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SOMBER CHRISTMAS UNDER  
THE SHADOW OF WAR IN GAZA



## Centre scraps no-detention policy for primary class V, VIII



decision intending to improve the learning outcome among children. The Union Education Ministry has taken a big decision and abolished the 'No Detention Policy'. Students who fail the annual examination in classes 5 and 8 will be failed," Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy, told The Pioneer. However, the Government has clarified that no child shall be expelled from any school till the completion of elementary education. According to a gazette notification, after the conduct of regular examination, if a child fails to fulfil the promotion criteria, as notified from time to time, he shall be given additional instruction and opportunity for re-examination within a period of two months from the date of declaration of results.

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

In a major change in the primary education system, the Centre on Monday directed for ending the "no-detention policy" for fifth and

eighth class, which means that students in these classes who fail their annual exams shall not be promoted to higher grade and hence will need to repeat the same class. Failed students will have a chance to retake the test

within two months, but if they fail again, they will not be promoted. The school will not expel a student until the 8th grade. Education Secretary Sanjay Kumar said that the Central Government has taken this

## Delhi Govt teachers to learn how to handle bomb threats

**SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI**

In a way replicating the training reportedly given to school teachers in United States of America (USA) on 'how to shoot a gun, and handle a weapon' due to the rampant problem of gun shooting in schools, the Delhi Police joined hands with the Delhi Education Department, for training teachers and school staff of all government and private schools on how to handle bomb threats even as the fear of such threats through emails continue to loom among the school



authorities in the National Capital since May. This comes as an extension of the Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena's 'Samvaad' program where in a meeting with teachers, they raised the issue of Drug Abuse, Cyber Hygiene and recent Bomb threat emails. Multiple schools in Delhi have received hoax bomb threats in the last 10 days. The threats disrupted classes and triggered multi-agency search operations.

Continued on page 2

## Bangladesh wants Hasina back, sends note verbale to India

**PTI ■ DHAKA**

Bangladesh's interim government said on Monday that it has sent a diplomatic note to India to send back deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina to Dhaka. Hasina, 77, has been living in exile in India since August 5 when she fled the country amid the student-led protests that toppled her 16-year regime. Bangladesh-based International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) has issued arrest warrants for Hasina and several former Cabinet ministers, advisers, and military and civil officials for "crimes against humanity and genocide".

"We have sent a note verbale to the Indian government saying that Bangladesh wants her back here for the judicial process," Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain told reporters at his office. Earlier in the morning, Home Advisor Jahangir Alam said his office has sent a letter to the foreign ministry to facilitate the ousted premier's extradition from India. "We have sent a letter to the foreign ministry regarding her extradition. The process is currently underway," he told reporters in response to a query. Alam said an extradition treaty between Dhaka and New Delhi already exists and Hasina could be brought back to Bangladesh under it. Last month, in an address to the nation on the completion of 100 days of the interim government, Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus said it will seek the extradition of Hasina. "We must ensure justice in every killing... We will also ask India to send back fallen autocrat Sheikh Hasina," he said. Yunus, who assumed office on August 8, claimed that about 1,500 people, including



students and workers, were killed while 19,931 others were wounded during the protest against the Hasina government. In October, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul had reportedly said that Bangladesh would strongly protest if India tried to refuse Hasina's extradition by citing any provision in the treaty. In an interview with PTI in Dhaka in September, Yunus had said that Hasina making political remarks from India is an "unfriendly gesture", asserting that she must remain silent to prevent discomfort to both countries until Dhaka requests her extradition. "If India wants to keep her until the time Bangladesh (government) wants her back, the condition would be that she has to keep quiet," he said. In recent weeks, Hasina has accused the Yunus-led interim government of perpetrating "genocide" and failing to protect minorities, especially Hindus, since her ouster.



## ONOE JPC to meet on Jan 8

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The first meeting of the 39-member parliamentary panel on the 'One Nation, One Election' initiative is scheduled for January 8, marking the start of discussions on a major electoral reform proposed by the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government. According to parliamentary sources, the Joint Committee on Bills for simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies, chaired by BJP MP PP Chaudhary, will likely have an introductory session where officials will brief the panel on two key Bills aimed at implementing the BJP's long-standing election reform agenda.

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## Three Khalistani terrorists killed in Pilibhit encounter

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ PILIBHIT**

In a major anti-terror operation, three militants belonging to the Khalistani Commando Force were gunned down in a joint operation by Punjab and Uttar Pradesh police in Pilibhit's Pura area early Monday morning. The encounter left two policemen injured, while the police recovered a significant cache of weapons, including two AK-47 rifles and two Glock pistols, from the spot. The operation was carried out around 5 am near the Hardoi Branch Canal after Punjab police traced the location of the wanted militants to Pilibhit. The three militants, all hailing from Punjab's Gurdaspur district, were accused of orchestrating a grenade attack on a police outpost in Gurdaspur on December 19. According to officials, the militants were traveling on a motorcycle when they were intercepted by the joint police team. Upon being surrounded, the trio opened fire indiscriminately using their automatic weapons. In the ensuing exchange of gunfire, all three were neutralized. Two policemen sustained injuries during the operation. The sounds of gunfire in the early hours sent shockwaves through nearby villages, with residents initially unsure of the nature of the operation. Bullet marks on police vehicles and the seizure of a motorcycle used by the militants indicated the intensity of the encounter.



This combo image shows arms and other items recovered at the site of an encounter of three terror suspects, allegedly involved in the grenade attack in Gurdaspur, by a joint team of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab police, in Pilibhit

## Terror suspect planned escape to Pak via B'desh

**PNS ■ KOLKATA**

The arrested member of the 'Tehreek-e-Mujahideen' terror outfit from Kashmir was planning to use the river route to travel to Bangladesh and eventually escape to Pakistan, a senior officer of the West Bengal Special Task Force (STF) said on Monday. Bengal STF officials also believe that the arrested person, identified as Javed Munshi, has close ties with the Lashkar-e-Taiba terror group. Investigators are working to decode the notes seized from his possession to uncover more details about his plans, the officer added.

Munshi was arrested by a joint team of Jammu and Kashmir Police and West Bengal Police STF from near Canning in South 24 Parganas district on Sunday. The 'Tehreek-e-Mujahideen' group is controlled from Pakistan and has connections with other terror outfits in the valley, as well as in Pakistan and Bangladesh, the officer added. The 58-year-old man was considering multiple routes to reach Bangladesh, including traveling by road from Canning to Dhamakali, and then using river routes through the Sunderbans.

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## Gig workers need targeted regulatory framework: NHRC

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

In the rapidly expanding gig economy of India, gig workers often endure grueling shifts that can exceed 10 hours a day, while contending with low, unpredictable incomes and the pressure of meeting unrealistic performance targets. However, things might change for the better for this workforce, which is estimated to be 65 lakh strong. At a recent session held by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), stakeholders from the sector recommended a slew of measures including the need for targeted regulatory frameworks, setting up rest points, and the creation of grievance redressal mechanisms, particularly for women workers. These recommendations which come amidst Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya announcement in October to put in place a framework for social security of gig workers, including health insurance and pension were presented as part of the



meet addressing the challenges faced by gig workers. The issue holds importance given that India's top think tank panel Niti Aayog has estimated 65 lakh gig and platform workers in the country, but the number is likely to be over two crore as the segment is growing rapidly. Gig workers, also known as independent contractors, are individuals who undertake temporary or short-term work assignments, primarily within the service sector. They operate independently and are not regarded as employees of the organizations. Hence, they do

not typically have access to common employee benefits that full-time staff members receive. However, irregular incomes, unexpected expenses, and limited access to credit have often left them at the receiving end. Taking serious note of their precarious condition, NHRC's acting chairperson, Vijaya Bharathi Sayani said that there is a "need for targeted efforts" through regulatory frameworks to address gig worker's challenges, including long working hours, financial strain, and physical exhaustion.

Continued on page 2

## No face cover allowed for women lawyers: J and K HC

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ SRINAGAR**

The High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh recently observed that the rules dealing with the dress code for women advocates prescribed by the Bar Council of India (BCI) do not say that women lawyers can appear before courts with a face covering. The Court made the observation after a lady lawyer appeared with a face cover and turned down the Court's request to remove the cover. This led the Court to seek a report from the Registrar General on whether the relevant rules allow lady advocates to appear with their face covered.

Continued on page 2

## Shyam Benegal, pioneer of parallel cinema in India, passes away at 90

**TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI**

Veteran filmmaker, Padma Bhushan and Dadasaheb Phalke award winner Shyam Benegal, a pioneer of parallel cinema in India has died aged 90, after suffering from a chronic kidney disease. He will be remembered for his films like 'Ankur', 'Nishant', 'Zubeida', 'Manthan', 'Mandi' and 'Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose'. Shyam Babu, as he was affectionately known in the film circles, breathed his last at the Wockhardt Hospital in Mumbai, just nine days after he celebrated his 90th birthday with his family and friends. The legendary filmmaker is survived by his 85-year-old wife Nira Benegal, who has been into diverse fields of activities including films, literature, music architecture and design, and daughter Pia Benegal. Shyam Benegal, who made

significant contributions to India Cinema, introduced parallel cinema in the seventies. Rated at one stage next only to the all-time great Satyajit Ray as a filmmaker who made meaningful films, he made films like 'Ankur' (1973), 'Nishant' (1975), 'Manthan' (1976), 'Bhumika' (1977), 'Mammo' (1994), 'Sardari Begum' (1996), and 'Zubeida' (2001). He also made a children's film Charandas Chor (Charandas the Thief) in 1975. Born on December 14 1934 in a Konkani-speaking Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmin family in Hyderabad, Shyam made his first film at 12 years of age, using a camera given to him by his photographer father Sridhar B. Benegal. He went on to earn a Master's degree in Economics from Osmania University, Hyderabad, where he also founded the Hyderabad Film Society. Having begun his career as a



DECEMBER 14, 1934 - DECEMBER 23, 2024

copywriter with Mumbai-based advertising agency, Lintas Advertising, where he steadily rose to become the creative head.

Meanwhile, Benegal made his first documentary in Gujarati, 'Gher Betha Ganga' (Ganges at the Doorstep) in 1962.

He also taught at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) between 1966 and 1973, and was the chairman of the FTII for two terms between 1980-83 and 1989-92. He began his career as a filmmaker by making documentaries. One of his early documentaries, 'A Child of the Streets' (1967), garnered him wide acclaim, and he went on to make over 70 documentaries. A versatile filmmaker, Shyam Benegal had made as many as 20 feature films during his illustrious career. Known for spotting talent, Shyam Benegal introduced actors - many of whom from FTII and National School of Drama (NSD) - introduced actors like Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri, Anant Nag, Smita Patil, Shabana Azmi, Kulbhushan Kharbanda and Amrish Puri. Benegal was honoured by the Government of India with the Padma Shri in 1976 and the

Padma Bhushan in 1991. He has received several accolades, including eighteen National Film Awards, a Filmfare Award and a Nandi Award. In 2005, he was honoured with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, India's highest award in the field of cinema. Apart from making films for the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), he also served as the Director of the NFDC from 1980 to 1986. With the financial support of actor Shashi Kapoor, Shyam Benegal made commercial films like Junoon (1978) and Kalyug (1981). Benegal wrote the scripts and screenplays for his films, and authored three books based on his own films: 'The Churning with Vijay Tendulkar' (1984), based on 'Manthan'; 'Satyajit Ray' (1988), based on his biographical film, 'Satyajit Ray'; and 'The Marketplace' (1989), which was based on 'Mandi'.

