, take a break, and then apply for H-1Bs, or other work visas. This will stall their automatic entry into the job market, and allow opportunities to the local youngsters. Of course, such changes will make the US education less appealing and popular for the foreigners, most of whom spend huge sums, even take education loans, as they eye American jobs at higher salaries.

Related to the above-mentioned sections are the spouses, and dependent children, of the H-1B visa holders, who manage to get visas to enter the US. Many of these spouses are young, and newly-married, with young children. They are reasonably educated, and find decent jobs. This too cuts into the job market for the locals. There are attempts to restrict jobs opportunities for the spouses, and even limit their entry into the US. Indirectly, this may force many Indians and Chinese, who believe in family links, to refuse H-1Bs, if their husbands, wives, and children cannot travel with them. In effect, it will limit the entry of foreigners in America. Estimates indicate that there are more than 50 million foreigners in the US, and constitute 15 per cent of the population. This may point to those who are not American citizens, and may not include others, who are foreign born, but have bagged their citizen papers legally.

For Americans, the good news is that the unemployment among the older Americans is four per cent, and the number has not changed much in the recent past. This implies that the more experienced locals manage to get jobs. However, this trend is laced with two caveats. First, according to a media report, only two sectors, healthcare and social assistance, and leisure and hospitality, added nearly 7,00,000 jobs this year. In the case of the other sectors, there was a small collective decline of 6,000 jobs. Thus, in most sectors, there are either layoff, or non-hiring moods. Hence, the opportunities are limited, and applicable to specific skills. Second, high-skill sectors such as computer systems design, scientific research, and management consulting have witnessed drops in headcounts. Thus, several professional and technical services are being taken over by technology, largely Artificial Intelligence (AI) and robotics.

AI is generally responsible for the lack of jobs for young Americans, apart from the impact of the current visa regime. In the recent past, tech firms have sacked thousands of people, mostly in the entry-level and mid-level positions. A policy-maker recently described the graduates' position as one when they are caught in a "perfect storm." From a period, when they were "swept into the labour market" as they graduated, they face one that sweeps them away from it. There are various bills by Republicans and Democrats to either make the visa regime more stringent, or open it further. But no one has a solution for the tech-led job disruptions that will continue.

The Pioneer

BHOPAL | THURSDAY | DECEMBER 4, 2025

BUSINESS

13

Indian economy's Mad Tea Party

Imagine a grand tea-party in a sprawling mansion, but the guests are not lords and ladies. Instead, they are economic indicators, policy pronouncements, market flows, and corporate boardroom whispers. The table is groaning under the weight of GDP growth numbers, stock valuations, inflation readings, rupee-dollar exchange rates, and investor sentiments, hopes, and desires. Yet somehow, between the teacups and scones, the house creaks. Something feels slightly off, though everyone behaves as if nothing is amiss.

This is the rabbit hole that India tumbles into every so often, an elaborate hall where optimism, anxiety, momentum, and fragility attend the same banquet. As observers of this odd spectacle, we are the bewildered wanderers trying to make sense of the contradictions balancing precariously on fine 'China.' The entry into the hall begins with a familiar slide. Global trade tensions, foreign capital outflows, and domestic cheerfulness swirl together like the spiral that draws the narrator, ChatGPT, who falls into Alice-like rabbit hole, and watches the economic contradictions pile up.

The AI tool puts GDP at the head of the table, flaunting its growth, and gleaming with medals and polished confidence. According to the official data, India's real GDP expanded 8.2 per cent year-on-year in Q2 of FY 2025-26. The prime minister, finance ministers, and others applauded. Global commentators nodded approvingly. Investors abroad clinked teacups in recognition of one of the fastest-growing major economies. According to the narrator, GDP is the star guest, which is bright, composed, and certain of its standing and authority.

Yet, just across the table, sits the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). It looks rumpled, underdressed, and slightly embarrassed to be there. In October 2025, IIP grew 0.4 per cent year-on-year, a dramatic fall from 4.6 per cent in September. Electricity generation slowed. Mining activity contracted. Consumer durables contin-

ued shrinking, and even non-durables dipped. Capital-goods output managed only a timid 2-3 per cent improvement. The factories yawn, as the GDP claims at the party that it is booming.

This is the first contradiction of the evening. A nation proclaims exhilarating expansion, while its workshops clear their throats softly in protest. Historically, IIP and GDP have tended to move together. Studies over the decades show a statistically significant correlation between the two, suggesting that industrial activity has long been a meaningful driver of economic momentum. A widening gap between the GDP and IIP may therefore signal a structural shift away from industry, or simply the temporary distortions that sometimes colour monthly data. Do not forget that the GDP figures are for the July-September period, and IIP only for October. There is a lag.

Much of the recent GDP strength arises from services and consumption, which do not feed directly into the IIP. A consumption-led surge can lift GDP sharply without stimulating domestic industrial output, especially if spending tilts toward services, imported goods, or real estate. The decoupling may inflate headline growth, yet leave factory output trailing behind. However, the Q2 figures indicate that manufacturing grew by more than nine per cent, which is nothing to scoff at, or ignore. But this may be due to factories emptying out, and clearing their inventories.

Into this uneasy room wanders a weary figure: the Rupee. Its hat droops, and its expression is unmistakably tired of the festivities. Having slipped to ₹90 against the US dollar, a record low after months of decline, it sighs whenever someone mentions "strong fundamentals." A widening trade deficit tugs at one sleeve, higher import bills at another, and persistent capital outflows weigh down its posture. The Rupee wonders how a party can celebrate so loudly when its own burdens grow heavier by

the day. This is despite the massive help from the Reserve Bank of India to shore it up.

Across from the Rupee sits Consumption, dressed in bright colours, and speaking animatedly with guests. Economists point to data showing that private final consumption expenditure rose about 7.2 per cent in FY25, up from 5.6 per cent the previous year. Households appear to be spending more on retail, travel, fuel, services, and vehicles. Inflation remains manageable, food prices relatively calm, and disposable incomes somewhat buoyant. Consumption continues to refill its cup and to the narrator, seems convinced that the positive energy in the party room is real and sustainable.

At this moment, the mansion's heavy doors swing open. The next set of guests does not walk in together.

They move in opposite directions. The first group makes a U-turn, and hurries out quietly. It includes foreign portfolio investors, whispering about global risks, elevated yields in advanced markets, and geopolitical jitters. Their departure deepens the gloom on the face of the Rupee, as it watches through the large windows. Reports over the TV in the room confirm that foreign outflows have added considerable pressure to the currency.

The second group enters with calmer steps. Domestic retail investors do not announce their arrival, but their presence is steady and reassuring. They continue to channel money into mutual funds through SIPs. Although they cannot help the stock indices to move up, they stem the tide even as foreign investors leave. Market observers note that these domestic inflows have softened the impact of external turbulence and helped major indices maintain balance. It is ironic that when the indices begin to rise, as they did since October and November, retail investors turn sellers to book profits.

