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BJP claims LOP skipped PM's speech out of guilt

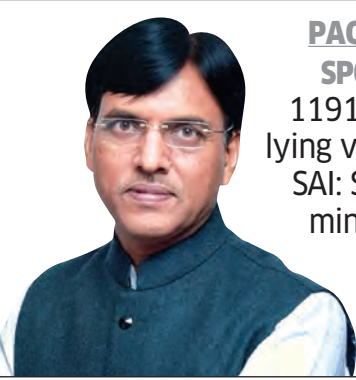


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1191 posts lying vacant in SAI: Sports minister

PIONEER IN SHORT

SENSEX FALLS OVER 600 POINTS

Indian equity markets suffered major losses on Monday as investors lost ₹7.12 lakh crore in market value, with the BSE Sensex plunging 609.68 points (0.71 per cent) to close at 85,102.69. The Nifty50 also fell 226 points to 25,961. Analysts attributed the decline to profit-taking after two days of gains, continuous foreign institutional investor (FII) selling, and cautious sentiment ahead of the US Federal Reserve's rate decision. Key Sensex laggards included Bharat Electronics, Tata Steel, Bajaj Finance, Adani Ports, SBI, Asian Paints, Larsen & Toubro, and Bharti Airtel, while Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies, Reliance Industries, and HDFC Bank were among the few gainers. Sectoral indices saw broad declines, led by services (-3.7 per cent), realty (-3.5 per cent), and capital goods (-2.83 per cent), with midcap and smallcap indices falling 1.73 per cent and 2.2 per cent respectively. The sustained weakness in the rupee and ongoing FII outflows heightened concerns over inflation, rising import costs, and global economic uncertainties, contributing to the bearish market sentiment. Trading saw 3,348 stocks decline.

the ByStander



Crackdown on graft Vig arrests 271 officials in 18 months Including 20 policemen

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The Vigilance Directorate has intensified its State-wide crackdown on corruption with 20 police officials and employees caught red-handed while accepting bribes over the past 18 months, said Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi in the State Assembly on Monday.

A total of 271 government officials and employees were arrested in Vigilance-related cases during this period. Vigilance Courts also recorded 174 convictions, reflecting a significant rise in successful prosecutions and judicial action against corruption.

Administrative measures followed these legal outcomes. As per the Chief Minister's statement, 33 officials were dismissed from service while pension benefits of 65 superannuated officials were withheld due to their involvement in corruption cases. These actions underscore the government's strict stance against financial misconduct and abuse of office.

Majhi noted that the Vigilance Directorate continues to prioritise trap operations, which expose bribery at various levels of public service. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to sustained monitoring and investigation to ensure transparency and accountability across departments.

PM questions Nehru legacy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday accused Jawaharlal Nehru for partition and echoing Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Attacking independent India's first prime minister, PM Modi said, "Instead of firmly countering the baseless statements of the Muslim League and condemning them, Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Congress president, did not reaffirm his and the Congress party's commitment to Vande Mataram, but began questioning Vande Mataram itself... Under the pressure of appeasement politics, the Congress bent and agreed to break Vande Mataram to pieces. Therefore one day, it had to bend for the Partition of India," he said.

The PM was speaking at a Parliament debate on the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram.

Initiating the debate, the PM highlighted how Vande Mataram inspired the nation, energised the freedom struggle and became a symbol of national resolve which prompted Mahatma Gandhi to liken it to the national anthem. The PM said Muslim League leader Jinnah first stepped up his opposition to Vande Mataram on October 15, 1937, from Lucknow. Nehru



PM Narendra Modi speaking in the Lok Sabha during a discussion on the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram during the Winter session of Parliament

wrote to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose five days later, sharing Jinnah's sentiments and observing that Vande Mataram's Anandmath background had the potential to "irritate the Muslims", PM Modi said.

The PM said it was ironic that Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Vande Mataram underwent a review of its worth in his home State of Bengal at the Kolkata session of the Congress Working Committee in 1937, leaving the country in a state of shock and prompting patriots

to take out processions against the decision of the Congress.

As members of the Trinamool Congress protested the PM addressing Chatterjee as Bankim da, the PM took a dig at the party saying that the Congress outsourced its decision-making process.

He asserted that the policies of the Congress and its allies have remained unchanged and they continued to resort to politics of appeasement and have attempted to create

controversies around Vande Mataram.

The prime minister recalled that Mahatma Gandhi wrote in 1905 that Vande Mataram has become so popular that it has emerged as national anthem and wondered why injustice was meted out to it.

"If Vande Mataram was so popular, why was injustice meted out to it, why was it betrayed in the last century. What were those forces that were so powerful to overrule the wishes of Mahatma Gandhi on Vande Mataram," he said.

State faces severe police manpower crunch

Opposition revives recruitment scam allegations

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi informed the State Assembly on Monday that Odisha is grappling with a major police manpower shortage with 1,784 Sub-Inspector (SI) posts lying vacant across districts.

In a written reply to Kendrapada MLA Ganeswar Behera, Majhi shared district-wise data showing that major

urban and crime-sensitive jurisdictions are among the The crisis is not confined to the SI level. Majhi noted that five Inspector posts are vacant while the State faces a massive 180-post shortage in the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) cadre. To partially address this, 99 Inspectors have been promoted to DySP rank, and their posting orders are under examination.

Although the government cited administrative measures to plug vacancies, the figures reignited political sparring in the House. Opposition members pointed out that Odisha's police recruitment pipeline

has been disrupted for years, marred by repeated exam delays, litigation, allegations of paper leaks and controversies over transparency.

In 2022 and 2023, recruitment to several posts including SI, constable and jail warder had faced accusations of procedural lapses triggering protests from aspirants and demands for a CBI or Vigilance probe. While no large-scale scam was officially acknowledged, the disruptions stalled the induction of new personnel, deepening the shortage visible today.

MLAs from the Congress and the BJD argued that the

current shortfall is a "direct fallout of the recruitment mismanagement" and accusing the government of failing to build a steady cadre pipeline.

Majhi asserted that DySP posts are filled through both direct recruitment and promotion and that the government is streamlining recruitment, expediting promotions and strengthening examination mechanisms to prevent past irregularities. He assured that filling crucial field-level posts remains a priority, especially as the State faces rising challenges in law and order, cybercrime and women's safety.

Cold wave to intensify further in State IMD issues warning for 10 districts

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

The cold wave gripping Odisha is set to deepen over the next few days with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issuing warnings for 10 districts, including the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.

The chill is forecast to intensify between December 10 and 11 affecting isolated pockets of Sundargarh, Angul, Jharsuguda, Kalahandi, Khordha, Jagatsinghpur, Kandhamal, Koraput, Subarnapur and Cuttack districts. Both Bhubaneswar and Cuttack may witness a further dip with the minimum temperature likely to settle around 11°C and 10°C, respectively.