## MARKETS



## WEATHER

AIQI	421
MAX	18°C
MIN	12°C

## No lapse, says CISF on MPs scuffle



**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) on Monday said there was "no lapse" on its part when asked about the scuffle that took place among MPs in Parliament complex during the recently concluded Winter Session and added it will choose to "keep quiet" when allegations are levelled by lawmakers. The CISF is tasked to guard the Parliament House Complex. "There was no lapse (on part of the force)...By lapse if you mean some weapons were allowed inside, then I can tell you that no weapon was allowed..." CISF Deputy Inspector General (operations) Shrikant Kishore said at a Press conference. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Members of Parliament Prapad Chandra Sarangi and Mukesh Rajput had got injured during scuffle between the Opposition and ruling BJP MPs on the premises of Parliament who were discharged from the RML Hospital on Monday. Kishore said the force will choose to "keep quiet when the honourable members (MPs) make allegations." The officer was asked about the counter-allegations made by the parliamentarians on who pushed whom. He added the CISF was not conducting any inquiry into the incident that took place at the 'Makar Dwar' of the Parliament House Complex on December 19. Delhi Police had filed an FIR against Leader of the Opposition (LoP) and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi following BJP's complaint against him. Asked about complaints against the force since it took charge of Parliament security in June this year, the officer said the MPs, employees working in the complex and visitors are "very satisfied and happy" with their work. Kishore said the security department of Parliament will be competent to answer questions related to security, including recovery of cash from a seat in the House during the last session.



BJP leader Thakur releases 'aarop patra' against Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Senior BJP leader Anurag Thakur on Monday released an 'aarop patra' (charge sheet) against AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal, accusing him of turning Delhi into a "corruption lab" through a series of "scams".

Thakur said, "This charge sheet has stories of AAP's corruption. Arvind Kejriwal has made fake promises to people living in Delhi. He said would provide free medical, water and electricity, but people still pay for these services.



Ranjan Dimri

government but was involved in eight to nine scams related to the liquor policy, Delhi Jal Board, DTC, Waqf Board," Thakur charged while releasing the document.

Ghotale Pe Ghotala, Kejriwal Ne Banaya Delhi Ko Bhrashtachar Ki Prayogshala" (Kejriwal turned Delhi into a laboratory of corruption with scams), Thakur gave the slogan and asserted that the BJP will remove the AAP from power in Delhi.

costliest water is provided by your government. Delhi is number 1 amongst the world's most polluted capitals. Delhi has India's most corrupt ministers," Thakur said.

"AAP took 1.6 million dollars from Sikhs For Justice and Pannu has also accepted this. In the Punjab Assembly polls, they took the support of Khalistani groups. AAP is providing security to illegal Rohingya immigrants," the BJP said in its accusations against AAP.

and hospitals and did not use the Centre's funds to boost the city's healthcare infrastructure. He charged that the smog tower in Connaught Place, which was supposed to provide relief from air pollution, was lying defunct although the AAP government spent crores of rupees on advertisement.

AAP launches door-to-door registration for city Govt's two financial aid schemes

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal, along with Chief Minister Atishi and former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, on Monday launched the door-to-door registration for women and elderly citizens under the Delhi government's two financial aid schemes, 'Mahila Samman Yojana' and 'Sanjeevani Yojana' respectively.



Ranjan Dimri

such women, Arvind Kejriwal assured them to have their names added to the voter list, enabling them to claim the scheme's benefits, which are exclusively for Delhi residents with verified voter status.

registration drive, he said said, "We conducted the registration of some senior citizens in the Jangpura constituency. The registration for the Mahila Samman Yojana and the Sanjeevani Yojana has begun today. We started the registration for Mahila Samman from the New Delhi constituency. Now, we have commenced the registration for the Sanjeevani Yojana in the Jangpura constituency. Here, we registered some senior citizens."

He added that under the Sanjeevani Yojana, senior citizens above 60 years of age will have their medical expenses covered by the Delhi government, whether they get treated in government or private hospitals. He stated that while all treatments in Delhi government hospitals are free, under the Sanjeevani Scheme, senior citizens will now be able to receive treatment in private hospitals as well, with all expenses covered by the Delhi government.

The registration process will continue until every household in Delhi has been covered. These two schemes will prove to be game changers in people's lives," he said.

LG takes potshot at Kejriwal over city's hellish civic amenities

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Lieutenant Governor Vinal Kumar Saxena on Monday took a potshot at former Chief Minister and AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal, stating that after 10 years your eyes have opened to the miserable conditions and hellish 'civic amenities' prevailing in Delhi.



Ranjan Dimri

the same promptness and concern for the places like Kiradi, Burari, Sangam Vihar, Gokulpuri, Mundka, Nangloi, Ranikheda, Kalandar Colony, etc., identified by me after the tour. "I would have been happy if you had also paid attention to those Delhi Government schools, where students of two classes are taught by ghost teacher in the same room with their backs towards each other," he claimed, adding that he should take cognizance of those mohalla clinics where the condition is dilapidated and doctors do not come to the clinics.

requested you to solve them," the letter read. Saxena added that it would be appropriate to remind you that no work has been done on these issues till date and Yamuna has reached the highest level of pollution this year. "If you don't mind, I will personally hold you responsible for this, since you had filed a petition in the Supreme Court to stop the cleaning work going on in the Yamuna," he claimed.

Delhiites wake up to biting cold wave as parts of city receive light showers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhiites woke up to a biting cold wave with fog on Monday morning even as parts of the national capital received light showers. The minimum temperature recorded in the city stood at 8.6 degrees Celsius, according to the Safdarjung Observatory, a notch below the seasonal average while the maximum settled at a chilly 20 degrees Celsius.



Ranjan Dimri

process. The rainfall was too light to have a substantial impact on the entrenched pollutants. One of the contributing factors to this situation was the relatively calm wind speeds that did little to disperse the pollutants. The air pollution in Delhi was—over 74.4 times—the limit prescribed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in the morning. The overall level of Particulate Matter under 10 microns was 570 as compared to 457 micrograms per cubic meter a day before.

Congress expected to release its second list of candidates in next few weeks

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Health insurance, monthly stipend and free bus rides for women allowance, free electricity, and a road map to make Delhi pollution free—these are among the key promises that the Delhi Congress is likely to announce in it 'Nyay Patra', which is expected to be released on Christmas ahead of the high octane Delhi assembly elections.

Coaching centre deaths: LG approves immediate suspension of two DFS officers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Months after the unfortunate incident of death of three students in basement of Rau's Coaching Centre at Old Rajender Nagar, Delhi Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinal Kumar Saxena has approved the immediate suspension of two Group 'A' officers of the Fire Safety Department, Delhi government, Raj Niwas said on Monday.

City CEO iterates availability of Voter Helpline Number for electoral queries

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Electoral Officer of Delhi R. Alice Vaz, IAS has iterated the availability of the Voter Helpline Number 1950 (Toll-Free) to assist citizens for their electoral queries and complaints. This effort focuses on improving accessibility and ensuring that every voter receives accurate information and timely support.

Congress expected to release its second list of candidates in next few weeks

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

to promise to the people of Delhi in a bid to win the elections, slated to be held early next year. Congress is going to make five to six big promises to the people of Delhi through its manifesto, a party source said. He added that on the lines of Rajasthan, the people of Delhi will also be promised health insurance of Rs 25 lakhs.

# Congress running smear campaign against Shah, accuses BJP

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**  
The BJP on Monday accused the Congress of running a smear campaign against Union Home Minister Amit Shah and said, instead of indulging in such "drama", it should apologise for always "insulting and humiliating" B R Ambedkar.  
It also accused the Congress of using out of context a small portion of Shah's recent speech in the Rajya Sabha in a bid to "establish its political identity".  
The Congress has launched a weeklong nationwide campaign against Shah, alleging that he insulted Ambedkar with his remarks while participating in a debate on the Constitution in the Rajya Sabha last week.

As part of the "Ambedkar Samman Saptah", Congress workers and leaders will hold marches and press conferences to remember Ambedkar's legacy, the party said on Saturday.  
Hitting back, senior BJP leader and former Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad alleged that the Congress, which "always" insulted Ambedkar during his lifetime, was doing a "drama" of remembering his legacy.  
"The Congress, which always insulted B R Ambedkar, is holding press conferences across the country... Stop this drama. Stop this hypocrisy," Prasad said in a press conference at the party headquarters.  
"The Congress must tender an unconditional apology for all the insults and humiliations



done to B R Ambedkar during his lifetime and to his legacy after his death. First of all, publicly apologise and then hold press conferences," he added.  
The BJP leader asserted that the people of the country were very mature. "Its (Congress) efforts will not succeed."  
Prasad said the BJP would hold press conferences around the country to "expose" the Congress by telling people how the party and its leaders insulted Ambedkar. "We have all the proof," he added.  
The BJP leader also slammed Congress general secretary KC Venugopal for describing as a "badge of honour" the FIR against Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi in connection with last week's face-off between

ruling and opposition MPs on the Parliament premises.  
"A case was filed against Rahul Gandhi for pushing and shoving (BJP) MPs and a Congress general secretary, who is very close to him, said it was a badge of honour in their fight to honour the legacy of BR Ambedkar... What a bundle of lies," he said.  
Rahul Gandhi is wearing "badge of dishonour for insulting and humiliating the legacy of Ambedkar", he charged.  
Prasad said the BJP believed that all those who made "some honest efforts" to build the nation should be respected. "This is the difference (between the Congress and the BJP)... We honour even our staunch rivals who have tried to build the nation in their own ways. We published a book on EMS

Namboodiripad [CPI(M) leader and Kerala's first chief minister] when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was prime minister," he said.  
After the BJP assumed power under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lok Janshakti Party chief Ram Vilas Paswan was conferred with the Padma Bhushan and Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar) supreme Sharad Pawar the Padma Vibhushan, he added.  
Asked about Jawaharlal Nehru, Prasad said, "The biggest proof of honouring our rivals is the prime ministers' memorial and museum. Earlier, only Nehru's memorial was there. Now, there is (a memorial of) every prime minister. The country should remember all the prime ministers."

# Nearly 10 lakh Govt jobs provided in mission mode: PM Modi

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said his government has provided nearly 10 lakh permanent government jobs to youths in the last one or two and a half years which, he asserted, is a record.  
Addressing recruits at a Rozgar Mela through a virtual event, where over 71,000 people were given appointment letters, he said never before in the tenure of any previous government were jobs provided in such a "mission mode".  
The young population is at the centre of his government's policies and programmes, he said, adding honesty and transparency have driven the recruitment process.  
The prime minister said 'Rozgar Melas' (recruitment drives) are empowering the youth and unlocking their potential. "The youth of India today is full of new confidence, succeeding in every sector."  
Noting that a large number of recruits are women, Modi said it is the endeavour of his government that they become self-dependent in every field.  
The government's decision to grant 26-week maternity leave to women has helped them a lot in their careers, he said and



underscored that women are the majority owners of the house constructed under the 'PM Awas Yojana'. Women-led development is taking place in the country, he said.  
Modi said making maximum use of the Indian youths' abilities and talent is a priority of his government, and that they are at the centre of a host of schemes, be it start-up India, digital India or reforms in space and defence sectors.  
The National Education

category.  
The backward classes recruitment has seen a 27 per cent rise under the Modi government compared to the UPA's 10 years in power, he said.  
The Schedules Castes and Scheduled Tribes accounted for 15.8 and 9.6 respectively for Monday's recruitments, Singh added.  
In his address, Modi said the development of a country relies on the hard work, capability, and leadership of its youth, and India is committed to becoming a developed nation by 2047 as its policies and decisions focus on empowering its talented youth.  
He said India is now the world's fifth-largest economy and the third-largest start-up ecosystem. Similarly, youths pursuing careers in sports have confidence that they will not fail because they now are supported by modern training facilities and tournaments.  
Modi said the country is undergoing a transformation across various sectors, becoming the second-largest in mobile manufacturing.  
India is also making strides in renewable energy, organic farming, space, defence, tourism, and wellness, creating new opportunities and reaching new heights in each area, he added.