In a different wing of the mansion, a dazzling carnival unfolds. It is the IPO Wonderland, glowing with lights, and humming with excitement. Here, founders stand on small pedestals, telling stories that shimmer with promise. Investors line up in enthusiastic queues, elbowing forward for oversubscriptions. Merchant bankers move briskly from one issuer to another, gathering commitments as if distributing invitations to a royal celebration. The contrast is striking. A secondary market that nervously checks its pulse, and a primary market that appears incapable of anything but exuberance.

Inflation, normally the guest who consumes more than anyone else, is surprisingly restrained. Retail prices show multi-year lows, supported by stable food prices, and controlled overall price levels. For a moment, this seems like cause for celebration. But the calm is not absolute. Import-dependent goods misbehave. Perishables and eggs rise unexpectedly. These small but disruptive price spikes flicker in and out of the picture, much like the Cheshire Cat's grin, visible for a moment, then vanishing without explanation. One is not even sure if there is a cat with a grin, or merely the grin.

The Tech Wrecker

Tesla's trillion-dollar takeaway

to continue." Many experts see stock-based income as a step in the right direction. It forces senior executives to adhere to a timeline, and specific milestones. It encourages the senior executives to think of the shareholders, and firms first, as their futures are linked to both. Musk's trillion dollars are tied to Tesla attaining specific market cap, and annual revenues. His income will fall short if the milestones are not achieved.

However, experience shows that the reverse may also be true. CEOs and founders may feel the pressure to show better performances to line their pockets, and resort to illegal and semi-legal shortcuts. They hope that the irregularities will come to light long after they have quit, or monetised their stock holdings. The legendary Jack Welch was known to massage the quarterly earnings of General Electric to avoid expectation surprises and shocks to Wall Street. Internet firms, and dotcoms routinely misguide analysts, and shareholders to paint a rosier financial picture.

In addition, the dilution of the shares is not adjusted through stock buyback. For

example, if the number of shares go up because of stocks given to the senior executives each year, the firm can buy back shares from the market using its cash reserves, to balance the equity capital. This will preserve valuations, which will not be adversely impacted due to bloating equity bases. Even if a firm cannot buy back the shares each year, it can do so every few years to rein valuation sanity. This, of course, does not happen in most cases.

A broader critique by Burry pinpoints how the stock options, and stock-based compensations are accounted for in the balance sheets. He claims that many tech firms remove these from the "adjusted" earnings, and financial results. Look at it from a normal perspective. Stocks are part of the salaries and, hence, they need to be shown as incurred expenses. Since, they are not included on the expenditure side, they boost the profits. More importantly, stock-based payments are regular and recurring features, and give a false picture regularly. Tech giants "routinely benefit from this practice because it makes their financial perfor-

mance healthier than it truly is."

Stock options, and stock payments are a genuine cost to the shareholders, and happen at the latter's expense. They can never be, in the words of the legendary Warren Buffet, be treated as optional footnotes. Based on such arguments, Burry proposes, and concludes that "when the real cost of stock-based compensation is fully considered (on valuations and profits), Tesla's valuation looks much less defensible than its headline numbers suggest." According to media reports, Tesla's share price dipped slightly after Burry's newsletter, although the scrip stood six per cent higher this year.

In the recent, there were concerns about the valuations of tech stocks. A recent agency report states that while earnings of tech stocks as a percentage of S&P 500's collective earnings are down, the former's share in market cap is at an all-time high. In the third quarter of this calendar year, tech firms accounted for just under 21 per cent of the earnings, down by two percentage points compared to three quarters earlier, the share in market cap rose by a percentage point to just over 31 per cent. This raises worries that share prices of tech firms are "further removed from underlying profit trends."

Nasdaq Composite Index, a tech-heavy one, trades at a forward P/E (price-to-earnings) of more than 29, which is above its 10-year average, and higher than S&P 500, which includes diverse stocks. In both cases, the expectations are that AI will deliver results in the future, and push up the profits of the tech firms. Recent results by Nvidia exceeded the street's expectations, and nullified concerns about AI-driven valuations. Yet, some experts contend that these factors cannot fully explain the stretched valuations. One needs to see how the 'Magnificent 7' tech stocks perform in the future.

Most of us may not know Michael Burry. Among the savvy stock investors, both in India and abroad, he is a known Cassandra. Like the princess from Greek mythology, whose prophecies were true but she was never believed, Burry's accurate warnings about the 2008 Financial Crisis, and Great Recession, were ignored. He made money from it through the Big Short,' and became famous. In his new Substack newsletter, Cassandra Unchained, he hopes to take on the tech giants, and the mystique of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

In a recent blog, Burry guns for the tech giants, which use stocks and shares to compensate founders, CEOs, and senior executives. Tesla's CEO, Elon Musk, whose trillion-dollar compensation got 75 per cent votes from the shareholders, is among them. Palantir and Amazon are the other names he highlights as these firms dilute their shares through such measures. According to Burry, Tesla's stock is "ridiculously overvalued," and that too "for a good long time." This is because of the adverse impact of stock-related salaries. It distorts the way the shareholders perceive profitability, and valuations.

Not just the senior executives, even mid-level managers receive stocks as rewards to boost compensation packets. This is through the issue of new shares which, obviously, increases the number of shares, or equity capital of a firm. The existing shareholders, therefore, continue to own less of the equity each year than they did in the previous one. In the case of Tesla, reveals Burry, the share count increases by 3.6 per cent each year. As per his approved trillion-dollar future package, Musk is likely to get tens or even hundreds of millions of shares, which may double his stake to nearly 29 per cent over the years. This will reduce the ownership of the others.

Since stock market valuation is based on the multiple of price-to-earnings, the latter reduces if the number of shares go up each year. Thus, for valuation to remain high, or go up, the multiple constant needs to rise. This may create a divergence between a firm and its peers. Obviously, innovative, and investor-friendly firms enjoy a higher multiple compared to their competitors. It can be, say, 20x while the average figure for the industry or sector is only 10x. But share dilution has an indirect impact, which is not related to present performances, sentiments, or future expectations.

Burry shares a chart that depicts how "this steady dilution (of shares) can erode a company's value, especially over long periods." He adds that this dilution is "certain

The Pioneer

SINCE 1865

Biogas Congress: WBA, NDDDB MoU to scale waste-to-wealth solutions

ABHI SINGHAL/ABHINAV KUMAR JHA
■ New Delhi

The World Biogas Association (WBA) on Wednesday inaugurated its India Congress 2025 with the plenary session, ‘Fueling India’s Biogas Decade’, which brought together a high-profile panel to outline India’s expanding leadership in climate solutions and clean-energy transition.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between World Biogas Association (WBA) and National Dairy Development Board (NDDDB) at the India Congress 2025 in the presence of the esteemed panelists and the audience. The WBA-NDDDB MoU strengthens India’s biogas ecosystem by combining global best practices with NDDDB’s nationwide dairy network to scale sustainable CBG and waste-to-wealth solutions.

On the occasion, Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri highlighted how WBA got together government, investors and industry since its first Congress in 2023 to shape India’s Biogas future.