Phulbani is expected to remain the coldest with the mercury plummeting to around 5°C. Jharsuguda, Bhawanipatna and Rourkela

are projected to log 7°C while Angul and Koraput may touch 8°C. Minimum temperatures of around 9°C are likely in Sundargarh, Subarnapur, Nabarangpur and Keonjhar followed by 10°C in Balangir and Boudh.

The cold tightened its grip on Monday morning as G Udayagiri remained the State's coldest point for the second consecutive day at 4.3°C. Semilguda in Koraput followed closely at 4.6°C while Phulbani recorded 7.2°C. Jharsuguda stood at 7.4°C, Daringbadi at 7.5°C, Mohana at 8.9°C, Rourkela at 7.6°C, Chiplima at 8°C, Angul at 8.8°C, Kirei at 8.9°C, Bhawanipatna at 9°C and Nabarangpur at 10°C.

In the twin cities, Bhubaneswar recorded 12.1°C-3.8 degrees below normal while Cuttack logged 12.4°C. The IMD has advised people, especially the elderly and children, to take adequate precautions as the cold wave is likely to persist through the week.

Cong memo to Assembly seeks 94% backward class quota

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Congress leaders, headed by PCC president Bhakta Charan Das, submitted a memorandum to Odisha Assembly Speaker Surma Padhy on Monday urging implementation of proportional reservation for backward classes in the State.

The memorandum highlighted that around 94% of Odisha's population belongs to backward classes with OBC and SEBC constituting 54% and Scheduled Castes and Tribes 40%. Despite Constitutional provisions under Article 164(1) for special reservations, the Congress leaders claimed that Odisha has yet to fully realise the rights of these communities.

The proposal seeks proportional reservation in higher education (technical, medical, professional courses) and government jobs for OBC, SEBC, SC and ST communities. It also recommends inclusion of this "proportional reservation system" in the Ninth Schedule of the

Constitution.

The memorandum follows a resolution passed during the "Social Justice and Odisha" meeting organised by the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee on December 6 on Babasaheb Ambedkar Mahaprayana Day. The proposal calls for urgent action by both the State and Central Governments.

The submission was supported by Congress leaders, including party legislature wing leader Ramachandra Kadam, former Union Minister Srikanth Jena, former MP Anant Prasad Sethi, MLAs Ashok Das and CS Rajan Ekka, former MLA Santosh Singh Saluja, PCC vice-president Dr Lalatendu Mohapatra, former MLA Krishnachandra Sagariya and PCC Media chairman Arvind Das.

Bhakta Das emphasised that the government should immediately implement proportional reservation in line with Articles 15(4) and 16(4) of the Constitution to ensure that backward communities receive their rightful representation in education and employment.

Government turns heat on IndiGo

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

ON MONDAY, INDIGO'S CRISIS ENTERED ITS EIGHTH DAY, WITH 562 FLIGHTS CANCELLED ACROSS AIRPORTS

Naidu said adding that the disruption was a result of IndiGo failing to manage its crew and duty roster. On Monday, IndiGo's crisis entered its eighth day, with 562 flights cancelled across airports.

The revised flight duty time limitation (FDTL) was introduced after a high court order

in April 2025. Of the 22 guidelines, 15 were implemented on July 1 and the remaining seven on Nov 1. The minister stressed that multiple consultations were held with all stakeholders, including IndiGo, and rules had to be followed without any compromise on safety.

"After thorough consultation and safety risk assessment, necessary variations and exemptions have been given beforehand," the minister said, adding that the crisis took place almost one whole month of operation in the new FDTL.

CM tells Assembly

State sees surge in crimes against women

Cyber fraud and corruption cases also on rise

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Odisha has recorded an alarming rise in crimes against women, cyber fraud and corruption during the past 15-18 months, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi revealed in the State Assembly on Monday while responding to multiple queries from MLAs Prasanna Acharya, Rama Chandra Kadam and Tara Prasad Bahinipati.

According to data presented by the CM, the State registered 3,205 rape cases between July 1, 2024 and September 30, 2025. In the same period, police recorded 202 attempted rapes, 9,851 molestation cases and 1,476 incidents of sexual harassment. Majhi said the numbers point to a "deeply disturbing trend of violence against women".

The statistics further underline the gravity of the situation: 2,310 cases of public disturbing, 152 cases of voyeurism and 556 cases of stalking were reported. Odisha also saw 4 acid attacks, 129 trafficking cases and 796 incidents of eve-teasing during the 15-month



span.

Kidnapping and abduction of women remained a major concern with 8,863 cases registered. Dowry-related violence also continued unabated with 277 dowry homicides, 5,861 cases of dowry torture, 6,773 non-dowry torture cases and 49 dowry suicides reported. Majhi said the government is working to strengthen policing, expand victim support systems and intensify local-level monitoring.

Alongside physical crimes, Odisha reported a sharp surge in cyber offences. Majhi informed that the State registered 3,486 cybercrime cases in 16 months resulting in financial losses amounting to Rs 222 crore for citizens. Police made 69 digital arrests and apprehended 727 suspects linked to

online fraud networks. Investigators managed to freeze bank accounts worth Rs 6.74 crore while Rs 61.36 lakh was refunded to victims. The Chief Minister said cyber cells are being strengthened to counter increasingly sophisticated fraud mechanisms.

On corruption, Majhi said Vigilance sleuths had arrested 271 government officials, including 20 police personnel, for bribery and other misconduct in the last 18 months. Vigilance courts convicted 174 officials while 33 were dismissed from service and pensions of 65 others were stopped. "The government will continue its uncompromising fight against corruption," Majhi asserted.

State reels under severe doctor shortage

Govt pushes OPSC to fast-track recruitment

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Odisha's public healthcare system is under acute strain with nearly 60% of sanctioned doctor posts lying vacant across the State. Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling informed the Assembly on Monday that out of 15,774 approved posts, a staggering 9,503 remain unfilled, severely impacting service delivery, especially in rural and tribal regions.

Currently, 6,271 doctors are serving in government hospitals, 1135 on contract and 5,003 in regular positions. The minister acknowledged that Odisha's doctor-to-population ratio stands at 1:1,735, far below the WHO norm of 1:1,000, highlighting a widening healthcare gap.

Specialist shortages have compounded the crisis. At Community Health Centres (CHCs), over 74% of

specialist posts are vacant, undermining key services such as gynaecology, paediatrics, surgery and anaesthesia. Districts like Deogarh, Koraput, Rayagada, Mayurbhanj and Ganjam remain among the worst-affected, often forcing patients to travel long distances for essential care.

The minister admitted that chronic understaffing has resulted in long queues, overworked medical personnel, delayed treatments and non-functional departments in several district hospitals, concerns raised repeatedly by MLAs and local communities.

To bridge the gap, the government has urged the Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC) to expedite recruitment for 5,248 vacant posts. Mahaling said ongoing hiring drives, contractual appointments and incentives are being strengthened to attract doctors to remote areas. Mining-affected districts are also using District Mineral Foundation (DMF) funds to hire additional specialists and upgrade services.