Policy has taken steps for the development of youngsters, he said, highlighting its emphasis on the use of mother tongues.  
His government has ensured that language is not a barrier by ensuring that youngsters can take recruitment exams in 13 Indian languages, he added.  
Noting that former prime minister Charan Singh, whose birth anniversary is being observed on Monday, stood

for the development of rural India and for the country's progress, Modi said his government has followed this by creating job and self-employment opportunities in villages. It was his government's good fortune to bestow Bharat Ratna on Singh earlier this year, he said.  
Speaking at the event, Union minister Jitendra Singh said more than 29 per cent of the 71,000 recruited came from the Other Backward Classes

# CISF launches new transfer-posting policy to ensure 'better work-life balance'

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**  
The CISF on Monday said it has unveiled a new organisational transfer and posting policy in order to ensure a "better work-life balance" for its personnel who guard some of the most vital assets and infrastructure in the country.  
The policy will "impact" over 98 per cent of the paramilitary force's about 1.70 lakh workforce with personnel to retire within two years being the first category to be given "choice or preference posting" followed by women staffers, working couples and the remaining falling in the fourth category.  
The policy, to kick in from December 31, is meant for non-gazetted officials (NGOs) in the ranks from constable to inspector, as grievances related to this issue is "higher" in these ranks, officials said.  
"The policy is aimed to satisfy the force members when it comes to their transfer and posting, and place of work...Without compromising on the operational requirements of the force," CISF Inspector General (Administration) K C Samantary briefed the media.  
The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has replaced the last such policy that was enacted in 2017. "The policy has been

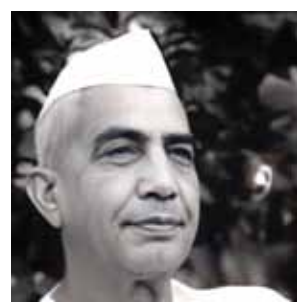


made after conducting extensive consultations on the ground. We aim to make the CISF a future ready force to cope with emerging security challenges with training and building expertise in various security domains.  
"We also see that there is a profound shift in social norms and family dynamics and work-life balance is not desirable but essential," the IG said. He said "more and more women" were joining the force and that "working couples" are increasing in the force and hence the policy is borne out after considering all such issues.  
The IG said special care will be taken to ensure that the education of the children of the force personnel does not suffer and transfer orders will be issued in such a time that the academic cycle of their wards does not get affected.

"Choice-based posting in CISF has been made a rule as compared to being an exception earlier. Personnel who want to get a choice transfer or posting will have to opt for it," he said.  
As per the CISF officials, personnel retiring within two years will be given the first preference while issuing posting orders followed by women personnel, then working couples and the rest will fall in the last category.  
The IG said "domain experts and personnel who are highly talented" will also get preference in their choice posting due to their skills and demanding nature of work.  
The domain experts are those who are adept in areas like information technology, cyber security, data science, aviation security, anti-drone solutions, weapons and tactics, among others.

# PM Modi, Dhankhar, Yogi pay tributes to Charan Singh on birth anniversary

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW**  
Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh (UP) Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday paid tributes to former prime minister Charan Singh on his birth anniversary.  
Dhankhar recalled Charan Singh's contribution to the agri sector. Talking to reporters at Kisan Ghat here after paying tributes to Singh on his 122nd birth anniversary, Dhankhar said it is an occasion for everyone to take a resolve that agriculture is necessary for India's rise.  
Agro sector and farmer welfare are fundamentals for a passage to a developed nation at 2047," he said. Dhankhar said as Singh was committed towards holistic development of farmers, it was time for all of us to "converge our energies and get into the job that these celebrations are festive occasions for the farmer and would be game changer for the country's economy."  
In his tributes, Prime Minister Modi described Charan Singh as a true well-wisher of the poor and farmers. In a social media post, Modi said Singh's dedication and spirit of service to the country will continue to inspire everyone.  
Born in 1902 to a Jat family in western Uttar Pradesh, Singh went on to become a prominent leader, especially in north India, and an axis of anti-Congress politics after he quit the Congress. He also served as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh.  
The Modi government bestowed the Bharat Ratna on him this year, acknowledging his contribution to public life. His grandson Jayant Singh is a minister in



the BJP-led NDA government. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said in a social media post "Humble tributes to former prime minister 'Bharat Ratna' Chaudhary Charan Singh ji on his birth anniversary. He dedicated his life to the upliftment of villages, poor and deprived and farmer welfare! Heartiest greetings of 'Farmers' Day' to the people of the state and the farmers who provide food!"  
The chief minister also attended a programme marking the 122nd birth anniversary of the former prime minister. He said, "Chaudhary Charan Singh's birth anniversary has been observed as 'Kisan Samman Diwas' in Uttar Pradesh since 2002."  
He recalled Singh's belief that India cannot prosper if its farmers remain poor, emphasising that the prosperity of the nation is integral to the well-being of its 'Annadata' farmers.  
"The initiatives launched in 2014 are now recognised globally as a model for agricultural development", he stated.  
Reflecting this vision, the double-engine government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been relentlessly working to uplift farmers, he added.  
Adityanath paid floral tributes to Singh's statue at the Vidhan Sabha and distributed new tractors to 11 farmers under the Chief Minister Krishak Uphaar Yojana.

# Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas to be showcased at R-Day Parade 2025

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**  
Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas will be showcased through tableaux at Kartavya Path during Republic Day Parade 2025, defence ministry said here on Monday.  
Every year states/UTs and Union government ministries/ departments showcase their tableaux on Kartavya Path as part of Republic Day Celebration (RDC). For RDC-2025, the theme for tableaux has been decided as 'Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas,' it said.  
Since the beginning of this year, a consultative process has been adopted by the Ministry of Defence to decide on various aspects related to tableaux. A meeting at senior official level was held in April 2024 to deliberate on



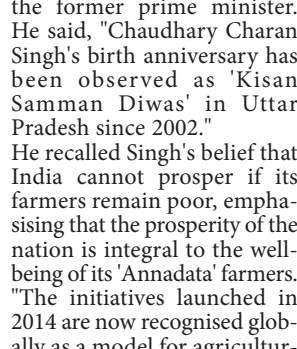
improvement of tableaux quality. Various suggestions received during meeting has been included in process. Theme for tableaux was also decided based on suggestions from State/UTs.  
There is a well-established system for selection of tableaux for participation in the Republic Day Parade as per which Ministry of Defence invites proposals for tableaux from all State/ UTs and central ministries/ departments.  
The tableaux proposals received from various State/ UTs and central ministries/ departments are evaluated in a series of meetings of the Expert Committee, comprising eminent persons in the field of art, culture, painting, sculpture, music, architecture, choreography etc. Tableaux are one of the

important components of Republic Day Parade. Due to time allotted for tableaux in the overall duration of parade, shortlisting of tableaux is done by the Expert Committee.  
While evaluating the tableaux ideas presented by various states/UTs and ministries, key aspects like conceptual uniqueness and novelty, creative expression with a clear, communicable message, combining subtlety as well as directness, striking balance between Virasat and Vikas in each tableau, exclusion of repetitive ideas, special attention to details like colors, forms, textures, flow, rhythm, proportions and balance, ensuring a well-composed aesthetic experience of grand scale were taken into consideration for selection.  
Following 15 states/ UTs have been selected for showcasing their tableaux on Kartavya Path for RDC-2025: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chandigarh, Dadar Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu, Goa, Gujarat,

Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.  
In addition, 11 Ministries/ Department of Union government have also been selected for RDC-2025.  
All the states/UTs, irrespective of their selection for Kartavya Path, are invited to display their tableaux during Bharat Parv in Red Fort (26th-31st January 2025).  
The entire selection process is robust, fair, transparent, based on merit and free from any bias. The selected tableaux would showcase India's diverse strengths and its constantly evolving cultural inclusiveness marching into glorious future, showcasing 'Swarnim Bharat - Virasat aur Vikas' to the world audience.

# Delhi HC denies anticipatory bail to former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**  
Delhi High Court on Monday refused to grant anticipatory bail to former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar in the criminal case lodged against her for cheating and wrongly availing of OBC and disability quota benefits in the civil services examination.  
"Anticipatory bail plea is dismissed. Interim protection from arrest is vacated," Justice Chandri Singh said while ruling on the plea.  
Justice Singh said a strong prima facie case was made out against Khedkar and investigation was required to unearth the conspiracy. It was a classic case of fraud committed on a constitutional body as well as society, the judge said. Khedkar is accused of misrepresenting

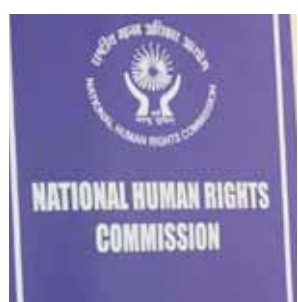


information in her application for the UPSC Civil Services Examination, 2022, to get reservation benefits.  
The counsel for the Delhi Police as well as the complainant, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), opposed the plea for pre-arrest bail.  
The UPSC was represented by senior advocate Naresh Kaushik and lawyer

Vardhman Kaushik. The UPSC initiated a series of actions against Khedkar in July, including lodging a criminal case, for availing exemption in the civil services exam by faking her identity.  
The Delhi Police registered an FIR under provisions of the Indian Penal Code, Information Technology Act and Right of Persons with Disabilities Act.

# NHRC questions TN Govt about death by electrocution of two labourers

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**  
Taking suo motu cognisance of a media report that two persons, working as contract labourers with the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (Tangedco) died due to electrocution, The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to the State Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, Tamil Nadu calling for a detailed report in the matter within two weeks.  
The NHRC noted that while repairing a high-tension overhead power line near Olaiyur Ring Road in KK Nagar, Tiruchi in the Southern State on December 18.  
"The Commission has observed that the contents of the media report, if true, indi-



cate gross negligence on the part of the electricity department resulting in the death of two labourers," said the Rights body in a statement issued here. The Commission has also noted that such incidents have occurred earlier too in the state. This is a serious human rights violation and a matter of concern for the Commission, it further added.  
The notice is expected to include the status of the FIR registered in the matter and

compensation, if any, provided to the next of kin of the two victims, said the statement.  
The Commission would also like to know the steps taken/proposed by the State government and Tangedco to ensure that such incidents do not recur, it added.  
According to the media report, as per the preliminary investigations, the power supply to the cable was not fully turned off during the repair work. The workers were on the job without any protective gear.  
In a similar incident, a worker was electrocuted to death while repairing a transformer in the Theothukudi district of Tamil Nadu last year. Last month, a migrant worker was reportedly electrocuted during Cyclone Fengal and his body was found near an ATM in Muthialpet, pointed out the NHRC in a statement.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Attack and aftermath

Christmas market attack in Germany reigniting polarising debates about immigration and national security

A recent attack on a Christmas market in Magdeburg, Germany, has reignited contentious debates about immigration and national security, with far-right groups seizing the moment to push for mass deportation of immigrants. The tragedy, which claimed the lives of five individuals and left dozens injured, has sent shockwaves across Germany, leading to both solemn remembrances and polarising political rhetoric. On the evening of December 20, a car driven by Taleb al-Abdulmohsen, a 50-year-old psychiatrist originally from Saudi Arabia, careened into a crowded Christmas market. The attack lasted three harrowing minutes, during which over 200 people were struck, leaving 40 with critical injuries. Authorities arrested al-Abdulmohsen at the scene, and he now faces multiple charges of murder, attempted murder, and grievous bodily harm. Despite living in Germany for nearly two decades, the suspect's motives remain unclear. Investigators have yet to establish any ideological or political motivations.