“With 1,16,000 metric tonnes of waste generated, India is facing an energy and waste challenge. Since India is a natural

gas importer, CBG is a path to energy security and sustainability,” Puri said through a video message to the India Congress 2025. The Minister emphasised how WBA serves as a vital platform for India’s goal of 5000 CBG plants.

Addressing the Congress, Pankaj Jain, Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (MoPNG) said, “India’s energy sector is growing rapidly, with over 50 per cent



of electricity now non-fossil. Recent policies have already spurred strong growth in biogas and CBG, and the IEA is working with the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas to develop a market outlook to guide bioenergy decisions through 2030.”

Adding to Jain’s comments, Tarun Kapoor, Advisor to the Prime Minister, warned, India must now rethink its biofuel strategy as ethanol production has surged

far beyond current blending requirements. He stated, “Private companies have made significant investments, but sometimes when the government offers a higher price, things tend to go overboard. That is what seems to have happened, leading to an oversupply.”

On #MakingBiogasHappen, envisaging biogas plants in India, Meenesh Shah, Chairperson and MD, National Dairy Development Board (NDDDB), said, “We are facing some clear challenges in the CBG ecosystem. We offer long-term price assurance, but when the discovered market price increases, a fair mechanism is needed to ensure vendors are not at a loss.”

The two-day event, hosted by the London-based WBA at the India Habitat Centre, brings together senior Union ministers, former NITI Aayog leadership, global institutions such as the World Bank and International Energy Agency, and domestic heavyweights including NDDDB and Chintan Research Foundation. The Congress aims to act as a bridge between investors, policymakers, and technology developers at a time when India pushes for large-scale expansion of biogas and advanced biofuels.



An MoU was signed between World Biogas Association (WBA) and National Dairy Development Board (NDDDB) at the India Congress 2025 on Wednesday. (L-R) Shishir Priyadarshi, President, Chintan Research Foundation; Prashant Tiwari, representing The Pioneer; Charlotte Morton OBE, CEO, World Biogas Association (WBA); Meenesh Shah, Chairperson, National Dairy Development Board (NDDDB); Dr Pradeep Monga, Senior Advisor & Policy Director, WBA; Rajesh Kumar, Regional Head, NDDDB; Dr Dilip Khare, WBA

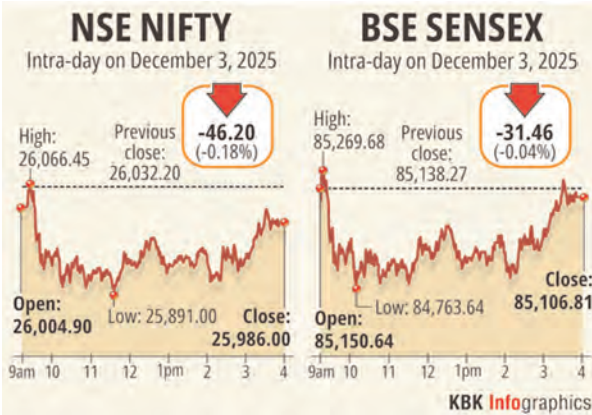
Stock markets drop amid relentless foreign fund outflows

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mumbai

Stock markets extended the losing run to the fourth consecutive day on Wednesday as persistent foreign fund outflows and the rupee breaching the psychological 90-to-dollar low hit investor sentiment, dragging the benchmark Sensex down by 31 points.

Falling for the fourth day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex dipped 31.46 points or 0.04 per cent to settle at 85,106.81. The index opened lower and dropped further by 374.63 points or 0.44 per cent to hit a low of 84,763.64 due to profit-taking. Gains in IT and blue-chip ICI Bank and HDFC Bank, however, helped the barometer pare some losses in the pre-close session.

The 50-share NSE Nifty skidded 46.20 points or 0.18 per cent to 25,986. After a flat start, the Nifty drifted gradually lower in early trade and then remained range-bound for most of the session.



Among Sensex firms, Bharat Electronics fell the most by 2.13 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra, Titan, NTPC, State Bank of India, Adani Ports, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles and Bajaj Finserv were also among the major laggards.

IT shares rebounded as the rupee fell below 90 per dollar. TCS was the biggest Sensex gainer, rising by 1.41 per cent. Infosys rose 1.12 per cent while ICI Bank and HDFC Bank also advanced. “Equity markets ended

lower as the continued slide in the Indian rupee — which hit a fresh record low against the US dollar — prompted foreign portfolio investors to lock in profits, with the currency weakness weighing on their dollar-adjusted returns,” Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

The BSE midcap gauge dropped 0.95 per cent and smallcap index dipped 0.43 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, capital goods tanked 1.31 per

cent, followed by consumer durables (1.24 per cent), auto (1.12 per cent), power (1.05 per cent), industrials (0.99 per cent), services (0.97 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.93 per cent) and utilities (0.85 per cent).

BSE Focused IT climbed 0.79 per cent, IT jumped 0.78 per cent, while tech (0.41 per cent), telecommunication (0.29 per cent) and bankex (0.19 per cent) advanced.

“Markets witnessed a volatile session and ended marginally lower, extending the ongoing consolidation phase. After a flat start, the Nifty drifted gradually lower in early trade and then remained range-bound for most of the session. A late rebound in the last half hour helped trim losses, and the index eventually settled at 25,986.”

“Sentiment was dampened by a weakening rupee, which hit a record low against the dollar, heightening concerns around import costs and triggering FII outflows. In addition, caution ahead of the

MPC meeting and mixed global cues added to the subdued mood,” Ajit Mishra – SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,642.30 crore on Tuesday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth Rs 4,645.94 crore, according to exchange data.

In Asian markets, South Korea’s Kospi and Japan’s Nikkei 225 index settled in the positive territory, while Shanghai’s SSE Composite Index and Hong Kong’s Hang Seng index ended lower.

Markets in Europe were trading mostly higher. US markets ended higher on Tuesday.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 0.99 per cent at USD 63.07 per barrel.

Falling for the third straight session on Tuesday, the Sensex tumbled 503.63 points or 0.59 per cent to settle at 85,138.27. The Nifty declined 143.55 points or 0.55 per cent to 26,032.20.

Not losing sleep over falling Rupee: CEA

Expects improvement against dollar next year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran on Wednesday said the government is not losing sleep over the declining rupee, which has breached the 90-level against the US dollar.

The rupee hit a historic low of 90.21 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, raising fears of inflation.

The falling rupee is not affecting inflation or exports, he said on the sidelines of a CII event here.

Falling rupee helps outward shipment but makes import costlier. Import-dependent sectors such as gems and jewellery, petroleum and electronics may see lower benefits due to a rise in input costs, putting pressure on inflationary expectations.

However, he expressed hope that it would improve next year.

In 2025, the rupee depreciated about 5 per cent against the US dollar.

The rupee breached the 90-a-dollar level for the first time to settle at a fresh all-time low of 90.21 (provisional) on Wednesday, down 25 paise from its previous close, amid sustained foreign fund outflows and higher crude oil prices.

Uncertainty over the India-US trade deal, along with the lack of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) effort to stop the slide in the local unit, put further pressure on the rupee, according to forex traders.