In Odisha

Geo-location alert helps rescue 4 missing Bengal girls

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

A geo-location alert from the West Bengal Police helped Odisha authorities track down four missing schoolgirls at the Khurda Road railway station late Sunday night. Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel rescued the four 14-year-old minors from West Bengal who had mysteriously travelled more than 500 km and reached Odisha after disappearing from their homes. The girls, all Class-IX students from Thakurnagar under the Gaighata police station in North 24 Parganas dis-

trict, were reported missing on December 5. Using real-time mobile tower data, the West Bengal Police traced the movement of their phones to Khurda Road and alerted their Odisha counterparts. RPF teams later located the girls loitering at the station premises. A police team from Gaighata arrived in Bhubaneswar early Monday and took custody of the minors. They were taken back to North 24 Parganas and will be reunited with their families after completion of the formal legal process.

Investigators are now probing how the girls managed to travel across States and whether they were influenced or lured online. Their mobile phones and digital communication trails are being scanned with officers suspecting possible interaction with unknown contacts on social media. School counselling records reveal that at least two of the girls had previously been cautioned for excessive mobile use and engaging with unidentified profiles online, a detail now gaining significance in the investigation. The case has renewed con-

cern over the growing vulnerability of adolescents in Bengal's border districts, where several minors in recent months have been found travelling long distances after being influenced through social media or messaging apps. Law enforcement agencies fear that digital grooming and trafficking networks may be targeting young girls. Both Odisha and West Bengal Police are conducting a joint investigation stressing the need for stronger digital vigilance among parents and schools as similar incidents continue to surface.

India-South Africa T20

DGP reviews 3-tier security plan at Barabati

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Cuttack

With the Barabati Stadium here set to host the first India-South Africa T20 International on December 9, Odisha DGP Yogesh Bahadur Khurania on Friday evening carried out an on-ground inspection of the full security layout. The DGP reviewed preparedness for player safety, spectator security and crowd regulation, noting that a three-tier security ring has been deployed across the stadium and surrounding zones. He examined traffic and parking arrangements, frisking and



access control at all gates, CCTV monitoring, anti-sabotage sweeps and police deployment plans. Special focus was placed on

secure movement of the teams, from arrival to departure. Khurania said the Odisha Cricket Association has made "excellent arrangements," and

expressed confidence that spectators would enjoy a smooth experience. He urged fans to reach the venue 3-4 hours before the match to avoid congestion. He further appealed for public cooperation, recalling that previous international matches at Barabati have been conducted successfully with strong crowd discipline. Police Commissioner S Devdatta Singh, Additional Commissioner Narasingha Bhol, Cuttack DCP Khilari Rishikesh Dyanadeo and senior OCA representatives accompanied the DGP during the review.

Kidnapped man's body seized in Kendrapada

RAJESH BEHERA ■ Kendrapada

Police here retrieved the body of a 45-year-old Dalit person, identified as Balamram Sethy of Dhiapari village of Gopalpur under the Rajnagar police station limits, who had been kidnapped on November 29 for a ransom of Rs 5 lakh. The miscreants kidnapped Balamram, who had a food stall near a local liquor shop at Gopalpur, and later affixed a poster at Gopalpur market by threatening the family members of the victim to give Rs 5 lakh as ransom for his release. They asked the family members not to inform the police. Else they threatened to kill the victim. Bubu Sethy, Balamram's son, lodged a missing report on December 1, but police did not take any action. The family

members earlier informed the Rajnagar police about the past rivalry of Balamram with a family of Kankadia village. But the police neglected to inquire into the matter, they alleged. On Monday, the family members came across the jacket and slipper of Balamram at Kankadia village and informed police. Later, the police seized the body. Rajnagar PS IIC Naresh Sahu said that two persons have been taken into custody in the incident and inquiry was underway. The detainees were taken to the crime spot for scene recreation. A raid is on to nab the other accused, he added. The exact reason behind the kidnap and murder is yet to be ascertained by police, but according to locals, it could be the fallout of an extramarital affair.

'Citizens' role vital in combating urban pollution'

Orissa Environmental Society holds webinar
PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

At the current juncture, urban pollution has become a serious challenge as rapidly growing cities struggle with rising levels of smog, waste and noise. Vehicle emissions, industrial activities, construction-demolition processes and improper waste disposal worsen air, water and soil quality, threatening health of the public and the environment. While governments and organisations introduce policies to control pollution, citizens play a crucial role in driving meaningful change at the field-level. Individuals can re-

duce pollution by choosing public transport, cycling or walking instead of relying on private vehicles. Proper waste segregation, recycling and reducing single-use plastics help keep cities cleaner. Citizens can also participate in community clean-up drives, tree plantation programmes and support eco-friendly businesses. Raising awareness through social media and local initiatives further encourages responsible behaviour. Experts expressed these views in a webinar organised on the theme 'Urban pollution challenges - Role of citizens' under the auspices of the Orissa Environmental Society (OES). By adopting sustainable habits and holding authorities accountable, citizens become active partners in building healthier, greener and

more resilient urban spaces. The programme, held under the chairmanship of OES president Dr Sundara Narayana Patro, had Er Dillip Kumar Dash, senior environmental engineer of the State Pollution Control Board (SPCB), as the chief speaker. Dash narrated the pollution monitoring mechanisms and inspection protocols adopted by the SPCB. The SPCB covers 21 cities for air quality monitoring and seven identified non-attainment cities under the National Clean Air Programme, in addition to State Clean Air Programme, for air pollution reduction by 2026. The SPCB has declared Ekamra Kshetra of Bhubaneswar as a low-emission zone (LEZ). Dash emphasised on best practices such as road and parking in-

frastructure development, municipal and e-waste disposal and green-space enhancement. He also explained the seven themes of Mission LiFE, implemented by MoEFFCC to improve the environmental quality by changing citizen and community behaviour. While Dr Patro stressed on creating a network of citizens for keeping the urban environment pollution-free, OES working president Dr Jayakrushna Panigrahi urged the urban dwellers to reduce their carbon footprints and enhance their commitment towards environment. OES secretary Er Manoranjan Mishra presented a welcome address. Vice-president Dr Lala AK Singh introduced the guests, and joint secretary Dr Surabhi Jain offered a vote of thanks.