In the wake of the tragedy, far-right groups have amplified their calls for stricter immigration controls and mass deportations. On December 21, approximately 2,100 demonstrators gathered in Magdeburg to voice their outrage. Protesters, some wearing black balaclavas, carried banners with slogans like "Reimmigration Now" and "migration kills." The term "reimmigration" has become a rallying cry for far-right factions advocating the forced removal of immigrants and individuals deemed non-ethnically German. Chants such as "Anyone who doesn't love Germany should leave" and "We must take back our cities, our villages, and our homeland" echoed through the streets. The incident has deepened divisions within Germany over immigration and integration policies. Critics argue that far-right groups are exploiting the tragedy to stoke xenophobia and advance their anti-immigrant agenda. Meanwhile, local communities have sought to counter the rhetoric of hate with acts of solidarity. A silent vigil was held at Magdeburg's Cathedral Square on the same evening as the protest, with participants lighting candles in memory of the victims. German authorities have called for calm and emphasised the need for a thorough investigation. Chancellor Olaf Scholz expressed condolences to the victims' families and condemned both the attack and the use of such tragedies to spread divisive ideologies. The attack has reignited debates over Germany's approach to immigration and the balance between openness and security. While far-right voices call for stringent measures, advocates for multiculturalism warn against the dangers of collective punishment. This incident underscores the fragility of Europe's social cohesion in times of crisis. As Germany mourns, the challenge lies in addressing security concerns without succumbing to fear-driven policies that erode the values of inclusivity and tolerance that underpin the nation's democratic fabric.

our villages, and our homeland" echoed through the streets. The incident has deepened divisions within Germany over immigration and integration policies. Critics argue that far-right groups are exploiting the tragedy to stoke xenophobia and advance their anti-immigrant agenda. Meanwhile, local communities have sought to counter the rhetoric of hate with acts of solidarity. A silent vigil was held at Magdeburg's Cathedral Square on the same evening as the protest, with participants lighting candles in memory of the victims. German authorities have called for calm and emphasised the need for a thorough investigation. Chancellor Olaf Scholz expressed condolences to the victims' families and condemned both the attack and the use of such tragedies to spread divisive ideologies. The attack has reignited debates over Germany's approach to immigration and the balance between openness and security. While far-right voices call for stringent measures, advocates for multiculturalism warn against the dangers of collective punishment. This incident underscores the fragility of Europe's social cohesion in times of crisis. As Germany mourns, the challenge lies in addressing security concerns without succumbing to fear-driven policies that erode the values of inclusivity and tolerance that underpin the nation's democratic fabric.

### PICTALK



People dressed as Santa Claus during Christmas celebration, in Chennai

## Macau: The glittering gem in Xi Jinping's China



SANTOSH MATHEW

For the Chinese Communist Party, Macau is a beacon of controlled capitalism, showcasing the potential of the "One Country, Two Systems" framework

When Chinese President Xi Jinping landed in Macau, the world's gambling capital, the air was thick with anticipation. Macau, often dubbed the "Las Vegas of the East," is much more than a beacon of wealth and opulence. For Xi and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), it is a sparkling gem in the palm of China's vast and complex economic system—a model of the "One Country, Two Systems" framework that allows capitalist practices to thrive under the watchful eye of a socialist regime. Xi's visit underscored the stark contrasts between theory and practice in the CCP's governance and the lessons it offers not only for China's neighbours but for the world at large. Macau's significance lies in its unique identity. A former Portuguese colony, it returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1999 under the promise of autonomy. Today, its glitzy casinos, luxury hotels, and sprawling Special Economic Zone (SEZ) generate billions annually, contributing substantially to China's GDP. But while the dice roll and fortunes are made on Macau's gaming tables, the CCP's control remains unyielding.

The irony is palpable. The CCP, a party built on anti-capitalist ideology, oversees the largest SEZ in the world in Shanghai, nurtures capitalism in Hong Kong, and allows gambling—once condemned as a moral vice—to flourish in Macau. This duality reflects the pragmatic philosophy first espoused by Deng Xiaoping: "It doesn't matter if a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice." This approach has been pivotal in transforming China into the world's second-largest economy. Yet it also lays bare the contradictions at the heart of CCP rule.

As Xi extolled Macau's success, he also warned against complacency and stressed the need for "long-term stability," a euphemism for unwavering allegiance to the CCP. For the CCP, Macau and Hong Kong are not just economic engines; they are experiments in controlled capitalism. The success of these regions bolsters the



party's narrative that socialism with Chinese characteristics can coexist with, and even benefit from capitalist mechanisms. The underlying contradictions are hard to ignore. The CCP's insistence on ideological purity clashes with its pragmatic embrace of market-driven policies. This duality is reflected in Xi's leadership, which combines Maoist centralisation with Dengist pragmatism.

For Maoists, Naxalites, and urban Naxals in India, as well as other ideologues clinging to rigid dogmas, Macau stands as a testament to the power of adaptation. The CCP's ability to evolve, to reconcile its Marxist-Leninist roots with the demands of a modern, globalised economy, has been the cornerstone of China's rise. This is a far cry from the ideological purism that often paralyzes leftist movements elsewhere. India, too, can draw inspiration from Macau. As the world's largest democracy grapples with its development challenges, it must consider the role of SEZs, MNC headquarters, and even industries like gambling in driving economic growth. While gambling remains taboo in much of India, the success of Macau shows how regulated gaming can become a major revenue source. Similarly, expanding SEZs and creating hubs for MNCs can



MACAU'S SIGNIFICANCE LIES IN ITS UNIQUE IDENTITY. A FORMER PORTUGUESE COLONY, IT RETURNED TO CHINESE SOVEREIGNTY IN 1999 UNDER THE PROMISE OF AUTONOMY

transform India into a global economic powerhouse. At the heart of this debate is the question of whether ideology should dictate policy. The CCP's approach—that opinion is not an iron rod—offers a compelling case for pragmatism. Yet, the party's intolerance for dissent, as seen in its suppression of Mao's "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom" campaign, highlights the dangers of unchecked authority. The CCP's success in economic management is undeniable, but its human rights record and stifling of democratic aspirations serve as stark reminders of the cost of its iron-fisted rule.

As Xi Jinping departed Macau, the world was left pondering the paradoxes of modern China. Under his leadership, the CCP has doubled down on centralisation, curbing dissent while championing economic liberalisation. Macau's glittering casinos and towering skyscrapers are symbols of this duality, where capitalism thrives under the shadow of socialism. For Xi, Macau is more than a gem in China's palm; it is a symbol of the CCP's ability to adapt and endure. Whether in the neon-lit streets of Macau or the corridors of power in Beijing, the CCP's experiment in controlled capitalism continues to shape the future of China—and the world.

(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### CONTROVERSY OVER AMBEDKAR

Madam—The row over the insult to Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar is neither factual nor logical since the home minister never insulted Dr Ambedkar in his speech by words or intention; rather, the fact is that no leader from the BJP has ever insulted Dr BR Ambedkar publicly or in Parliament or state assemblies, whereas Congress has a documented history of opposition to Ambedkar. It is no secret that the first PM, JI Nehru, was never on good terms with Dr Ambedkar, and MK Gandhi too had an uncomfortable equation with Ambedkar, while it may be argued that the twin Congress leaders (Gandhi and Nehru) were right when it comes to national interest and the movement of Indian independence to oppose Dr Ambedkar.

Unfortunately, the national politics has reached the spot where Dr BR Ambedkar has been established as a godly figure, though he never participated in any struggle for Indian independence for which the Congress claims sole credit and abuses Bharatiya JanaSangh and BJP for their nonparticipation, never mentioning Ambedkar for his nonparticipation because that would be politically incorrect. Neither making Ambedkar the god nor considering the Constitution a heavenly document would be democratically or even constitutionally correct.

Jai Prakash Gupta | Ambala Cantt

#### APATHY AT ITS WORSE

Madam—This is our modern India. When a Jaipur gas tanker explosion left motor mechanic Radheyshyam Choudhary with 85 per cent burns. He bravely walked 600 meters while engulfed in flames, even calling his brother before succumbing to his injuries at SMS Hospital. Shockingly, by mid-morning, videos of the aftermath of the gas tanker explosion on the national highway were circulating online, with more than one showing a burning man struggling to stay on his feet as he scampered for help amid

### Indian diaspora remits \$129 billion



In 2024, Indian expatriates achieved a historic milestone by sending \$129 billion in remittances. This amount not only surpasses India's vast defence budget and foreign direct investment but also exceeds the combined budgets of Pakistan and Bangladesh. This flow of funds symbolises not just economic support but also the hard work, dedication, and unwaver-

ing love of Indians for their homeland. Remittances have unlocked new avenues for development in rural and urban areas, fostering investment in education, healthcare, and infrastructure. It has provided stability to rural economies while empowering small and medium enterprises.

Indians living abroad establish their identity on foreign soil through resilience and courage. By dedicating a significant portion of their income to the development of their families and nation, they exemplify cultural values and familial commitment. This inflow strengthens India's foreign exchange reserves and energises local businesses. With strong policy measures, the government can further enhance this success. Remittances are not merely economic contributions; they represent the collective effort and national pride of Indians across the globe.

RK Jain | Barwani

#### ACTION AGAINST MINING MAFIA

Madam—The operation of the mining mafia is a well-known fact for a long time to both the governments of Rajasthan and Haryana, including the efforts put forth by the general public in complaining against such acts with no stoppage of the bringing down of the Aravalli hills. However, a common man hesitates to lodge an FIR, as he is aware of the consequences he will face with negligible police protection for a limited time and the creation of animosity with the mafia, resulting in a threat to his life and discouraging him from fighting with such a large force. Sending inspecting teams to the blasted site from both the government is purely an eyewitness in the eyes of the public until concrete action is taken at a national level involving the NIA. A strategic policy with amendments to the existing mining rules is required to be pondered upon to make it pragmatic and not theoretical to be effective.

RS Narula | Patiala

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## Navigating the intersection of technology, law and human rights

In a world increasingly shaped by digital technologies, the concept of 'digital arrest' has emerged as a controversial tool in cyberspace

The term 'Digital Arrest' often referred to as the restriction, monitoring, or apprehension of individuals through online mechanisms extends beyond the confines of traditional legal systems to encompass actions in cyberspace, such as freezing digital assets, blocking online accounts, or limiting access to certain platforms or limiting individual freedom in a virtual or online environment.