Speaking about gross foreign direct investment



(FDI) target, Nageswaran said, “We may cross USD 100 billion this year.”

During the first six months of the current fiscal, total FDI, which includes equity inflows, reinvested earnings and other capital, increased to about USD 50 billion as

2024-25 were approximately USD 81.04 billion, a 14 per cent increase over the previous fiscal year.

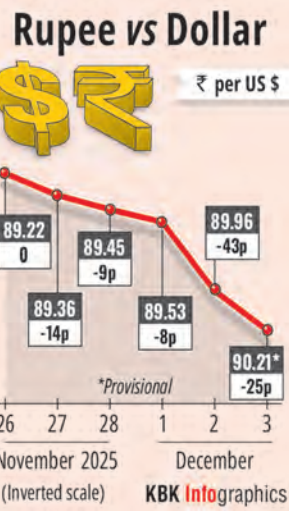
The gradual increase in net FDI numbers after 2014 and until the COVID-19 pandemic has now run into geopolitical and geo-economic challenges, Nageswaran said.

“That explanation should not stop there. We are aware that we have to crank up our game,” he said.

The government needs to address tax and non-tax issues, infrastructure-related issues, and also last-mile connectivity issues to increase FDI into India, he said.

The nature of the terrain has shifted when it comes to FDI over the last few years, the CEA said.

Post COVID-19, some of the countries started focussing on localisation of production rather than depending completely on foreign nations leading many companies to move their investment in those jurisdictions, he added.



against USD 42.3 billion in the same period of 2024-25. India’s gross FDI inflows for the financial year (FY)

Labour codes to be fully operational from April 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mumbai

The four labour codes ushering another wave of reforms in the country are likely to be fully operational from April 1, 2026 as the ministry has begun the process for enforcing rules under the notified law.

The four labour codes - Code on Wages, 2019, Industrial Relations Code, 2020, Code on Social Security, 2020 and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 - were notified on November 21.

For enforcing a law, the government needs to notify

rules under that to operationalise the legislation. Before that, the central and state governments are required to pre-publish the draft rules for public feedback.

Addressing CII IndiaEdge 2025 here, Labour & Employment Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Wednesday said draft rules under the four labour codes will be pre-published shortly.

He said that earlier the central government as well as states had pre-published draft rules, but that was a long time ago, and now there is a need for bringing draft rules again in sync with

present times.

A senior official explained that after pre-publishing the draft rules, the government will give 45 days time for public comments before firming up those for final notification.

The official also explained that the government intends to enforce the rules for operationalisation of the four codes from April 1, the beginning of the new fiscal year.

Replying to queries during a session at the conference, the minister explained that the number of working hours for a worker is still 8 hours per day under the new codes which will replace 29 frag-

mented laws with a unified, modern framework.

He further explained that the new framework provides for an option of overtime to the worker which is an international practice.

The minister also highlighted the government’s intent to meet the target of providing social security to 100 crore workers by March 2026, up from existing 94 crore in the country.

The social security coverage had expanded from 19 per cent in 2015 to over 64 per cent in 2025.

Since labour is a concurrent subject, appropriate governments — Centre and states

— will have to notify the rules under the four codes to enforce these fully across the country.

The enforcement of the codes will mark the next transformative step — broadening worker protection, easing business operations and promoting a pro-worker labour ecosystem.

The minister also highlighted various provisions of the labour codes like mandatory appointment letter, free health check up for workers of the age of 40 years and above, equal work equal pay and equal opportunity for women for work in different shifts.

Services sector growth in Nov driven by new business intakes: PMI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

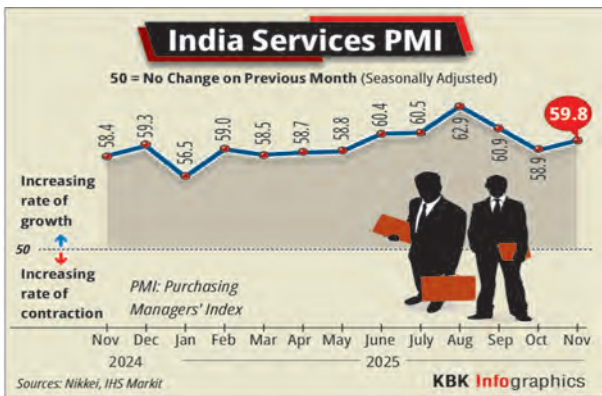
India’s services sector growth accelerated during November, after losing some momentum in October, driven by a faster upturn in new business intakes and subdued price pressures, a monthly survey said on Wednesday.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Services PMI Business Activity Index rose to 59.8 in November, from 58.9 in October, supported by new business growth.

In the Purchasing Managers’ Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

“India’s services PMI Business Activity Index rose from 58.9 in October to 59.8 in November, driven by robust new business intakes that fuelled output growth,” said Pranjud Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC.

International sales continued to improve, as firms



reported gains from Asia, Europe and the Middle East. However, the rate of expansion retreated to an eight-month low, the report said, adding that fierce international competition and the supply of cheaper services elsewhere constrained growth.

“... International sales expanded at an eight-month low due to fierce overseas services competition. Input price inflation reached its lowest rate in nearly five-and-a-half years, resulting in negligible increases in selling

charges,” Bhandari said.

On the employment front, although more jobs were added to India’s service economy in November, the rate of expansion was moderate and broadly similar to those seen in the previous two months, the survey said.

“Employment growth remained modest, with most companies reporting no change in payroll numbers. Meanwhile, India’s composite PMI remained strong, though it softened slightly to 59.7 in November, reflecting a slowdown in growth of

factory production,” Bhandari added.

The HSBC India Composite PMI Output Index fell from 60.4 in October to 59.7 in November, indicating the slowest rate of growth since May, amid a moderation in growth and softer inflationary pressures halfway through the third fiscal quarter.

Composite PMI indices are weighted averages of comparable manufacturing and services PMI indices. Weights reflect the relative size of the manufacturing and service sectors according to official GDP data.

The year-ahead optimism waned during November amid concerns about competition and potential disruptions from state assembly elections. Firms still foresee output growth, however, with positive sentiment linked to favourable demand, a greater social media presence, marketing initiatives and plans to keep price increase to a minimum, Bhandari added.

S&P ups jurisdiction ranking assessment for insolvency regime

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

S&P Global Ratings on Wednesday revised up its jurisdiction ranking assessment for India’s insolvency regime on improved creditor-friendliness of India’s bankruptcy resolution framework.

S&P said the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) has strengthened credit discipline and tilted the resolution process in favour of creditors, with promoters potentially risking losing control of their business, unlike under earlier resolution regimes.

S&P Global Ratings today revised up its jurisdiction ranking assessment for India’s insolvency regime to Group B from Group C, the agency said in a statement.