In a year Rs 3.39 cr spent on minister quarters' renovation

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

The State Government has spent more than Rs 3.39 crore on repairing and renovating the official residences of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, his two deputies and 13 ministers since the BJP assumed office on June 12, 2024. The expenditure details were presented in the State Assembly on Monday in response to a query by BJD legislator Gautam Buddha Das. In his written reply, Chief Minister Majhi stated that a total of Rs 3.39 crore was spent on ministerial quarters over the past year. Of this, Rs 73.58 lakh went towards refurbishing his two official residences. Repairs to Quarter No B-1 in Bhubaneswar's Unit-II area, where Majhi had resided as Keonjhar MLA, cost Rs 50.10 lakh while the Unit-V quarters allotted to him after taking oath as CM required an additional Rs 23.47 lakh. Significant expenses were also incurred on the homes of Deputy Chief Ministers. KV Singh Deo's official residence underwent renovations worth

Rs 28.21 lakh while Pravati Parida's quarters were refurbished at a cost of Rs 7.72 lakh. Among the ministers, renovation costs varied widely. Ganesh Ram Singhkhuntia's quarters recorded one of the highest expenditures at Rs 25.74 lakh closely followed by Suryabanshi Suraj at Rs 25.72 lakh. Prithviraj Harichandan's residence required Rs 20.93 lakh, and Sampad Chandra Swain's quarters saw repairs of Rs 19.60 lakh. Other ministers, including Gokulananda Mallik, Rabi Narayan Naik, Mukesh Mahaling, Suresh Pujari, Krushna Chandra Mahapatra and Pradeep Balasamanta, had refurbishment costs ranging between Rs 14 lakh and Rs 19 lakh. Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena's quarters were repaired for Rs 10.59 lakh while the lowest expenditure was on Minister Nityananda Gond's residence at Rs 5.11 lakh. The figures highlight a wide variation in renovation costs across ministerial residences even as the total expenditure crossed Rs 3.39 crore within the first year of the new government.

Cops inaction in B'swar rape case: BJD meets IG

UBACHAK MOHANTY ■ Baleswar

An alleged rape of a 21-year-old married woman from Kasafal under the Singla police station has become a political issue in the area. A section of BJD leaders met the IG (Eastern Range) on Sunday and alleged that the local police were not registering a case based on the victim's complaint due to political pressure. They urged the IG to take action against the accused. Reports said the incident occurred on November 28, and the police allegedly adopted a dilly-dallying approach in registering the case since the accused belongs to another political party. However, the case was registered on Monday after a group of BJD leaders like Lekhasri Samantsingar, former

MLAs Swarup Das and Sukanta Nayak met IG Pinak Mishra and expressed their anguish. Reports further added that when the complainant visited the house of the accused, Ganesh Rana of the same village, he assaulted her sexually in the presence of his wife, and a video recording of the incident was made by the accused. The incident sparked outrage in the village after the victim disclosed her ordeal to her family members and other villagers. Efforts were allegedly made to suppress the matter. However, following the intervention of the IG and the SP, the Singla police have registered a case under Section 64(1) of BNS and the IT Act against Ganesh Rana and his wife and began an investigation, reports added.

Nostalgia, cultural shows mark NIFT Alumni Meet

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The NIFT Bhubaneswar hosted its Alumni Meet on its campus, bringing together former students, faculty and current learners for an evening marked by nostalgia, cultural presentations and institutional pride. The event aimed at strengthening connections within the institute's creative community. The programme opened with a felicitation ceremony led by Campus Director Rajesh Kumar Jha, who in his inaugural address, welcomed the alumni back to their alma mater and remarked that the campus takes pride in the success of its graduates. Regional Industry Coordinator Dr Goutam Saha addressed the gathering, highlighting the alumni's professional accom-



plishments across various sectors. The cultural segment included a Bharatanatyam performance by Sharut Mallick and a flute recital by Suchana Senapati. Interaction sessions allowed the alumni to reconnect with students and faculty. These were accompanied by student-led performances, including a duet by Sanskruti and Riddhi, a dance by Anita and Mohima, and a solo song

by Bhagyasmita. A band performance by alumnus Aryan Srivastava added to the evening's vibrancy. A lively Housie game and a community dinner concluded the informal segment of the event. A total of more than 50 alumni participated. Director Jha also acknowledged a series of distinguished student achievements on the national stage. Krishangi Raj (TD Sem VII) secured first po-

sition in the All-India NIFT Chandelier Design Competition conducted by FOS Lighting. The institute additionally felicitated its medal winners from Converge 2025 held in Kerala, whose performances contributed to NIFT Bhubaneswar securing a position among the top seven NIFT campuses nationwide. The event concluded with a vote of thanks presented by Ravi Prakash.

Safety concern as 1K bats stay in trees in B'ngir town

And poaching rampant in area
SUDHIR MISHRA ■ Balangir

The arrival of a large number of bats and their staying in some of the big trees of the town has brought both cheers and concerns to the wildlife enthusiasts here. Identified as Indian flying fox bats, they first arrived here five to six months ago. They left the place during Deepawali, and after that they again came and stayed here. Around 1,000 bats are staying, informed Sashi Purohit of Balangir town, in whose house's backyard trees, these bats are staying. Bats are nocturnal animals and fly at night. They are both herbivores and carnivorous. What concerns wildlife lovers



here is their protection, as poaching of bats for their meat is common. Because of indiscriminate poaching, their number is dwindling, and the need for conservation is greater, said wildlife lovers. In the urban area, large trees are

rare. Whatever large trees were in and around the town, they were cut either for road widening or other purposes, destroying the habitat of birds, they added. Bats often carry the virus of various diseases. People

should avoid eating the half-eaten fruits of bats or their meat, they cautioned. Meanwhile, the forest personnel have visited the spot, and steps are being taken for their protection, said Balangir Range Officer NK Panda.

XIMB hosts 'Communiqué 2025'

Experts decode secrets behind iconic brands
RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

The Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar (XIMB) hosted its annual media conclave 'Communiqué 2025' on Sunday. Organised by Illuminatix, the institute's Media and PR Cell, the event brought together industry leaders to discuss the theme, "Building Brands: A Deep Dive into the Stories behind Thriving Brands". The opening session featured IHCL Digital Marketing Director Arya Swayamshree, who said, "Great brands win with clarity, consistency, and emotional connection. They outlive trends because they resonate with people, not just



sell products." She cited Apple, Nike and Taj as examples of brands that have stood the test of time. Pidlite Industries Regional Field Marketing Manager Sanjaya Kumar Sahu highlighted the power of grassroots engagement. "Enduring brands focus on ground connect and trust. Fevikwik doesn't just advertise; it engages directly with carpenters and end-users to

build loyalty," he explained. Tata Consumer Products Senior Brand Manager (Tata Sampann Spices) Varsha Naik stressed the importance of understanding changing consumer behaviour. "Great brands don't just create ads; they engage meaningfully. Look at Ching's rise and the decline of Tata Nano; it's about connecting with people, not just products." Orbit8 Media Creative

strategist Kalpit Mohanty spoke on the need for unconventional storytelling backed by emotional intelligence. "Skills can be mastered, but emotional intelligence differentiates a brand. Campaigns like Happydent's 'Muskurale, Jagmagale' show how emotions drive brand recall," he said. Moderating the sessions, Professor Sumitra Mishra observed, "With shrinking attention spans, brand longevity now depends on patience, persistence and purpose. It's a marathon, not a sprint." The conclave concluded with a panel discussion and interactive Q&A. Speakers were felicitated by Illuminatix and the Alumni Committee while Illuminatix Coordinator Nishant Barik delivered a vote of thanks.