As technology permeates every aspect of life, the implications of digital arrest have grown even more significantly, offering both opportunities and challenges in governance, security, and individual rights in dismantling operations such as ransomware groups, hacking collectives, and online marketplaces for illegal activities. For instance, international efforts have led to the closure of dark web platforms such as Silk Road and the apprehension of their operators. Also, Cryptocurrencies and digital financial assets have brought about new forms of digital arrest, where govern-



ments or agencies freeze digital wallets associated with criminal activities thereby preventing the illicit flow of funds and supporting global financial regulations. While the concept is still evolving, digital arrest encompasses aspects of cybersecurity, legal frameworks, and the social consequences of living in a highly digitised world. At its core, this kind of arrest involves leveraging technology to enforce restrictions or punish actions taken in the digital sphere. Various government agencies, corporations, and even individual users can

participate in acts akin to digital arrest, raising questions about authority, power dynamics, and accountability in cyberspace. To balance security and individual rights in the digital era, taking measures such as establishing transparent and enforceable regulations that define the scope of digital arrest; overseeing the use of digital arrest mechanisms to ensure accountability and prevent misuse; developing universal guidelines for promoting fairness and consistency across jurisdictions and most importantly raising public awareness about digital rights and responsibili-

ties can equip individuals with the knowledge and tools needed to engage effectively and securely in the digital world. As the digital world continues to evolve, so too will the methods of enforcement and resistance. New technologies, such as artificial intelligence and blockchain, may influence how digital arrests are carried out and challenged. Transparency in enforcement, the right to appeal, and global cooperation on ethical standards are essential steps in creating a just digital society. There is no denying that digital arrest represents the intersection of technology, law, and human rights in the digital age. While it offers tools for enforcing order and combatting crime, it also poses risks to freedom and privacy. As society becomes increasingly reliant on digital infrastructure, the concept of digital arrest will likely continue to evolve, demanding thoughtful and ethical approaches to its implementation.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)



SHAINY SHARMA

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## FIRST COLUMN

SUCCESS THROUGH  
WORKPLACE INTELLIGENCE

It is the ability to adapt to the work environment through emotional and cognitive intelligence



SAKSHI SETHI

In today's dynamic work environment, workplace intelligence has become a cornerstone for achieving personal growth, team cohesion, and organisational excellence. Workplace intelligence refers to the ability of individuals and organisations to navigate, adapt, and thrive in the professional environment through effective understanding, communication and decision-making. It encompasses emotional intelligence, social intelligence, and cognitive intelligence blended together with technological advancements thereby creating a comprehensive approach towards addressing the root causes of toxicity and fostering a positive workplace culture. There is no denying that such intelligence not only plays a pivotal role in creating a healthy, harmonious and productive professional environment but also equips individuals and organisations with the tools to identify, mitigate and prevent toxic behaviours that can undermine morale, collaboration and overall success.

It is often believed that employees with high workplace intelligence can manage their tasks efficiently and adapt to new challenges with minimal disruption. By leveraging cognitive and emotional intelligence, they can prioritize effectively and maintain focus, leading to improved productivity. Also, social and emotional intelligence enables them to work harmoniously with others, promoting effective communication and minimizing conflicts. Strong teamwork followed by leaders with workplace intelligence inspires trust, and motivation and navigate through complex challenges with clarity and empathy. It even enhances creativity, innovation and the achievement of their collective goals and even reduces stress, boosts morale, and contributes to overall job satisfaction. In an era of rapid technological advancements and shifting market dynam-



ics, workplace intelligence equips employees and organisations with the resilience and adaptability needed to stay competitive. By fostering emotional and social intelligence, workplace intelligence helps identify and mitigate toxic behaviours, thereby ensuring a positive and respectful work environment.

By promoting training and development, organisations can invest in training programmes that focus on emotional intelligence, communication skills and technological proficiency. Open and constructive feedback mechanisms help the employee grow and refine their workplace intelligence over time. Emphasising diversity and inclusion helps individuals develop social intelligence by interacting with people from different backgrounds and perspectives. Encouraging continuous learning and adaptability ensures that employees remain agile and open to new ideas and methods. Remember, a workforce with high workplace intelligence is more likely to generate creative solutions and drive innovation. Employees are more likely to stay in organisations where they feel valued, supported, and empowered. Today, companies such as Heineken, Cooley, Cruise Automation, Urban Company, Amazon, Chipotle and many more are known for fostering workplace intelligence to attract top talent and build trust with stakeholders.

By investing in the development of workplace intelligence, organisations can create environments that promote collaboration, innovation, and sustainable success, ensuring they remain agile and competitive in an ever-evolving world. As organisations continue to navigate the complexities of globalisation and digital transformation, the importance of workplace intelligence will only grow. Artificial intelligence, remote work and diverse teams are shaping new paradigms that demand a more nuanced understanding of interpersonal and technological dynamics but organisations that invest in fostering workplace intelligence will gain a competitive edge, as their employees will be better equipped to adapt, innovate, and lead in an ever-changing world.

*(The writer is an educator; views are personal)*A roadmap for financial  
sustainability of India PostSUBHASH CHANDRA  
AGARWAL

India Post is at a crossroads. As private courier services continue to expand their market share with speed and convenience, it must adapt to stay competitive



India Post, a vital lifeline in connecting citizens across the country, needs to undergo a comprehensive review of its services. This reform should focus on introducing innovation, ensuring greater revenue generation for the Department of Posts (DoP), and maintaining affordability for the public. As private courier services continue to gain traction due to their convenience and efficiency, India Post must adapt to remain competitive and relevant in a rapidly changing environment.

**Rationalising Postal Tariffs and Eliminating GST on Select Services**

The current structure of postal services includes highly subsidised offerings, such as postcards priced as low as 50 paise. While such subsidies aim to make communication accessible, they are often exploited. For instance, during Lok Sabha elections in 2019, political parties used postcards extensively, resulting in significant costs to the public exchequer. Similarly, postcards are frequently misused for commercial purposes, such as reminders by chit-fund companies. These subsidised services, rarely used by the common man, burden taxpayers without corresponding benefits.

To address this, printed or rubber-stamped postcards should be discontinued unless they are sponsored. The introduction of sponsored Meghdoot postcards priced at Re1 and printed postcards priced at Rs10 could ensure a sustainable revenue model. Similarly, the tariff for registered newspapers could be rationalised to Rs1, reflecting the increased cost of inputs for small newspaper production.

Additionally, while normal postal services are exempt from GST, applying GST on premium services like Speed Post is counterproductive. It results in a redundant transfer of funds between government departments. Rationalising tariffs for Speed Post to Rs 20 or Rs 30 per 50-gram weight slabs and aligning other domestic and international postal tariffs in multiples of Rs 10 would streamline the system and reduce inefficiencies. International postal rates could follow a consistent structure, with uniform tariff increases per weight slab for air and sur-



THE 'MY-STAMP' INITIATIVE, WHICH ALLOWS INDIVIDUALS TO PRINT PERSONAL IMAGES ON POSTAGE STAMPS, HAS BEEN MISUSED. REPORTS INDICATE INSTANCES OF NOTORIOUS INDIVIDUALS OBTAINING STAMPS WITH THEIR PHOTOS, TARNISHING THE PROGRAM'S CREDIBILITY

face mail.

**Generating Revenue Through Sponsored Postal Stamps**

To boost revenue, the DoP should introduce sponsored postal stamps. These stamps, carrying advertisements or approved messages, could be issued in bulk to sponsors at a fixed charge per printed stamp. This initiative could attract businesses, encouraging them to utilise postal services over private courier companies.

Additionally, a new series of definitive postal stamps and stationery could be launched annually on the first day of the financial year. These stamps should maintain consistent color schemes for specific denominations while showcasing new designs based on a selected theme. Commemorative stamps, previously issued in arbitrary denominations like Rs 12 and Rs 41, should be standardised to denominations in multiples of Rs 10. Furthermore, the practice of printing stamps of different denominations on the same sheet, except for miniature sheets, should be discontinued as it complicates usage.

Miniature sheets, being collectible items, should be priced higher than the face value of the stamps they contain. Such measures could not only enhance revenue through philately but also rekindle public interest in postal services.

**Replacing 'My-Stamp' with Sponsored Stamps**

The 'My-Stamp' initiative, which allows individuals to print personal images on postage stamps, has been misused. Reports indicate instances of notorious individuals obtaining stamps with their photos, tarnishing the program's credibility. Since no robust mechanism exists to screen applicants' backgrounds, the programme is susceptible to abuse. Discontinuing the 'My-Stamp' concept in favor of sponsored stamps could address this issue. Sponsored stamps would

not only ensure better regulation but also offer a significant revenue stream.

**Enhancing Consumer Convenience with Sticker Receipts**

Currently, receipts issued by the Postal Department include a sticker only on the portion retained by the Department, leaving the consumer without one. Adding stickers to consumer receipts would eliminate the need for gum to paste them onto dispatch registers or documents. This small change could save public resources and improve the user experience, especially for organisations that rely heavily on postal services.

**Introducing RTI Stamps and Rationalising Postal Orders**

Postal orders in low denominations such as Rs 1, Rs 2, Rs 5, and Rs 7 were discontinued due to high handling costs. For example, the handling cost of a postal order in 2011-12 was Rs 37.45, far exceeding its value. To minimise losses, higher denominations like Rs 100, Rs 200, and Rs 500 could be introduced. Furthermore, RTI-specific stamps in denominations of Rs 2, Rs 10, and Rs 50 could replace postal orders for fees under the RTI Act, streamlining the payment process. This approach aligns with recommendations from the Central Information Commission and addresses the issue of unfeasible copying charges below Rs10 due to the absence of lower-denomination postal orders.

**Managing Inoperative and Matured Accounts**

Unclaimed deposits in post office accounts often remain unnoticed due to deceased account holders failing to inform legal heirs. This creates a risk of fraud, as unscrupulous individuals may attempt to claim such funds in collusion with postal employees. To mitigate this risk, the Postal Department should send registered letters to account holders who have not operated

their accounts or claimed matured deposits for over three years. If no response is received within three months, the funds should be frozen in fixed accounts and made accessible only after rigorous verification. Publishing details of such accounts could help legal heirs claim their rightful amounts, subject to stringent scrutiny. The introduction of successive nominations, as practiced by LIC of India, would further safeguard deposits and simplify inheritance processes.

**Expanding Postal Services Through Bank Counters**

The closure of post offices in key commercial areas, such as Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi, has caused inconvenience for businesses that rely on Registered and Speed Post services. With banks increasingly adopting government savings schemes, their branches could be utilised for booking postal services. Offering banks a nominal commission for hosting these services would not only enhance accessibility but also integrate postal and banking ecosystems more effectively.

**Revamping the Postal Ecosystem for Sustainability**

India Post's transformation should emphasise efficiency, innovation, and customer-centricity. Rationalising tariffs, eliminating wasteful subsidies, and leveraging sponsored services are crucial steps toward financial sustainability. Additionally, addressing operational inefficiencies and improving service delivery will help India Post reclaim its position as a trusted and competitive communication medium.

By embracing these changes, India Post can not only secure its financial future but also continue serving as a cornerstone of India's communication network.

*(The writer is a Guinness World Record holder and RTI Consultant; views are personal)*

## India's math geniuses shine bright in international math competition 2024

India, a nation with a rich legacy of mathematical brilliance, added another feather to its cap by triumphing at the UCMAS International Competition 2024

India has long been a land of great mathematicians, from Aryabhata to Ramanujan to Bhaskara, each leaving an indelible mark on the world with their mathematical ingenuity. Today, India continues to excel in the field, as evidenced by its stellar performance at the Universal Concept of Mental Arithmetic System (UCMAS) International Competition 2024 in New Delhi, where the country bagged both the highest individual and team trophies.

The competition, the world's largest event for Abacus and Mental Arithmetic, brought together over 6,000 students from nearly 30 countries. Participants faced the challenge of solving 200 arithmetic questions in just eight min-



SARIKA JHA

utes, relying solely on the Abacus or mental math techniques—a feat that truly felt like magic. For the second time, the World's Largest Abacus & Mental Arithmetic Event- UCMAS International Competition 2024 was held in India at the Delhi University Multipurpose Hall. Students from across the world competed with each other showcasing their men-

tal prowess in solving a very large number of mathematics problems in the quickest possible time to win the awards. This landmark event reaffirms its global significance in nurturing young minds in mathematics.

The competition aimed at promoting brain development, enhancing cognitive skills, and demonstrating the incredible abilities students can achieve through Abacus and Mental Arithmetic. Presenting the trophies to top performers, former Union Minister Meenakshi Lekhi rightly said, "Smart brain produces smart solutions for every problem and prosperity is moving forward only when we have smart brains." Commending the efforts of the young participants, Lekhi emphasised

the importance of such initiatives and said, "UCMAS is enhancing cognitive skills and academic excellence." The blend of the ancient tool of the Abacus with modern teaching methodologies creates a unique educational experience.