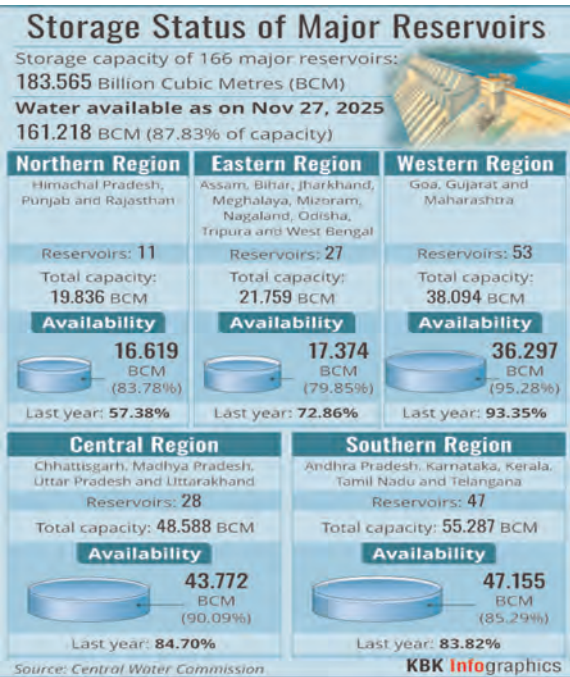
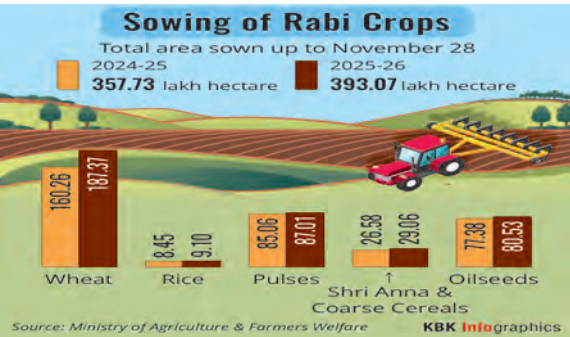
“The change follows an upward revision of our assessment of the creditor-friendliness of India’s bankruptcy resolution framework to medium from weak,” it said. Contributing to this

reassessment are a continuing record of successful creditor-led resolutions under IBC.

These resolutions demonstrate improved timeliness and recovery rates. Average recovery values have improved to more than 30 per cent, from 15-20 per cent under the previous bankruptcy regime.

The IBC has reduced the average resolution time for bad loans to about two years, down from six to eight years. S&P, however, said India’s resolution regime still lags those of more established Group A and some Group B jurisdictions. Average recovery rates of about 30 per cent are comparatively low.

It also flagged that despite a reported time to resolution of about two years, unpredictability remains with delays often stemming from initiating resolution and implementation plans, frequently due to legal challenges by other stakeholders.



PROSPECT

Exports record healthy growth in November: Goyal



The country's exports, which fell by about 12 per cent in October, have registered healthy growth in November, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Wednesday.

However, he did not disclose the numbers. The commerce ministry will release the export and import data for November on December 15. "Merchandise exports are also on a strong wicket. Merchandise exports went down in October. Incidentally, November has gone up by a greater amount than what went down in October. If I aggregate October and November, there is growth in merchandise exports despite the global turmoil," he told reporters here. He said India is working towards deeper integration with global trading partners, and in the months and days to come, "you will hear a lot more about our own successful engagements with many of our trading countries".

India is negotiating several free trade agreements (FTAs) with various countries and regions, including the US, European Union (EU), New Zealand, Oman, Chile, and Peru. When asked about the rupee value against the US dollar, he said the Indian economy continues to power on. "The growth is at 8.2 per cent in Q2, beating all estimates. We have seen the lowest-ever inflation in the last few months. Foreign exchange reserves continue to be strong. Capital inflows and investments in infrastructure, consumer spending, and all the levers of the economy have demonstrated a great deal of positivity," the minister said. The rupee hit a historic low of 90.15 against the US dollar on Wednesday, raising fears of inflation. India's exports contracted 11.8 per cent to \$ 34.38 billion in October on account of the impact of high tariffs by the US, while the trade deficit widened to a record high of \$ 41.68 billion, mainly due to a jump in gold imports.

In April-October this fiscal year, exports increased marginally by 0.63 per cent to \$ 254.25 billion, and imports rose 6.37 per cent to \$ 451.08 billion.



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma interacted with a delegation of media professionals from Telangana who are visiting Assam to witness the State's rapid transformation across key sectors including education, health, women empowerment and infrastructure.

Assam CM presents appointment letters to 5,815; total govt jobs rise to 1,41,194

TONY DAS
Guwahati

Increasing the strength of Assam Police Force through transparent recruitment, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma continuing his Government's journey of transparent, merit-based appointments, presented appointment letters to 5,818 youth selected for Assam Police and other directorates of the Home Department at a function held at Bhogeswar Baruah sports complex here today.

With these appointment, the total number of transparent, merit-based government appointments given by the present State government has reached 1,41,194. Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Sarma said that as promised, State Government has been giving appointments transparently, thus reflecting his government's commitment to youth empowerment, institutional strengthening and public service through fair recruitment.

He moreover said that earlier for securing jobs as police, applicants needed influential connections or money. Now in Assam, hard work and study help candidates earn government jobs. He added that nepotism frustrated young people and many who failed to get jobs despite good results had gone astray.

Giving the example of yester-years, the Chief Minister moreover said that several youth left for other states to work as security guards because they got no opportunities in Assam.

Referring to the promise of one lakh government jobs during the last Assembly election campaign, the Chief Minister said that after



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma giving appointment letters to new police recruits on Wednesday

forming the government he launched a clean and transparent merit based recruitment system. The government created a process that fills vacant posts each year in the police, education, and health departments so that no vacancy remains open for long, Sarma added.

The Chief Minister also advised recruits who gained jobs without paying bribes to reject corruption even after joining service. He said that no corruption complaints emerged against recruits in the past five years.

He urged those who have come from low income families such as farmers, vegetable sellers, and rickshaw drivers to stay kind

toward the poor because they earned their positions through determination and hard work.

He asked new recruits to give up the Orunodoi benefits if any female member of their families are receiving, visit local temples or naamghars before joining their posts, and never neglect their parents.

Labour Welfare, Home (Prisons, Home Guards and Civil Defence) Minister Rupesh Gowala, MLAs Atul Bora, Siddhartha Bhattacharyya, Ramendra Narayan Kalita, Chief Secretary Dr. Ravi Kota, DGP Harmeet Singh, and a host of other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Excise collected from tobacco to be shared with States: Finance Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday said tax revenues collected from excise duty on tobacco and related products will be part of the divisible pool, and 41 per cent of that will be shared with the states.

Replying to the debate on the Central Excise (Amendment) Bill in Lok Sabha, Sitharaman said this is not an additional tax, and the same tax burden, as currently applicable under the GST regime, will continue. The bill seeks to levy excise duty on tobacco, related products. "This is not an additional tax.

This is not something which the Centre is taking away. This is not a cess. This is excise duty. It existed before GST... It is coming back to the Centre, to be collected as excise duty, which will go to the divisible pool. It is going to be redistributed again at the 41 per cent which



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaks in the Lok Sabha during the Winter session of Parliament on Wednesday

has to go to the states," Sitharaman said.