Amld rise In rellgious violence In State

Demand for Minority Commission gains momentum

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Calls for a dedicated Minority Commission in Odisha have intensified as reports of attacks on religious minorities, particularly Christians, continue to surface across the State. The issue was raised in the Assembly by MLA Praful Chandra Pradhan on Monday who pointed out that no statutory body currently exists to safeguard minority interests and promote their development.

Responding, Minister Nityananda Gand said the government has recently proposed formation of a Minority Commission to focus on the welfare and protection of minority communities. However, activists and opposition

leaders argue that the proposal comes decades too late following repeated incidents of communal violence.

Human rights organisations and independent fact-finding teams have documented attacks on Christian families, churches and tribal communities in districts such as Nabarangpur, Malkangiri, Gajapati, Mayurbhanj and Baleswar, including forced conversions, desecration of churches, denial of burial rights and mob violence. Victims claim that law enforcement often fails to intervene or investigate adequately.

Odisha has a long history of communal flare-ups, most notably the 2008 Kandhamal violence, which displaced

thousands and destroyed hundreds of churches. Critics say the absence of a Minority Commission has allowed such incidents to recur, leaving affected communities without institutional protection.

At the national level, several Indian States have Minority Commissions tasked with promoting welfare, protecting rights and monitoring incidents of discrimination. States like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh already have functioning Minority Commissions with varying degrees of authority and powers. These commissions serve as advisory and investigative bod-

ies to ensure minority interests are safeguarded.

Civil society leaders and opposition MLAs insist that a statutory Minority Commission in Odisha with investigative powers and a mandate for legal protection is essential. They argue that only a functioning commission can ensure minorities' constitutional rights and provide mechanisms for justice and rehabilitation.

The government's recent acceptance of the proposal signals a step forward, but stakeholders warn that swift implementation and adequate powers will be key to addressing longstanding fears and preventing future incidents of communal violence in Odisha.

College girl dies in fire

tragedy in Rajgangpur

CM announces
Rs 4L aid

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

A college student lost her life in a devastating fire at Lanjibenda on Monday exposing the State's negligence in safeguarding its youths. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Monday announced a compensation of Rs 4 lakh for the bereaved family.

The tragedy occurred when the student, whose identity is yet to be disclosed, died in the fire that engulfed part of her college premises. According to local reports, the family had previously received death threats, raising questions about the adequacy of preventive measures and government oversight.

The CM assured that all nec-

essary support would be extended to the family and that authorities are investigating the cause of the fire.

BJD president Naveen Patnaik expressed shock and grief over the incident, saying, "The incident of a college student losing her life in a fire in Rajgangpur Lanjibenda is extremely heartbreaking." He criticised the government's perceived inaction, stating, "The family had already received death threats. How much more innocent lives will the government allow to burn like this? Who is the government protecting?"

Patnaik further demanded that the government take strict measures to improve law and order, ensure justice for the people and hold the perpetrators accountable without delay.

INBRIEF

BSF ASI dies in freak accident in Brahmapur

Brahmapur: BSF Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Prakash Chandra Dash died after being injured in a freak accident at his under-construction house in Brahmapur. Dash was watering the area



in the third floor of the house when he lost his balance due to the slippery surface and fell onto an exposed iron rod, sustaining serious injuries. He was rushed to MKCG Medical College Hospital. Despite efforts by the doctors, Dash's condition deteriorated due to excessive blood loss. He passed away on Saturday.

Rs 2-cr hemp plants destroyed in Gajapati

Paralakhemundi: By the instruction of Gajapati district Collector Madhumita and Superintendent of Police Jatindra Kumar Panda, hemp plants in 10 acres of land were destroyed near Chudangapur under Adava police limits of Gajapati district, on Saturday. The joint raid was conducted by the Revenue, Excise and Forest department staff and the plants destroyed were worth about Rs 2 crore.



Mangala Cup Cricket Tourney from Dec 25

Kakatpur: The 36th State-level Mangala Cup Cricket Tournament will commence from December 25 at the Maa Mangala Mini Stadium, Kakatpur. The Kakatpur Mangala Athletic Association is organizing the event. A Press meet was held on Saturday here where organisers shared key highlights of the tournament. Club president Pradipta Kumar Dixit announced that the event will continue till January 4, featuring eight competitive teams. The organising committee has declared Rs 50,555 as the winner's cash prize while the runners-up will be awarded Rs 30,333.

Indian, S African teams arrive ahead of Barabati T20I

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar / Cuttack

Excitement is building in Odisha as the Indian and South African cricket teams arrived in Bhubaneswar ahead of the much-anticipated T20I series opener at the Barabati Stadium in Cuttack on December 9.

Key Indian players Suryakumar Yadav, Hardik Pandya, Shubman Gill, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Sanju Samson, Jitesh Sharma and Varun Chakravarthy are set to join, boosting anticipation among supporters. From the South African camp, David Miller, Reeza Hendricks, Tristan Stubbs, Donovan Ferreira and George Linde have already arrived with the remaining players joining later.

Preparations at the Barabati Stadium are in full swing. Fire Safety Director General Sudhanshu Sarangi inspected the venue along with senior officials to ensure robust fire safety measures. Commissioner S Devdatta Singh confirmed a comprehensive three-tier security system, including enhanced crowd management, to safeguard players, officials and spectators.

Ticket counters across Odisha witnessed heavy rush with fans queuing early to secure seats. Authorities urged those unable to enter the stadium to enjoy the live telecast on Star Sports Network. No ticket black marketing has been reported so far though police remain vigilant.

After losing the Test series but winning the ODIs comfortably, India now shifts focus to the T20I series, a critical warm-up for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026. The 15-member Indian squad includes captain Suryakumar Yadav with vice-captain Shubman Gill returning after a neck injury and Hardik Pandya making a comeback following a quadriceps injury. Both will participate in practice sessions at the Barabati Stadium.

The five-match T20I series will conclude on December 19 with subsequent games in New Chandigarh, Dharamsala, Lucknow and Ahmedabad, all starting at 7 pm IST. With stringent security, smooth preparations and star players in action, the Cuttack leg promises a memorable experience for Odisha's cricket enthusiasts and sets the stage for India's World Cup campaign.

In Nabarangpur

Cong leader's public gambling sparks outrage



Police fail to take action due to ambiguity over Gaming Act

PNS ■ Nabarangpur

A controversy erupted in Chandahandi in Nabarangpur district, after senior Congress leader Khamraj Bagh allegedly conducted open-air gambling on a public road, intensifying confusion over the newly amended Odisha Gaming Act.

Bagh reportedly set up a Khudi Khudi gambling board in broad daylight, drawing

several locals to place bets. When ASI Benu Pani Majhi reached the spot and ordered the activity to stop, Bagh allegedly challenged the officer, insisting that the "amended Act prevents the police from arresting gamblers."

Faced with the claim, the ASI left without making any arrests. Locals expressed anger, warning that unclear laws are emboldening offenders and weakening police authority. The incident has triggered sharp public debate on the growing law-and-order concerns linked to the Act's amendments.