Over 3 million children across the world have benefited from the Abacus and Mental Arithmetic curriculum, which encourages creativity, visualisation, and focus while developing strong arithmetic abilities.

In today's competitive academic environment, maintaining mental wellbeing has become an uphill battle for many children. The relentless pressure to excel often leads to stress, anxiety, and even depression. In some heartbreaking cases,



it drives students to take extreme steps, as seen in recent reports from Rajasthan's Kota district—a hub for competitive exam preparations. However, innovative educational programmes like the Abacus and Mental Arithmetic course are emerging as a ray of hope, helping children manage stress while fostering mental stability and

self-confidence.

According to Dr Snehal Karia, CEO of UCMAS India, the course is designed to enhance children's mental stability by boosting their concentration, focus, and memory. It equips them with the confidence to understand and embrace their individuality, effectively reducing anxiety and depression. The Abacus & Mental Arithmetic program's key lies in its structured approach to building self-assurance through innovative teaching methods.

The encouragement and skills imparted during the training play a pivotal role in shaping a child's bright future. The program comprises eight levels, each lasting three to four months. Children attend weekly classes guided by

trained instructors, working through specially designed books and activities. Unlike conventional education, the course serves as a supplementary learning system to enhance cognitive abilities. There is an urgent need to complement the school's curriculum by focusing on brain development. The course improves memory, sharpness, and alertness.

As a result, students perform better academically and approach challenges with greater confidence. In a world where competition often overshadows creativity and self-worth, programs like Abacus & Mental Arithmetic provide children with the tools they need to thrive—mentally, emotionally, and academically. Alexan Wong, CEO of

UCMAS International Corporation, said, "The competition not only tests their skills but also serves as a platform to demonstrate their creativity, visual memory, and focus—all of which will shape their future success." The competition itself is a testament to the transformative power of such programs, where students not only test their math skills but also demonstrate the broader cognitive benefits that shape their academic and personal growth.

Ultimately, the world needs such initiatives to nurture well-rounded individuals who are prepared to face the challenges of the future with confidence and creativity.

*(The author is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal)*





UN 2024: India calls for change at UN as conflicts persist

As the United Nations prepares to celebrate its 80th anniversary next year, India stressed that reform is "key" to the organisation's "relevance" in addressing current and future global challenges, as world leaders signed off on an ambitious pact in 2024 to transform global governance and drive sustainable action.

Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the Summit of the Future before wrapping up his three-day visit to the US, he reiterated India's willingness to play a constructive role in the quest for a peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy.

Internet rife with fake reviews; will AI make it worse?

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence tools that allow people to efficiently produce novel and detailed online reviews with almost no work has put merchants, service providers and consumers in uncharted territory, watchdog groups and researchers say.

Many of the AI-generated comments on Yelp appeared to be posted by individuals who were trying to publish enough reviews to earn an "Elite" badge, which is intended to let users know they should trust the content, Spero said.

Magdeburg mourns Christmas market attack victims as fears swirl of deeper social divisions

Mourners laid flowers near the scene of the deadly Christmas market attack on Monday as investigators puzzled over the motive of the suspect and fears swirled that the rampage could deepen divisions in German society.

Nancy Faeser said Sunday that "the views and statements that the perpetrator expressed are being investigated, as are the tipoffs and proceedings with various authorities and the justice system."

kotak Kotak Mahindra Bank NOTICE Locker Hired by MANREET SINGH having address at 120, TAGORE PARK DELHI-110009 with KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK B-1, GUJRANWALA, NEW DELHI - 110009 remains un-operated and the rent due for the last 4 years.

China warns Philippines over mid-range missile deployment plan

China said a plan by the Philippines to deploy midrange missiles would be a provocative move that stokes regional tensions. The Philippines top army official told reporters in Manila earlier on Monday that the military plans to acquire a mid-range system to defend the country's territory amid tensions with China in the South China Sea.

The army is working not only with the United States but with other friendly countries on a long list of weapons platforms that it plans to acquire, he said. The Philippines defence plan includes protecting its exclusive economic zone, which reaches 200 nautical miles (370 km).

PUBLIC NOTICE This is to inform you, the public at large, that my clients Sh. Jitendra Singh (Aadhar card no. 279814961719) S/o Sh. Padam Singh permanent R/o H.No. 118, JAT Basti, Pitawali, Tehsil Bayana, Kohra, Bharatpur, Rajasthan - 321401 and Mr. Beenu Singh (Aadhar card no. 511961863343) W/o Sh. Jitendra Singh, both presently temporarily residing in Gurugram, Haryana, do hereby disown their son namely Sh. Sanjeet Singh (Aadhar card no. 255279155505), forever from all their movable and immovable properties/assets and they have no concern with any of his assets/liabilities whatsoever.

Uttarakhand Co-Operative Dairy Federation Ltd. Mangal Parao, Haldwani - 263139 (Nainital) Uttarakhand E-Tender Notice No.: 23(1-9)/UCDF/2024-25, Date- 23.12.2024 E-tenders are invited by the undersigned, from only experienced, reputed and financially sound Authorized Manufacturers/Dealers for the supply, installation, testing and commissioning of various Milk and Milk products Testing equipments for laboratory of various milk union and central dairy lab, Ialkhan following items so as to reach this office on or before 01.01.2025 up to 5.00 PM.

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida G.B Nagar, (U.P.) Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com E-TENDER NOTICE E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors / firms for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened / downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website : www.noidaauthorityonline.in & https://etender.up.nic.in. Please ensure to see these website for any changes / amendments & corrigendum etc.

SPECIAL TRAIN In order to clear extra rush of passengers, Northern Railway has decided to run the following Special Train as per details given below :- Train No. 04082/04081 Hazrat Nizamuddin-Thiruvananthapuram Central-Hazrat Nizamuddin SF Reserved Special Express Train TRIPS

PUBLIC NOTICE Information is given to general public at large that Mohd. Iftikhar & Mid Zuhair Alam who is/are purchasing the Property No. 923 E/A, Gali No. 8 (part of Property No. 923/8), area measuring 30 sq. yds., comprised of Khassa No. 5030/3, Gopendpur Kalka, New Delhi 110019 from Ali Hassan S/o Fida Hassan & Gurdoo Ali S/o Lykath Hussain who was the owner of property by virtue of Sale Deed dated 07.05.2006.

WORKS DEPARTMENT OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, EASTERN CIRCLE (R&B), BALASORE e-mail: - seec\_bis@rediffmail.com Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice Bid Identification No.CCEEC-10/2024-25 No:- 4725 Dt: 20.12.2024

BSES Yamuna Power Limited, Delhi ... A joint venture with Govt. of NCT of Delhi NOTICE INVITING TENDER Date: 24.12.2024 E-tenders under two Bid System (Unpriced & Priced) are invited as per the following details: NIT No. Tender Description Estimated Cost (₹) Cost of EMD (₹) Due Date & Time of Submission Date & Time of Opening

SCHEDULED & NON SCHEDULED MAINTENANCE WORK Tender Notice No.: RT\_EL\_TRD\_18\_24-25, Dated: 19-12-2024, E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: Tender No.: RT\_EL\_TRD\_18\_24-25, Name of Work: At Kathihar Division: PSI scheduled maintenance & Non scheduled maintenance work for PSI depot Dalkhola, Aluabari Road, Bagdogra and New Jalpaiguri under jurisdiction of Kathihar division for two years (24 months).

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Job Number, Name of Work, Amount (Lac), Publishing Time. (1) 15/GM/PE (PH-II)/ET/ 2024-25 Cleaning of covered drains & culvert with super sucker machine in PH-II area, Noida. Rs. 58.36 2nd Time



# Real Madrid's 4-2 win over Sevilla in the Spanish league

**AP ■ MADRID**  
Kylian Mbappé added to his scoring streak with a superb strike in Real Madrid's 4-2 win over Sevilla in the Spanish league to finish the year on a positive note after hitting what he called "rock bottom" in early December. Mbappé sent a right-footed shot into the upper corner 10 minutes into the match for his fourth goal in as many games with Madrid in all competitions. It was Mbappé's sixth goal in his last eight matches with Madrid. He struggled early on with his new club, and Mbappé said his lowest point came when he missed a penalty kick in the team's 2-1 league loss at Athletic Bilbao on Dec. 4. "I know I have a lot more to give," Mbappé said Sunday. "The last few games I've played better, I took a lot of positives from the Bilbao game, when I hit rock bottom." The France star said that made him realize "I have to give my all for this jersey and play with personality."



many scoring situations, a good end to the year," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "That was what we wanted, to be near the top and get some good rest for 2025." Madrid next faces Valencia on Jan. 3 in a match postponed because of the deadly floods that

hit Valencia in October. Sevilla, sitting in 14th place, had won two of its last two games in all competitions. Navas' farewell</hl2>It was the last game for Sevilla and Spain great Jesús Navas, who is officially retiring at the end of the year. The defender was honored by Sevilla and Madrid players and fans at the Santiago Bernabeu. Players from both teams made a guard of honor for Navas before the match, lining up as he entered the field, and Madrid's veteran midfielder Luka Modric handed him a jersey of the club signed by players. Fans gave Navas a standing ovation during the ceremony. Substitute Navas came on midway through the second half. "What happened today was spectacular," the 39-year-old Navas said after the match, unable to hold back tears. "I had never seen anything like it in my life on a rival field. It was crazy. In those last few minutes I couldn't see anything. I was looking at the ground recalling all the moments I've went through and the joy I've been able to give to Sevilla and the national team." Navas helped Sevilla win four Europa League titles and Spain clinch the 2010 World Cup and the 2012 and 2024 European Championships. He was with Manchester City when it won the 2014 Premier League. "Navas really deserves it," Ancelotti said. "Navas is an example for everyone." Valencia draws late Second-to-last Valencia salvaged a 2-2 home draw with Alaves, thanks to a goal by Dani Gómez eight minutes into second-half stoppage time after the visitors had taken the lead with Joan Jordán in the 88th. The setback drew more protests from Valencia fans who have been unhappy with the administration of team owner Peter Lim. Other results Thierno Barry scored a hat trick and Gerard Moreno and Pau Cabanes added one goal each as fifth-place Villarreal won 5-2 at Leganes, while Las Palmas won 1-0 against 18th-place Espanyol. Ninth-place Real Betis was held by 12th-place Rayo Vallecano to a 1-1 draw at home.