Earlier moving the Bill for consideration and passage in Lok Sabha, Sitharaman said the levy of excise on tobacco will ensure that the tax inci-

dence on the demerit good remains the same even after the expiry of the GST compensation cess. Sitharaman said since the GST law caps maximum rate of tax at 40 per cent, the ultimate tax

incidence on tobacco after removal of GST cess would come down from the current level if excise duty is not levied. "In order to ensure that the incidence is not lower than what it was

NBCC to power a new Ghaziabad: Tulsi Niketan to rise as a modern urban landmark

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

NBCC (India) Limited, a Navratna CPSE under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ghaziabad Development Authority (GDA) for the ₹642.82 crore redevelopment of the Tulsi Niketan Scheme Area. The MoU was formally signed by Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh, IAS, Secretary, GDA and Shri Pradeep Sharma, Executive Director (Engg.) & RBG-Head, Business Development Division, NBCC (India) Ltd., marking a major step towards modern, sustainable urban transformation in Ghaziabad.

The Tulsi Niketan Scheme Area, spread across more than 78,000 square metres and comprising close to 2300 residential units and 64 shops, will undergo a complete redevelopment based on a self-sustainable model. It is proposed to fund this redevelopment by commercially utilising certain part of the area.

As part of this partnership, NBCC will initiate a detailed



feasibility study, while GDA will provide all necessary land documents, site details, and administrative support for due diligence. Upon approval of the feasibility, NBCC will take up the role of the implementing agency and will be responsible for the entire redevelopment process, including planning, design, construction, financial management, marketing and sale of built-up areas, and resettlement of existing occupants.

All project revenues will be managed through a jointly operated escrow account to ensure complete transparency in fund flow and utilisation.

Oversight of the project will be carried out by an Empowered Committee composed of officials from both GDA and NBCC, which will monitor progress, approve designs and estimates, and guide the project from planning to execution.

Rehabilitation and resettlement of current beneficiaries will be undertaken in a structured and time-bound manner, with GDA providing verified beneficiary lists and NBCC managing the on-ground implementation. The redevelopment of Tulsi Niketan aims to transform the area into a modern, well-planned, and future-ready

residential complex equipped with improved infrastructure, enhanced facilities, and a sustainable urban environment. With this MoU, NBCC and GDA reaffirm their commitment to driving quality infrastructure development and improving the standard of living for citizens.

NBCC has been a pioneer in the space of redevelopment on self-sustainable mode. After successfully completing New Motibagh and East Kidwai Nagar GPRA projects, it is also executing the redevelopment of Sarojini Nagar and Netaji Nagar in New Delhi.

The redevelopment of Nauroji Nagar has been completed and the world class World Trade Center in Nauroji Nagar was inaugurated early this year by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi. NBCC is already working on various redevelopment/development projects in Goa, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Rajasthan. NBCC has also partnered with prominent Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) for redevelopment/monetisation projects.

Labour Laws Institute hold seminar on newly notified Labour Codes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

In a major step toward clarifying India's newly implemented labour reforms, HL Kumar & Associates, along with the Labour Laws Institute, convened a high-level seminar in New Delhi to dissect the Central Government's notification of the four Labour Codes on November 21, 2025.

Marking a landmark transition in India's labour regulatory framework, the Central Government on 21 November 2025 officially brought into force the long-awaited four Labour Codes — the Code on Wages, 2019; the Industrial Relations Code, 2020; the Code on Social Security, 2020; and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020. To build awareness and facilitate a deeper understanding of these transformative laws, H.L. Kumar & Associates, a distinguished

law firm, in collaboration with the Labour Laws Institute, organised a comprehensive seminar at the India Habitat Centre in the capital.

The event drew an impressive turnout of over 250 participants, representing organisations and professionals from across India. The workshop aimed to bridge the knowledge gap surrounding the practical implications of the new labour reforms for employers, employees, HR professionals, and legal practitioners.

Addressing the gathering, Gaurav Kumar, Managing Partner at H.L. Kumar & Associates, provided an in-depth analysis of the revised definition of "wages" under the Labour Codes. He highlighted how the new structure would impact employees' take-home pay, statutory deductions, and social security entitlements, emphasising the need for organisations to reassess their compensation frameworks.

India's geospatial market to double by 2030, says Amitabh Kant at GeoSmart World 2025

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

India's geospatial market, currently valued at ₹150,000 crore, is poised to double to nearly ₹1.06 lakh crore by 2030, said Amitabh Kant, IAS, Board Member of L&T, HCL, Indigo and Fairfax, while delivering the keynote on Day 2 of the GeoSmart World Conference & Expo 2025 at Bharat Mandapam.

Kant highlighted India's rapid transformation in the geospatial and space ecosystem, calling the journey "explosive and purpose-driven." He said the projected \$ 44-billion space economy by 2033 should propel India to pursue even greater innovation and collaboration.

"Geospatial technologies are foundational—we cannot build a Viksit Bharat without them," he said, stressing the need for open,



Amitabh Kant

machine-readable datasets to keep pace with global leaders.

He urged the industry to demonstrate bold outcomes by developing, within a year, an Indian city operating on a live geospatial and AI-powered system — "not a pilot, but a real

city with measurable improvements."

Senior government officials echoed the importance of geospatial intelligence in governance. Vivek Bharadwaj, Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, outlined the impact of the

SVAMITVA scheme, which has surveyed over 3.5 lakh villages and issued nearly 3 crore property cards, transforming rural land rights and credit access. Manoj Joshi, Secretary, Department of Land Resources, explained the development of India's Land Stack, calling precise land maps essential for transparent governance.

Srikant Sastri, Chairman of the Geospatial Data Promotion and Development Committee, underscored reducing reliance on foreign systems, citing recent GPS disruptions.

Industry leaders from Esri India, GMR Group and Survey of India showcased advances in AI-enabled analytics, high-resolution spatial data, and the national vision of "One Nation, One Map," as India accelerates its geospatial capabilities for the next decade.

ONGC Chairman granted one-year extension

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Arun Kumar Singh has been granted a rare one-year extension as chairman of ONGC, in signs that the government may have wanted continuity to consolidate the gains India's top oil and gas producer has made under his leadership.

Singh, 63, will continue as the chairman of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) till December 6, 2026, according to an official order that cited a decision made by

the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In 2022, he became the first near-60 executive ever to be appointed chairman of a blue-chip PSU. Now, in another unprecedented move, his tenure will run until age 64.

Industry sources said Singh brought the much needed stability in management at ONGC, helping reverse the decade-long decline in production of crude oil, which is feedstock for making petrol and diesel, and natural gas, which is used to produce



Arun Kumar Singh

power, make fertilizer, turned into CNG to run automobiles and fire household kitchens. Under him, ONGC stitched a technical collaboration with super major BP for revival of

its flagship Mumbai High oil and gas fields. The BP partnership has helped arrest the decline in output at the field and is likely to show positive results from the next year.

The government had toyed with the idea of bringing in a technical partner for some of the ONGC's mainstay but declining fields for almost eight years but the proposal never made progress. It finally worked under Singh. Singh also oversaw the start of oil production from the delayed KG-DWN-98/2 field in the Krishna Godavari basin.