OSRTC staff denied rejoining

Corruption alleged

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

A controversy over the re-joining of a staff in the Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC) has led to allegations of corruption, arbitrary suspension and administrative defiance.

The case involves OSRTC driver Niranjan Sahu, who despite repeated directives from Commerce and Transport Department officials, most notably Principal Secretary Usha Padhee, has reportedly not been permitted to re-join duty.

The incident comes at a time when the State Government, under its 'Asmita Sarkar' initiative, has been emphasising its zero-tolerance policy on corruption.

Sahu, who joined the OSRTC on August 12, 2008, was suspended on March 31, 2025 by Assistant Transport Manager and Unit Head Prashant Hota on charges of careless driving and misconduct.

Sahu refuted these allegations and claims the suspension was retaliatory, saying it stemmed from his refusal to comply with certain 'personal demands' made by the concerned official.

In Malkanglr

Houses torched as woman's headless body found

Issue highlighted in State Assembly

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar / Malkangiri

Malkangiri witnessed violent group clashes that destroyed homes and triggered heated debates in the State Assembly on Monday.

Tension erupted after police recovered a headless body of a woman from the Poteru river near Dudumetla sparking confrontations between residents of Rakhelguda and MV-26 villages. The unrest left over 50 houses damaged and heightened communal fears in the district.

The victim has been identified as Lake Podiami (51), a resident of Rakhelguda. Her body, discovered four days after she went missing, had her head missing, raising suspicions of foul play. Villagers blamed members of MV-26 for the murder.

On Sunday afternoon, hundreds from Rakhelguda and neighbouring tribal communities vandalised homes in MV-26 and set several houses on fire. Police and BSF personnel were deployed in large numbers to restore order. District Collector Somesh Kumar Upadhyay and SP Vinod Patil visited the

area, spoke to residents and assured support for affected families.

To prevent further unrest and curb misinformation, the administration suspended internet services for 24 hours from 6 pm Monday. Authorities also invoked BNS Section 153 to strengthen law and order in the region.

The violence was highlighted in the Assembly. BJD MLA Pratap Deb criticised the government for failing to maintain law and order, noting that police reportedly delayed action despite media reports. Congress MLA Mangu Khilla highlighted a related

incident in which a woman was murdered while harvesting paddy.

Both leaders urged the Chief Minister to take direct action, ensure justice for victims and prevent repeated clashes that could destabilise the district.

Officials confirmed that an assessment of damages is underway and assistance would be provided to affected families.

The Malkangiri unrest underscores the fragile communal situation in the district and the urgent need for swift administrative intervention to restore confidence among residents.

11-day Int'l Trade Fair begins in Brahmapur

- 1L items from India and abroad exhibited
- Mermaid show main attraction

PRASANT DAS ■ Brahmapur

The 3rd International Trade Fair of Brahmapur commenced on Friday here at the UCP Engineering School Play Ground, which will continue for eleven days till December 15. The fair is being organised every year in Brahmapur by Gupta Event Management Private Limited, Bhubaneswar.

This year the entire fair area has been air conditioned. Traders from 22 States and ten foreign countries are participating in the event. Here the visitors can enjoy the exhibition of more than one lakh items and also purchase the

items of their choices. The items being exhibited are sofa set, dining set and other furniture from Kashmir, 100 varieties of dry fruits from Afghanistan, Iranian Khajoor, Thailand jewellery and footwear, Korean ornaments and home decor items, Indian handicrafts and handlooms, ancient metal and AD stone ornaments, Irani carpets, ancient metal and brass items, Dubai dress and wall frames, leather products from West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, Singapore items, Khadi and dress materials from Bhagalpur, Punjab, Banaras, Jeypore, Bangladesh, besides from Sambalpur,



Champaran mutton, electronics, cosmetics and consumer goods.

The organisers have informed that the main attraction of the fair is the most attractive Mermaid Show. While this show will be a paid show, Mermaids from coun-

tries like Indonesia, Barley and Philippines are participating.

Gupta Event Management directors Sujit Kumar Gupta, Payal Acharya Gupta, event coordinator Bir Bahadur Singh and Mermaid manager Mohammed Imran were present at the Press conference.

In Kalahandi, Rayagada

Vedanta launches 'Shishu Sanjeevani'

For fortified nutrition support to kids across AWCs

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The Vedanta Aluminium has reinforced its commitment to early childhood well-being with the launch of the Shishu Sanjeevani, a fortified nutritional supplement programme across 25 Anganwadi centres in Kashipur and Bhawanipatna, benefitting more than 600 children aged 3 to 6 years.

Developed by the National Dairy Development Board, the Shishu Sanjeevanis are enriched with essential micronutrients aligned with the ICMR-NIN guidelines, ensuring safe and consistent nutritional intake under the supervision of Anganwadi workers. The initiative aims to strengthen the nutritional foundation of chil-



dren during their formative years, reducing malnutrition and supporting holistic growth.

The programme complements Vedanta's flagship Nand Ghar initiative, launched in 2015 under the aegis of the Anil Agarwal Foundation in partnership with the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

CEO, Vedanta Aluminium, Rajiv Kumar said, "This initiative reflects our commitment

to strengthening early childhood nutrition and supporting holistic community development. Through the effort, we align with the nationwide vision of Rashtriya Poshan Maah, ensuring children receive strong foundations in health and education for a brighter future."

Child Development Program Officer, Kashipur, Raygada, Jyotsana Barik said the initiative has been very helpful for the children.

K'put MP introduces 3 Private Members' Bills in LS

To address historic injustices to tribals, boost growth in KBK

PNS ■ Koraput

In an important initiative aimed at correcting historic imbalances and addressing the long-standing demands of Odisha's backward and tribal regions, Koraput MP Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka introduced three significant Private Members' Bills in the Lok Sabha.

The Bills focus on securing sustained development for the KBK region, rectifying omissions in the Scheduled Tribes list of Odisha, and granting constitutional recognition to two indigenous tribal languages.

Introducing the "Special Financial Assistance to KBK Region of State of Odisha

Bill, 2024", Ulaka sought to create a statutory framework that guarantees predictable and accountable Central assistance for the Koraput-Balangir-Kalahandi region, one of the most historically disadvantaged areas in the country. The Bill covers the districts of Koraput, Rayagada, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Balangir, Subarnapur, Kalahandi and Nuapada.

Emphasising the need for sustained support, he said that despite several decades of special programmes, the region continues to suffer from chronic poverty, persistent migration, low literacy, poor health indicators and inadequate connectivity. He stated that the region has contributed significantly through its minerals, forests and labour, yet its people continue to remain deprived

of basic opportunities and essential services.

The second Bill, titled the "Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024", seeks to amend the Presidential Order of 1950 to correct long-standing omissions in the list of Scheduled Tribes in Odisha. It aims to ensure that deserving tribal communities, including the Jhodia or Jhodia Paroja, are properly recognised and reinstated into the constitutional framework that grants access to reservations, scholarships, welfare schemes and political representation.