## Manu Bhaker missing from Khel Ratna nominees; Sports Ministry says no final list yet

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
selection committee is, however, allowed to consider names which may not be among the applicants. While the ministry claimed that Bhaker did not apply for the award, her father Ram Kishan Bhaker, a chief engineer in Merchant Navy, said the youngster had followed the due process. "There is no worth of playing Olympic sports in India because despite winning two medals in an Olympics, Manu has been ignored for the Khel Ratna award. There is no point in playing and winning rewards for your country and in turn beg for recognition," Ram Kishan told PTI. "She had been applying for all awards, say Khel Ratna, Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan for the last 2-3 years continuously and I have proof of that. This time too, I am confident she would have applied but I can't show anything as I am at sea right now. "But even if she hasn't, the committee should consider her looking at her achievements," he asserted. He blamed bureaucracy for the mess-up. "We form a committee but it is the bureaucrats who call the shots. This is not how sports function," he said. It is learnt that the committee has recommended India hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh, who led the country to a second consecutive Olympic bronze medal, for the Khel Ratna. The award selection committee is a 12-member panel headed by retired Supreme Court judge Justice V Ramasubramaniam. It includes former athletes like women's hockey captain Rani Rampal among others. The ministry norms allow athletes to self-nominate instead of relying on federations and other institutions for it. The

## Olympian PV Sindhu marries entrepreneur Venkat Datta Sai

**PTI ■ UDAIPUR**  
Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu embarked on a new journey in life as she tied the knot with entrepreneur Venkata Datta Sai in a private ceremony here. The 29-year-old shuttler from Hyderabad, who won a bronze at the 2016 Rio Olympics and a silver at the Tokyo Olympics three years ago, married Datta, an executive director at Posidex Technologies, on Sunday in a traditional ceremony attended by close family and friends. Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, shared the first photograph of the wedding on 'X' on Monday. "Pleased to have attended the wedding ceremony of our Badminton Champion Olympian PV Sindhu with Venkata Datta Sai in Udaipur last evening and conveyed my wishes & blessings to the couple for their new life ahead," Shekhawat tweeted. The celebrations commenced with a lively Sangeet ceremony on December 20, featuring music and dance as the two families came together. This was followed by traditional rituals such as Haldi, Pellikuthuru, Mehendi, and other customs on December 21. Sindhu's wedding news came close on the heels of her victory at the Syed Modi International in Lucknow earlier this month, ending a long title drought. With five medals, including a gold, at the BWF World Championships, and two Olympic medals, Sindhu is widely regarded as one of India's greatest athletes. The couple has invited some of the top celebrities of the country for the wedding reception, including the likes of Sachin Tendulkar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



## US Open doubles champion Max Purcell suspended for anti-doping breach

**AP ■ MELBOURNE**  
U.S. Open in September and won Wimbledon with another Australian, Matthew Ebden, in 2022. He is currently ranked No. 12 in doubles. He also finished as a runner-up in the Australian Open doubles final twice, in 2020 and 2022. Purcell, ranked No. 105 in singles, was not listed on the Australian Open entry lists released earlier this month and did not receive a wildcard or feature on the qualifying entries. The ITIA did not say whether Purcell's absence from the draw of the tournament starting Jan. 12. Was due to the sanction. The latest doping violation in tennis comes just weeks after five-time Grand Slam champion Iga Swiatek accepted a one-month suspension after testing positive for the banned substance trimetazidine. Top-ranked men's player Jannik Sinner, winner of two Grand Slams this year, was exonerated by the ITIA after twice testing positive for a trace amount of an anabolic steroid in March with the World Anti-Doping Agency appealing the ruling. Two-time Grand Slam winning doubles player Max Purcell has entered a voluntary provisional suspension under tennis' anti-doping rules. The International Tennis Integrity Agency announced the sanction in a statement on Monday after the 26-year-old Australian admitted to violating Article 2.2 of the Tennis Anti-Doping Program "relating to the use of a Prohibited Method". The ITIA said the suspension came into effect on 12 Dec, and time served under provisional suspension will be credited against any future sanction. The length of time of the voluntary suspension was not specified by the ITIA. "During the provisional suspension, Purcell is prohibited from playing in, coaching at, or attending any tennis event authorized or sanctioned by the members of the ITIA (ATP, ITF, WTA, Tennis Australia, Fédération Française de Tennis, Wimbledon and USTA) or any national association," the ITIA statement read. Purcell, with compatriot Jordan Thompson, won the

## Kho Kho World Cup to feature 21 men's and 20 women's teams

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
A total of 21 men's teams and 20 women outfits will compete in next month's Kho Kho World Cup with the sport's governing body increasing the number of participating teams due to an overwhelming interest. India will host the inaugural edition of the event at the IGI Stadium from January 13 to 19. Initially, 16 men's and 16 women's teams were scheduled to participate. Teams from six continents -- Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Europe, and Oceania -- will feature in the m u c h - a n t i c i p a t e d tournament. "We are keeping the facilities with the foreign delegates in mind. We have devised meals and diet plan for our guests as per their dietary requirements and we are also providing entire logistics, stay, and transport facilities for them, so that they do not face any issues during their stay here," KKF President Sudhanshu Mittal said in a release. "We have also made provisions for all countries to stay till the end of the tournament, irrespective of the results." The opening ceremony will take place on January 13, followed by the first match of the tournament between India and Pakistan. The league stage will run from January 14 to 16, with the quarterfinals and semifinals scheduled for January 17 and 18. The final will be held on January 19. Participating nations in Kho Kho World Cup 2025:

- Africa: Men's: Ghana, Kenya, South Africa Women's: Kenya, South Africa, Uganda
- Asia: Men's: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India (host), Iran, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, South Korea, Sri Lanka Women's: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India (host), Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, South Korea, Sri Lanka
- Europe: Men's: England, Germany, Netherlands, Poland Women's: England, Germany, Netherlands, Poland
- North America: Men's: United States of America South America: Men's: Argentina, Brazil, Peru Women's: Peru
- Oceania: Men's: Australia



# Coaching crisis, heartbreaks and Olympic setbacks mark a disastrous year for Indian boxing

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Indian boxing endured a turbulent year marred by coaching turmoil, crushing defeats, and a medal-less Paris Olympics campaign, all of it made worse by the national federation's negligence that brought u n p r e c e d e n t e d embarrassment to the country. There were very few positives to count in a year when, after a widely successful 2023, expectations were sky high. Yet no boxer was able to add to the three bronze medals -- Vijender Singh (2008), M C Mary Kom (2012) and Lovlina Borgohain (2021) -- that India had secured in the previous editions of the Olympics. The Nishant Dev, unlucky to miss out on an Olympic medal, was India's top performer but the likes of world champions Nikhat Zareen and Lovlina disappointed despite widely held belief that fortunes of women's boxing were following an upward trajectory. Outside the ring, the Boxing Federation of India's (BFI) negligence cost India an Olympic quota even as administrators globally scrambled to retain the sport on the Olympic roster. Controversy and coaching crisis The dismal performance at the first World Qualifying Tournament, where all nine boxers failed to secure a spot at the Paris Games, prompted High Performance Director Bernard Dunne to resign from his position while still in Italy, less than four months before the Olympics. It wasn't just the defeats that were troubling, but the manner in which the boxers lost that was truly disheartening. Frequent knockouts and RSC out-classed defeats pointed to inherent technical flaws

which had not been addressed. With the exception of Nishant, there was hardly any name in Indian boxing who could be spoken about as a success story. Adding to the woes, the country soon lost the women's 57kg Olympic quota, won by Parveen Hooda at the Asian Games last year, after the boxer was handed a 22-month suspension by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) for three whereabouts failures within a year. The 2022 World Championship bronze-medallist failed to submit her whereabouts for the period between April 2022 and March 2023, as mandated by WADA regulations. The BFI was also to blame for this unprecedented embarrassment given that federation is duly notified of such a lapse by the international body. The federation ought to have intervened to ensure that the athlete submitted the required details on time. As a result, India had to fight afresh for qualification in the women's 57kg category, the spot ultimately going to Jaismine Lamboria in the final Olympic Qualifiers. There were wholesale changes for this event with former Asian Games gold-medallist Amit Panghal replacing Deepak Bhorla in the 51kg category. Eventually Panghal and Nishant made the cut for the quadrennial spectacle along with Jaismine, adding to the three quotas won by Nikhat



Zareen (50kg), Preeti Pawar (54kg) and Lovlina (75kg) last year. In all, six boxers qualified for Paris, a decline from the five men and four women who represented India in the 2021 Tokyo Games. Barren Olympics, Nishant's heartbreak Heading into the big event on the back of two consecutive World Championship titles, Zareen was hailed as one of India's strongest medal contenders. However, in the fiercely competitive 50kg category, the Telangana boxer was completely outclassed by China's Wu Yu in a brutally one-sided bout. Zareen, unable to match the relentless pace of her opponent, later said that she had "not eaten for the last two days to maintain weight" and felt weak. A win away from a second consecutive Olympic medal, Lovlina too went down to a Chinese boxer. The Tokyo Games bronze winner couldn't get past familiar foe Li Qian. For Panghal, who was handed a fairly easy draw, it was deja vu as he made yet another pre-quarterfinal exit from the Olympics. The most heartbreaking loss, however, was endured by Nishant. The 23-year-old was defeated 1-4 by Mexico's Marco Verde Alvarez in the 71kg quarterfinal, despite appearing to dominate the bout. This outcome reignited the fierce debate and outrage over judging. The devastating result denied Nishant, the 2023 world championship bronze-medallist, a podium finish in his debut games as the Indian boxing contingent returned empty-handed from Paris. The sport has been dormant ever since. The boxers haven't competed in any tournament with the BFI deciding against sending a team for the Asian Championships. India joins World Boxing With the International Olympic Committee (IOC) threatening to leave boxing out of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics if national federations continued to align themselves with the suspended International Boxing Association (IBA), India joined the breakaway World Boxing (WB). However, the Asian Boxing Confederation (ASBC) voted against leaving the IBA to join the rival association. But BFI reaffirmed its support in WB, which also has the backing of the IOC, by successfully bidding for the hosting rights of the World Boxing Cup Finals next year. The sport's future though remains shrouded in uncertainty and it remains to be seen whether it can manage to hold its place in the Olympics.

# Shami not fully fit yet, ruled out of remaining two Tests in Australia

India pacer Mohammed Shami has been ruled out of the last two Tests against Australia as he is yet to regain full fitness, the BCCI said on Monday.

Shami, who last played for India in the ODI World Cup final in November, 2023, made a comeback from his right heel surgery during Bengal's Ranji Trophy match against Madhya Pradesh last month.

With calls for his selection growing, Shami played all nine games for Bengal in the subsequent Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy. He is also part of Bengal's squad for the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy but did not play the opening game on Saturday against Delhi. His fitness has been a subject of intense debate and speculation, so much so that India skipper Rohit Sharma had asked the physios at the National Cricket Academy to provide clarity on the matter following the Brisbane Test.

Shami had developed swelling in his knees while playing the SMAT, and the clarification in that regard finally came on Monday.

"Based on the current medical assessment, the BCCI Medical Team has determined that his knee requires more time for controlled exposure to bowling loads. Consequently, he has not been deemed fit for consideration for the remaining two Tests of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy," said the BCCI in a release.

"Shami will continue to undergo targeted strength and conditioning work under the guidance of the medical staff at BCCI's Centre of Excellence



and build his bowling loads needed to meet the demands of the longest format of the game. His participation in the Vijay Hazare Trophy will depend on the progress of his knee."

The medical team said the veteran fast bowler has fully recovered from the heel injury that kept him out of action after the ODI World Cup.

"The BCCI Medical Team at the Centre of Excellence has been working closely with Indian fast bowler Mohammed Shami on his recovery and rehabilitation after his right heel surgery. Shami has completely recovered from this heel problem."

"However, his left knee has exhibited minor swelling due to increased joint loading from his bowling workload.

The swelling is on the expected lines, owing to the increased bowling after a prolonged period," the BCCI said.

Shami bowled 43 overs in his comeback game in the Ranji Trophy.

Following that, he played in all nine games of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (SMAT), where he also "engaged in additional bowling sessions on the sidelines to build his bowling volume in order to get ready for the Test matches."

The 34-year-old has taken 229 wickets in 64 Tests, 195 scalps in 101 ODIs and 24 wickets in 23 T20 Internationals.

With India relying heavily on Jasprit Bumrah in Australia, Shami's presence in the bowling attack would have provided a much needed boost.



## Momentum on their side, India eye series win against West Indies

Coming off one of their biggest wins in terms of runs, fancied India will look to guard against complacency when they take on a beleaguered West Indies side with an aim to bag the three-match series in the second Women's ODI here on Tuesday.