BRIEFLY

HAALAND SCORES HIS 100TH PREMIER LEAGUE GOAL



Erling Haaland scored his 100th Premier League goal on Tuesday and Manchester City moved to within two points of the top of the standings after surviving a stunning fightback from Fulham.

Haaland became the fastest player to reach a century of goals in the league with his 17th-minute opener in City's 5-4 win at Craven Cottage. But a night of personal glory was nearly wrecked as Fulham came back from 5-1 down and came agonizingly close to an equalizer in added time when Josh King's effort was cleared off the line.

"It's not good enough and we all know this and we need to improve as a team," Haaland told Sky Sports. Haaland's goal – lashed in from close range – was his 100th in 111 games. It saw him break the record of England icon Alan Shearer, who reached that benchmark in 124 games.

JUVENTUS ADVANCES TO ITALIAN CUP QUARTERFINALS



Juventus advanced to the Italian Cup quarterfinals with a 2-0 win over Udinese after teenage defender Matteo Palma scored an own goal and conceded a penalty Tuesday.

Juventus, which holds the record for the most Italian Cup trophies with 15, will next face either Atalanta or Genoa, which play each other on Wednesday.

The Bianconeri took the lead midway through the first half when Italian States international Weston McKennie did well down the right flank before putting in a low cross that Palma turned into his own net as he tried to anticipate Jonathan David.

NAVNEET KAUR, JARMANPREET SINGH TO LEAD SG PIPERS IN HIL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Hockey India League franchise SG Pipers on Wednesday announced defender Jarmanpreet Singh and forward Navneet Kaur as captains of their men's and women's teams respectively, for the upcoming season of HIL. Australian midfielder Ky Willott will be taking up the role of vice-captain of the men's team.

LAST SEASON, JARMANPREET EMERGED AS ONE OF SG PIPERS' STANDOUT PERFORMERS

In the women's team, star forward Navneet Kaur retains the captaincy, with Australia's Kaitlin Nobbs being made her deputy ahead of her first season with the Pipers.

Last season, Jarmanpreet emerged as one of SG Pipers' standout performers. His impressive contribution to India's Asia Cup 2025 triumph further underscores his readiness to lead from the front.

Willott stepped up last season with his exceptional work rate, maturity on the ball, and ability to dictate play, attributes that now see him assume a formal leadership role.

He comes into the League on the back of playing an influential role in Hockey Club Melbourne's Hockey One title triumph on Sunday.

The women's team will see Navneet returning as captain, after a strong campaign where she led the attack, scored decisive goals, and showcased her influence in India's international outings. Supporting her will be Nobbs, whose international pedigree, defensive awareness, and calm decision-making add tremendous balance to the squad.

The 2025 HIL winner Nobbs starred in Perth Thundersticks' triumph in the Hockey One Final on Sunday.

Steve eyes prize in second Ashes Test vs England

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Brisbane

Now that he's worked out that he had them upside down, Steve Smith is more confident about wearing the black strips under his eyes while batting in the day-night Ashes cricket test at the Gabba starting Thursday.

More commonly used by footballers playing under lights, the black strips are part of Smith's attempt to leave nothing to chance facing the pink ball against England's bowling attack in changing light conditions.

The Australians are coming off an eight-wicket victory in the series-opener in Perth, which finished on Day 2 after Ben Stokes' England lineup wasted strong momentum at several stages while pursuing an attack-at-all-costs Bazball routine. Smith is expecting more of the same from England. He said his lineup would also offer more of the Aussie approach to the game, describing it as a more pragmatic focus on

playing to the conditions.

Hence, his new look — one he borrowed from ex-West Indies batter Shivnarine Chanderpaul and which gained plenty of attention around cricket circles when he experimented with it at practice this week.

"I actually messaged Shivnarine Chanderpaul and asked him what his thoughts were, whether he wore the chalk or the strips. He said the strips, and he thinks it blocks out 65 per cent of the glare," Smith said Wednesday at the captain's news conference on the eve of the second test. "He also said I've seen photos and you're wearing them the wrong way."

"So yesterday I put them on the right way and. I agree. It certainly stops the glare and yeah, I'll be wearing them."

The Australians have been forced into at least one change after Usman Khawaja was ruled out of the second test because of back problems that curtailed his participation in



Perth last week, with most pundits predicting a return for Josh Inglis in the middle order and Travis Head continuing as an opener after his starring role in the first test. Australia is delaying finalizing a starting XI until the toss, leaving Smith to deal with speculation about

injured skipper Pat Cummins being rushed back into the lineup from outside the match squad. He fielded multiple questions without giving a definitive answer.

Cummins missed the first test with a back injury and was left out of the original squad for the second, but

joined stand-in captain Smith and coach Andrew McDonald for a pitch inspection Wednesday.

"He looks pretty good to me, the way he's bowled in the nets," Smith said of Cummins. "Obviously games are a different intensity. He's tracking really nicely,

he knows his body well. We'll wait and see."

The Australians have an excellent record in day-night test matches, with the only one blemish. That was an upset eight-run loss to West Indies in January of last year at the Gabba, a ground where the Australians have been otherwise close to unbeatable for decades.

England hasn't won an Ashes test at the Brisbane venue since 1986, and hasn't won a test on Australian soil since the 2010-11 series.

Stokes has vowed to maintain England's "blue-print" for attacking approach, which was heavily criticized in Perth. Asked to describe Australia's way, Smith kept it simple.

"Adapting to conditions and what's in front of us — playing the game in real time," he said. "That's one thing this team's done really well for a period of time, been able to sum up the conditions, play what's in front in live time."

"And I think if you do that in test cricket, it holds you in pretty good stead."

Smith's death hits harder before Ashes: Stokes

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Brisbane

Being in Australia, 1-0 down already in the Ashes series, meant learning of the sudden death of England great Robin Smith "hits harder" for Ben Stokes and his squad.

England's test and second-string squads were in Perth last week, where Australia won the first test by 8 wickets in two days and an Australian XI also won a game against the Lions.

Smith, who played 62 test matches for England, died in Perth, Western Australia, on Monday. He was 62. The news emerged days after Smith met and spoke with the Lions squad.



Former England batter Robin Smith

"Just last week he was there chatting with the Lions who were out here," Stokes said Wednesday on the eve of the second test in Brisbane. "He was at the game last week and talking

to people and sharing, going into quite a lot of detail about his life and opening up quite a lot.

"It hits you a bit harder, I think, when you realize that it was only a week ago."

Stokes said while he didn't know Smith very well, the England touring party was filled with people who knew the ex-test batter.

"The same thing kept on coming up pretty much, which was just that he was an absolute belter of a bloke," he said.

Stokes ended the news conference by saying England's ambition in Brisbane was the same as it was when the team arrived in Australia: to reclaim the Ashes.

A knee injury to paceman Mark Wood meant England had to make a change in the bowling attack, and selectors settled on all-rounder Will Jacks ahead of specialist spinner Shoaib Bashir.

Indian shooters hope to hit bulls eye at ISSF WC final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Doha

India's top shooters, after a year sprinkled with major milestones and heaps of medals, will look to finish the season on a high at the elite ISSF World Cup Finals, which will commence on Thursday.