Ulaka noted that for thousands of families, incorrect classification or delayed updates have meant denial of education, employment and socio-economic safeguards.

He stressed that for a

young tribal student, proper inclusion in the ST list can determine access to scholarships, college admission or job opportunities, and the Bill is intended to correct this historic injustice.

The third Bill introduced, the "Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2025", proposes the inclusion of the Sora (Soura) and Ho languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. Sora is an endangered indigenous language with deep cultural roots in Odisha, while Ho is widely spoken across Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Assam.

Ulaka emphasised that the absence of constitutional recognition has hindered the preservation, development and promotion of the languages, which hold rich linguistic and cultural heritage. Formal recognition, he said,

is essential for safeguarding these languages and ensuring their continuity for future generations.

Calling for broad, bipartisan support, Ulaka appealed to Members of Parliament across party lines to treat the Bills with seriousness and sensitivity. He stated that the reforms proposed are not about any individual or political party but about addressing historic neglect, restoring dignity to tribal communities, protecting indigenous languages and enabling long-overdue development in the KBK region.

Ulaka also urged cooperation between the Union Government, the Odisha Government and local stakeholders to ensure that the proposed reforms are implemented in a timely and accountable manner.

Government notifies draft occupational safety rules

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Government has notified draft Delhi Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Rules, 2025, to ensure a safe working environment for workers employed in hazardous and accident-prone industrial activities.

The draft rules provide for the constitution of a 10-member Delhi Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Board headed by the labour commissioner, and safety committees in establishments employing 250 or more workers.

The labour department has invited suggestions and objections on the draft rules, which will be considered by the Government after 45 days.

The draft rules state that every employer of a factory and building or other construction work will annually conduct, free of cost, medical examination of

every worker aged 45 years and above, within 120 days from the commencement of every calendar year.

Every employer in the industry involving hazardous processes will arrange to conduct free-of-cost medical examination for every worker annually, within 30 days from the commencement of every calendar year, as mentioned in the draft rules.

Additionally, no employee will be employed in any establishment unless he has been issued a letter of appointment. Under sub-section (1), Section 10 and Section 11 of the draft rules, the employer or manager of an establishment will, as early as possible, send a notice to the labour department inspector cum facilitators, about the occurrence of any accident that results in the death of a worker or results in bodily injury likely to cause death.

The dangerous occurrence will include the burst-

ing of any plant or pipeline or equipment containing petroleum, steam, compressed air; collapse or failure of a crane, derrick, winch, hoist or other appliances, explosion due to explosives, fire, leakage or release of harmful toxic gases and such other incident.

Under sub-section (2) of section 17 of the draft Rules, the Delhi government will constitute the “Delhi Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Board”. The board members will include the chief inspector-cum-facilitator, labour department, member secretary, Delhi pollution control committee, director, Delhi health services, two representatives of employees and two members of the district crisis group having expertise in occupational safety and health.

Establishments involving hazardous processes and employing 250 or more workers will mandatorily

form safety committees. The draft Delhi Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Rules, 2025, was notified earlier this month. The draft rules also lay down working conditions stipulating daily and weekly working hours, wages and overtime payments.

The weekly working hours under clause (b) of sub-section (1) of Section 25 for each worker will not be more than 48 hours. The periods of work of adult workers in an establishment each day, including intervals and spread-overs, will be fixed by the government through notification.

Under Section 27, no worker will be allowed to work overtime exceeding 144 hours in any quarter of a year. In calculating overtime on any day, a fraction of an hour between 15 and 30 minutes will be counted as 30 minutes, and in case of more than 30 minutes, it shall be rounded to an hour on an actual basis.

CM, ministers pay respects at Golden Temple

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and her Cabinet ministers on Monday visited the Golden Temple in Amritsar to pay obeisance.

After paying obeisance, Rekha Gupta said she had come to offer 'shukrana' (thanks) following the successful organisation of Guru Tegh Bahadur's 350th martyrdom anniversary programme at the Red Fort in Delhi.

She was accompanied by ministers Parvesh Sahib Singh, Ashish Sood, Kapil Mishra, Ravindra Indraj and Manjinder Singh Sirsa. Gupta also cleaned utensils in the periphery of the Golden Temple along with Minister Sirsa.

The event witnessed the presence of thousands of devotees who offered their respects to Guru Sahib and participated in every programme, including Gurbani Kirtan and Sankirtan.

During her spiritual visit, the Chief Minister also paid her respects at the holy Durgiana Temple and the Valmiki Temple, offering



After bowing my head at Sri Harmandir Sahib, my mind found satisfaction. Waheguru Ji, may You keep Your hand of grace upon everyone

— REKHA GUPTA, CHIEF MINISTER

prayers for the nation's prosperity and the well-being of the people of Delhi.

Praying for continued blessing, the chief minister said in a social media post, “After bowing my head at Sri Harmandir Sahib, my mind found satisfaction. Waheguru ji, may You keep Your hand of grace upon

everyone.” Sirsa wrote in a post, “Today, by visiting this sacred place, my mind found immense peace, and I also experienced the boundless presence and tranquillity of that ‘Akal Purkh’”.

Earlier, the chief minister had described the “extraordinary success” of the

THE CHIEF MINISTER ALSO PAID HER RESPECTS AT THE HOLY DURGIANA TEMPLE AND THE VALMIKI TEMPLE

‘Gurmat Samagam’ at the Red Fort as the “grace of Guru Sahib, despite an atmosphere of fear caused by a terror incident just a day before the three-day event in November”. She said more than six lakh devotees attended the religious events without any disruption.

During her spiritual journey, the Chief Minister also visited the famous Durgiana Temple, which resembles the Golden Temple in appearance. She performed traditional rituals and prayed for the nation's well-being. Thereafter, she paid respects at the Maharishi Valmiki Temple (Sri Ram Tirath Temple) and received blessings.

After reaching Shri Guru Ramdas International Airport, she was received by local BJP leaders led by district president Harvinder Singh Sandhu.

Agency replaces old streetlights with advanced LEDs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

In a major push to eliminate dark spots to improve safety across South Delhi, newly appointed agency of Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Esmart Energy Solutions has replaced more than 70,000 LED streetlights with advance technology between October and November this year.

The company, which formally took charge of the operation and maintenance of streetlights in the region in September under an agreement with the MCD, has also carried out large-scale repair

work on existing lights damaged during the monsoon.

Saurabh Aggarwal, Business Head of Esmart Energy Solutions, said: “It is a matter of great satisfaction for us to serve the people of Delhi through this important partnership with the MCD. Our first aim is to ensure safety by removing every dark patch in the national Capital. Well-lit roads and public spaces are crucial for a Viksit Delhi and for the growth of the city's varied night life—from historic monuments to busy markets that stay alive till late.”

During the recent festive season, including Diwali and

Chhath Puja, the company increased its workforce and worked round the clock to keep streets, parks, and residential colonies brightly lit.

Esmart is going to replace all the existing street lights with new fittings within the next 3 years which will consume far less power than the older lamps while giving out stronger and more uniform light.