India will be entering the game on the back of a massive 211-run victory over the visitors in the series opener in which the Harmanpreet Kaur-led team ticked almost all the boxes.

Every match the teams play in the coming months will be significant as the ICC World Cup is scheduled to be held in the country next year.

India, who have never won a women's World Cup, are desperate to end their ICC title drought at home and they are aware that a strong build-up is extremely important for them to head into the mega event as one of the contenders alongside the 'usual suspects', Australia and England.

Though India have not begun their preparations for the big tournament in earnest, having suffered a 0-3 whitewash in Australia, they bounced back in style, albeit against a much weaker opposition in the West Indies.



Play of the Match in the first ODI, Renuka Singh will be high on confidence having returned a five-for and she will once again look to inflict maximum damage on the Windies with the new ball.

As far as the West Indies are concerned, they will have to lift their game several notches and the likes of Hayley Matthews, Deandra Dottin, Shemaine Campbelle and Afy Fletcher, the squad's senior players with years of experience, will need to lead from the front.

Teams (from):

India: Harmanpreet Kaur (captain), Smriti Mandhana (vice captain), Pratika Rawal, Jemimah Rodrigues, Harleen Deol, Richa Ghosh (WK), Uma Chetry (WK), Tejal Hasabnis, Deepthi Sharma, Minnu Mani, Priya Mishra, Tanuja Kanwer, Titas Sadhu, Saima Thakor, Renuka Singh Thakur.

West Indies: Hayley Matthews (captain), Shemaine Campbelle (vice captain), Aaliyah Alleyne, Shamila Connell, Nerissa Crafton, Deandra Dottin, Afy Fletcher, Shabika Gajinabi, Chinelle Henry, Zaida James, Qiana Joseph, Mandy Mangru, Ashmini Munisar, Karishma Ramharack, Rashada Williams.

## Indians unhappy with 'used' practice pitches

The Indian team has expressed dissatisfaction with the practice pitches ahead of the fourth Test against Australia here, blaming their variable bounce for the hit that Rohit Sharma took on his knee but MCG curator Matt Page has defended the tracks by saying that "standard protocol" has been followed.

Rohit developed swelling on his left knee as he tried to play a thru-ball down from support staff member Dayanand Garani and didn't take further part in the nets on Sunday.

The side opted not to practice on Monday.

It was learnt the skipper needed icing at night and the team think-tank held the used pitch's uneven bounce responsible for the injury scare.

The Indian team had sent its training schedule two months ago but the MCG curator stuck to the standard operating procedure of giving a new practice track only three days prior to the Test match, which begins on December 26 in this case.

"So for us, three days out, we prepare pitches for here. If teams come and play before that, they get what pitches we've had," Page told reporters about why India didn't get a pitch that would resemble the centre strip.

"So today, we're on fresh pitches. If we needed to play this morning, they would have been on those fresh pitches. Stock standard procedure for us, three days out. We do our pitches that we're going to have for our Test match," Page defended the move.

When asked if he has had the Indian schedule and BCCI had correspondence with Cricket Australia, he responded in affirmative.

"Yes, they gave us schedule. There has been correspondence between CA and Indian board and the extent of those conversations, I don't know," Page informed.

Pitch will help fast bowlers

The iconic MCG won't have the bounce of Perth or the seam movement of Gabba but it will still be pace-friendly with 6mm of grass covering,

## Strike rotation and solid defence key to face Bumrah, says Simon Katich

Former cricketer Simon Katich has advised Australian batters to concentrate on rotating the strike and maintaining a solid defence to succeed against the peerless Indian pacer Jasprit Bumrah.

Katich noted that since Bumrah rarely bowls loose deliveries, the Australians must be strategically good in their approach.

"I know all the talk is around having more positive intent, and I think that's all well and good and it is certainly something they have to be mindful of. But against someone like Bumrah intent is not about just blazing him for fours, because he doesn't bowl many bad balls," Katich told SEN 1116.

"So a lot of that intent has to be about rotating strike and being able to defend really well, because you're not gonna be able to play with any intent if you aren't there after the tenth over. That's the challenge for all of these guys," Katich added.

To illustrate his point, Katich made a reference to Australia's second innings in the third Test at Brisbane, where the hosts attempted an aggressive approach but ultimately lost their wickets.

"We saw it in the second innings in Brisbane. Australians came out with really positive intent, trying to score more quickly and look what happened, 7/80 in no time.

"It's not easy to do against the red ball that moves around off the seam in a wearing wicket which the Gabba was starting to become with cracks.

"The top order has to be very careful and mindful of how they go about it. You're not going to score many runs if you're trying to take him on off the length, because he is so good," he added.

For the remaining two Tests, Australia has opted to place their trust in teenage sensation Sam Konstas, replacing opener Nathan McSweeney, who was given a maiden call-up ahead of the series.

"I know the young kid's (Konstas) got a lot of potential, and a lot of ability, but it'll be a challenge because not many guys around the world have been able to do that to that quality of bowling," Katich said.

Marsh should make way for Webster

Katich also felt Mitchell Marsh's inability to bowl the expected volume of overs suggests he isn't "100%" fit and should be replaced by uncapped rookie Beau Webster for the Boxing Day Test against India.

Marsh has been dealing with recurring back stiffness

since the white-ball tour of the UK in September. During the Perth Test, he bowled 17 overs in total, taking two wickets on the opening day but later pulled up sore.

In Adelaide, he bowled four overs while in Brisbane he rolled his arm for two overs.

"I've been saying for a couple Tests, Mitch Marsh has not been able to bowl the volume of overs that everyone expected of him. Given the conditions and given he is a wicket taker," Katich said on 'SEN Breakfast'.

"We saw that in Perth, he bowled well on day one. Took some key wickets and then struggled to back up. I mean obviously the Aussie hierarchy know better than we do around where his fitness is at.

"But for him to bowl two overs the other day after Josh Hazlewood went down, that to me indicates something's not 100% right with him."

After Marsh had pulled up sore, 30-year-old Tasmania all-rounder Webster was added to Australia's squad.

"At the end of the day, Beau Webster deserves to be in that squad," Katich said.

"He's done very well for Tassie in the last few years, he's a genuine all-rounder given what his role is for Tassie and he plays that dual role with bat and ball," Katich added.

In between the ongoing ODI series and the one against Australia, India registered a 2-1 victory in a T20I rubber against the team from the Caribbean islands, which was their their first home series win in the shortest format in over five years, but their failure to qualify for the semi-final of the last T20 World Cup has left a lot to be desired.

The team has been on an experimentation spree since the debacle in the UAE and has handed international debuts to as many as seven players, including Titas Sadhu, Priya Mishra and Pratika Rawal.

Playing in her first ever international match, Delhi's Pratika impressed with a 40-run knock off 69 balls during a century-plus opening partnership with vice-captain Smriti Mandhana.

The lone worry for India before the series opener was the fitness of Kaur, who missed the last two T20Is with a knee niggle, but with her clean hitting and running between the wickets, the skipper has laid all concerns to rest.

Mandhana, who led India in Kaur's absence and struck three fifties in a row in the T20Is, was again in her element in the first ODI and made a classy 91 off 102 balls while laying the foundation for an imposing total.

The left-handed opener will be keen to continue in the same vein in the remaining one-dayers as well.

## Tanush Kotian replaces recently retired Ashwin in India's squad

Mumbai off-spinner Tanush Kotian is set to join the India squad in Australia as a replacement for the recently retired Ravichandran Ashwin.

It is understood that the 26 year old Kotian, who was part of India A's tour of Australia, has also been added as a cover for Washington Sundar.

"Kotian has been added as a safety net and also to keep the squad number intact for the last two games. He only comes into the picture if either among Washy or Jaddu (Ravindra Jadeja) gets injured," a senior BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Kotian, who is currently in Ahmedabad for Vijay Hazare Trophy, is expected to leave Mumbai on Tuesday and will reach Melbourne before the start of Boxing Day Test.

The bowling all-rounder picked two wickets and scored an unbeaten 39 for Mumbai in their Vijay Hazare Trophy match against Hyderabad on Monday.



Kotian has fond memories of the Melbourne Cricket Ground where he scored 44 batting at No. 8 for India A and looked the part.

He already has 101 wickets to his name and 1525 runs with two centuries in 33 first-class games.

Originally, Axar Patel was supposed to be summoned to Australia but as per sources, the left arm spinner had sought a break after first two matches of Vijay Hazare Trophy due to a family commitment.

Kotian has been added to the squad following Ashwin's surprise retirement from international cricket following the draw Test in Brisbane. The 38-year-old ended his glorious career as the second highest wicket taker for India behind Anil Kumble.

# The ability to take 20 wickets is not that good in Indian team: Cheteshwar Pujara

The Indian team in Australia lacks a bowling attack that is good enough to take 20 wickets in a Test, Cheteshwar Pujara said on Monday and called it the side's biggest concerns heading into the last two matches of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

The five-match series is currently levelled at 1-1 with everything to play for in the Tests in Melbourne and Sydney.

The visitors have been relying heavily on pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah to get them wickets and while he has been a great success with both the red and pink ball, the peerless fast bowler has not received enough support from the other end, something that has plagued India besides their top-order batting woes.

"My biggest question and the reason for a little bit of concern is that the Indian bowling is looking a little weak," Pujara told Star Sports.

"Batting is a little better, like the top five didn't do well, but the middle order and lower middle order, Ravindra Jadeja, Nitish (Reddy), and even tailenders, Bumrah and Akash Deep contributed with the bat.

"Now, there is a weakness in the bowling, so what will you feed the team? That is the biggest question, because you can't drop Nitish, you can't drop Jadeja, so what will be the team combination?"

Pujara felt that Nitish Reddy and Ravindra Jadeja are not able to do the job of being the side's fourth and fifth bowler.

"Ashwin has taken retirement, so two spinners, I don't think they will play in Melbourne. So, how will you strengthen the bowling? Because the three seamers are very good, but their supporting role, fourth and fifth seamer, Nitesh Kumar is the fourth seamer and Ravindra Jadeja is the fifth bowler. If you add both of them together, the bowling is not that good.

"We will have to think about that, because if you want to

win a Test match, then you have to take 20 wickets, and the ability to take 20 wickets is not that good, the supporting role of the other bowlers is not good, so we will have to improve that as soon as possible, and how that will be, I don't know, but that is a big question."

With the exception of opener KL Rahul, the top-order batting has also been a big letdown so far in the series, and Pujara said it has got to do a lot with their inability to see off Mitchell Starc's initial spells with the new ball.

"He has been the best bowler for them in this series. And the way Mitchell Starc has played in the last 1-1.5 years, he has brought a lot of improvement. And he has a lot of ability.

"If I talk about my personal experience, when he used to play in the last series in 2018 or 2021, I used to feel that if

he plays against me, I will get runs.

"And now, it feels like he will take wickets. So what is the difference? The difference is that his line length, his accuracy has increased a lot. He is bowling very less loose deliveries. He is playing on the stump. Every ball is hitting on the good length spot. He is getting swing."

Starc has so far taken 14 wickets in the series, the most by an Australian bowler and only behind Bumrah across two teams.

Pujara observed, "The change he has brought in his game has made him a different player. And he is looking more dangerous than Cummins and Hazlewood.

So we will have to take care of his game, especially from the new games.

"In the first five overs, his first spell, he has taken the most wickets there. So if there is a good batting in the first five overs, bring him for the second or third spell. Because he gets tired. So the batting of the top order so far, our top order has never played in the third or fourth spell.

"The ones who have played are the lower middle order and the tail enders. And there we saw that when Bumrah and Akash were batting, when Mitchell Starc was bowling, he was not that effective. So they will have to play their new game well."



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