The season-ending competition will see 14 of India's best, including Paris Olympics double-bronze medallist pistol shooter Manu Bhaker, world champion Samrat Rana and multiple World Cup medallist Suruchi Singh, vie for the honours in a field usually restricted to the world's top 12 shooters in the individual section in each event.

In a glorious outing for the country's shooters on the big stage, India came up with a record-breaking show at the World Championships, held in Cairo (pistol/rifle) and Athens (shotgun), where



they won 14 medals, including three gold across Olympic and non-Olympic disciplines.

They will now look to convert that success in the World Cup Final, which not just gives winners the bragging rights but also comes loaded with attractive prize money of Euro 5,000, 4,000 and 2,000 for the gold, silver and bronze medallist respectively, in each category.

Two of India's top pistol shooters, Manu and Esha Singh will be among the favourites for podium finishes in 10m air and 25m sports pistol after they made the top-12 on the basis of their ranking and performance in the World Cups and World Championship.

The men's 10m air pistol event will have the newly-crowned champion in Cairo recently, Kamal-born Samrat

Rana, and Baghpat's Varun Tomar, who took the bronze as India made history by taking two podium spots in the showpiece event.

The men's 10m air rifle event will have former world champion Rudrankksh Patil and Arjun Babuta, who finished fourth at the Paris Olympics, compete against a strong field that also has the indomitable Sheng Lihao of China, the reigning Olympic and Asian Games champion, and Hungary's Istevan Peni.

Anish Bhanwala, who won silver at the World Championship after surviving two shoot-offs, too will be on a high after winning the biggest medal of his career, while women's 10m air rifle exponent Elavenil Valarivan will hope to continue her good form after a bronze-medal feat in Cairo.

Veteran Zoravar Sandhu, who became only the third trap shooter after Karni

Singh and world champion Manavjit Singh to win medal at the worlds (a bronze in Athens), will also be a leading contender after seeking training from legendary England marksman Peter Wilson, who is now India's foreign coach.

With a strong line-up, India will look to better their medal tally from the previous edition, held in New Delhi, where they won two silver and as many bronze.

Men: 10m air pistol - Samrat Rana, Varun Tomar; 10m air rifle: Rudrankksh Patil, Arjun Babuta; 25m rapid-fire pistol - Anish Bhanwala, Vijayveer Sidhu; 50m rifle 3P - Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar; Trap - Zoravar Sandhu.

Women: 10m air pistol - Suruchi Singh, Manu Bhaker; Esha Singh; 10m air rifle - Elavenil Valarivan; 25m pistol - Manu Bhaker, Simranpreet Kaur; Esha Singh; 50m rifle 3P - Sift Kaur Samra.

Kush Maini to drive latest Formula 1 car in Young Driver Test in Abu Dhabi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Abu Dhabi

Indian racer Kush Maini will get the taste of a modern Formula 1 machinery for the very first time when he takes the wheel of the current Alpine car in the Young Driver Test at Yas Marina Circuit.

The test will take place next Tuesday, two days after the 2025 Formula 1 World Champion is decided on the same track.

"Following the race weekend, Kush will take part in Tuesday's post-season Young Driver Test, following the conclusion of the Formula 2 race weekend, for his first appearance in modern Formula One machinery in an official Formula One session," read a statement from Alpine Formula 1 team.

The 25-year-old from Bengaluru has previously driven in the team's Testing Previous Cars (TPC) programme and simulator as part of his role in the Alpine Academy. He is also one of

THE 25-YEAR-OLD HAS PREVIOUSLY DRIVEN IN THE TEAM'S TESTING PREVIOUS CARS PROGRAMME AND SIMULATOR AS PART OF HIS ROLE IN THE ALPINE ACADEMY

the reserve drivers at the Enstone based outfit.

Nearing the end of his third Formula 2 season, Maini is understandably thrilled about getting in the cockpit of the latest Formula 1 car.

"I can't wait to take part in the post-season Abu Dhabi test and to have my first proper experience of the A525. The Yas Marina Circuit is one I know well from Formula 2 and it will be impressive to see the level of performance Formula One cars have around this track."

"I'm very appreciative of the team for trusting me in this role and will aim to do the best job possible with the

programme the team gives me," said Maini.

Maini, who is aiming to become the third Indian to compete in Formula 1 after Narain Karthikeyan and Karun Chandhok, will be sharing the track with current Alpine driver Pierre Gasly who will be testing with Pirelli compounds for the 2026 season alongside other established drivers holding a super license.

Maini will be in the other car which will be used for the young driver test. A young driver is defined as someone with fewer than two Formula 1 starts.

Maini will be competing in his fourth Formula 2 season in 2026, effectively his last shot at a Formula 1 race seat for 2027.

A season in Formula 2 costs more than Rs 20 crore while the budget is much higher for Formula 1.

Ahead of the final race weekend in Abu Dhabi, Maini is 16th in the drivers' standings with 26 points.

Not returning to tennis: Serena Williams

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ New York

Serena Williams threw cold water on the idea that she might be preparing to return to tennis, writing on social media Tuesday that she is "NOT coming back," after a spokesman for the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) said the 23-time Grand Slam champion had registered with the sport's drug-testing body.

That is the first step that would be required by a player seeking to come out of retirement.

The 44-year-old Williams, one of the greats of the game, has not competed since bidding farewell at the 2022 U.S. Open. At the time, Williams said she didn't want to use the word "retiring" and instead declared that she was "evolving" away from tennis.

It was not clear when or where — or even if — Williams actually will play again, and she later posted: "Omg yall I'm NOT coming back. This wildfire is crazy."



Her agent did not immediately return a request for comment.

In a statement emailed to The Associated Press, U.S. Tennis Association spokesman Brendan McIntyre said: "We are aware that Serena has filed the necessary paperwork with the International Tennis Integrity Agency to reenter the International Registered Testing Pool. If Serena decides to return and compete at the professional level, together with her fans, we will enthusiastically welcome the

return of one of the greatest champions in the history of our sport."

Williams was one of the biggest stars of any sport, a dominant talent on the court and still someone drawing attention away from it. If she were to end up returning to the tour, it would be a significant story line, of course.

Her decision to place her name back in the testing pool with the ITIA, which oversees anti-doping and anti-corruption efforts, was first reported by Bounces.

"She is on the list and back

in the testing pool," ITIA spokesman Adrian Bassett wrote to the AP on Tuesday.

Athletes returning to testing need to provide information on their whereabouts — details on their location when they are not at an official event and times when they are available to give samples. Someone who retires while they are on the list and later comes back needs to be available for testing for six months before they are allowed to return to competition.

Williams' older sister, Venus, returned to competition this July at age 45 after nearly 1 1/2 years away from the tour; she never had announced her retirement. At the U.S. Open, Venus became the oldest player to play singles at the American Grand Slam tournament since 1981.

When Venus, a seven-time major singles champion, came back at the DC Open, she spoke about wishing Serena would join her back on tour. They claimed 14 Grand Slam doubles titles as a pair.