Consistent bright lighting is delivering a clear boost to the night economy while making roads safer for everyone. In markets such as Greater Kailash-I and II, Saket, Malviya Nagar, Kalkaji, Kailash Colony, Lajpat Nagar, and Green Park,

traders say customers now feel far more secure walking to their cars or taking autos late in the evening. Evening walkers and joggers have returned in large numbers to parks and residential streets. Street-food vendors, late-night eateries, and delivery agents have extended their working hours.

Underlining the marked improvement in civic infrastructure and public safety, Chaudhary Ramakant, E-Block RWA President, South Moti Bagh, said: “The MCD's extensive drive to install bright LED street lights has completely eliminated dark spots across our lanes, parks and

by-lanes. Maintenance teams are now highly efficient, faulty lamps are repaired within hours, and the public complaint redressal system has become remarkably quick and responsive.”

Residents facing any problem with streetlights in the areas now handled by Esmart can report faults through a dedicated 24x7 helpline set up in coordination with the MCD. Complaints can be lodged on the toll-free number 1800-203-8500, by giving a missed call or sending a message on WhatsApp to +91 96505 57785, or by writing to southdelhi@esmartlighting.com.

NDMC to make seven buildings disabled-friendly

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

From installing Braille signage to procuring 27 wheelchairs for differently-abled people, the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has taken up a project to make seven of its buildings, including the Talkatora Stadium and Akbar Bhawan, disabled-friendly.

According to officials, the cost of the project is pegged at Rs 1.86 crore which has been approved by the NDMC. “We have floated a

tender for the project. A tender was floated earlier too but it did not attract bids. So we have floated the tender again. The successful bidder will have four months to complete the project,” an official said.

Seven buildings will be covered under the project - the Charak Palika Hospital, Talkatora Indoor Stadium, Aashirwaad Old Age Home, Palika Bhawan, Akbar Bhawan, Chanakya Bhawan and the Yashwan Place residential-cum-office complex. “These buildings have

been chosen for the initial phase of the project. More buildings will be made disabled-friendly in the next phase,” the official said.

The project involves fixing Braille signage for toilets, staircase, and wheelchair accessibility areas along with procuring 27 wheelchairs and as many evacuation chairs.

“The evacuation chair shall be designed for safely transferring patients up and down the stairs during fire emergencies at hospitals,” the official said.

Delhi Assembly first in India to operationalise real-time digital audit monitoring portal: Speaker

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi Assembly speaker Vijendra Gupta on Monday said that the Delhi Assembly is the first assembly in India to operationalise a real-time digital audit monitoring portal for monitoring of audit paragraphs and action taken notes (ATNs).

Gupta observed that the adoption of the Audit Para Monitoring System (APMS) marks a significant step towards transparency, procedural discipline and a more accountable audit follow-up mechanism.

“APMS is now fully operational within the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, and Delhi is arguably the first state assembly in the country to implement such a comprehensive real-time audit monitoring portal,” he added.

The Speaker held a meeting to assess the status



of action taken on the reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

He expressed concern while examining the status on the portal, which showed that 142 audit paragraphs had been uploaded by various departments, while only 30 ATNs had been submitted. He noted that such pendency is unsatisfactory and stressed that timely and complete responses are

essential for enabling the Public Accounts Committee to discharge its mandate effectively.

During the meeting, the challenges in audit follow-up were discussed extensively. It was noted that many replies uploaded by departments were not in the prescribed form and therefore could not be placed before the Public Accounts Committee, said an

official statement.

Gupta stressed that incomplete or informal replies cannot be considered valid ATNs and must be returned for correction. He directed that departments must submit corrected and properly formatted notes within three weeks.

APMS is a digital platform developed by the Ministry of Finance Expenditure Department and conceptualised by the Controller General of Accounts, based on the Public Accounts Committee's guidelines.

The system enables end-to-end monitoring of audit paragraphs, Action Taken Notes and Action Taken Replies. It displays the original audit observation, the deficiencies identified by the audit, the comments recorded at each stage, the responses uploaded by departments, the acceptance or return of replies and the statutory timelines for finalisation.

Govt approves extension of Devi Bus Route 7701A

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Aiming to ensure last-mile connectivity and reliable transport options in South Delhi, the Delhi government has approved the extension of Devi Bus Route 7701A from its existing terminal at South Asian University to AIIMS-CAPFIMS (Central Armed Police Forces Institute of Medical Sciences), Maidan Garhi. The decision follows a request from the Chief of AIIMS-CAPFIMS, Maidan Garhi, who highlighted the need for dependable connectivity between the metro network and the institute to address staff safety concerns, particularly during early morning and evening hours.

At present, Devi Route 7701A operates between Chhattarpur Metro Station and South Asian University with four trips in each shift. With the approved extension, the service will continue along the same corridor up to AIIMS-CAPFIMS, for which a new terminal fare stage has been added. The extended



service will operate from Chhattarpur Metro Station via Chhattarpur Mandir, Chhattarpur Village, Chhattarpur Extension, Nanda Hospital, Satbari Crossing and South Asian University before reaching AIIMS-CAPFIMS in the Up direction, and vice versa in the down direction. This extension increases the total trip length by approximately 1.5 kilometres in each direction.

The existing pattern of four morning and four evening trips in each direction will remain unchanged even after the extension. Departures from Chhattarpur Metro Station to AIIMS-CAPFIMS will

continue to be around 8.30, 9.00, 9.30 and 10.00 hours in the morning and 16.00, 16.30, 17.00 and 17.30 hours in the evening. Similarly, return trips from AIIMS-CAPFIMS to Chhattarpur Metro Station will take place around 09.00, 09.30, 10.00 and 10.30 hours in the morning and 16.30, 17.00, 17.30 and 18.00 hours in the evening.

The extension is expected to significantly improve mobility for staff, students, patients and visitors by providing direct, reliable and affordable last-mile connectivity from the metro station to AIIMS-CAPFIMS. It will reduce dependence on informal transport modes and elimi-

nate the need for commuters to walk along the hilly stretch leading to the institute.

The move enhances safety and comfort during early and late hours, supports better utilisation of the existing Devi fleet and strengthens the integration of the public bus network with major educational and medical institutions in the Chhattarpur-Maidan Garhi belt. It also aligns with the Delhi Government's broader emphasis on route rationalisation and improved multimodal connectivity across the city.

Speaking on the development, Delhi Transport Minister Pankaj Kumar Singh said, “The extension of Route 7701A to AIIMS-CAPFIMS is another milestone in our ongoing route rationalisation initiative, ensuring that public transport reaches areas where it is needed the most. This move will significantly improve last-mile access for staff, students and patients, while enhancing the overall public transport experience in the Chhattarpur-Maidan Garhi region.”

Ugandan man held for duping man of ₹1.9 lakh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A 38-year-old man, a native of Uganda, was arrested for allegedly duping a Delhi resident of ₹1.9 lakh after posing as a woman on a dating app by using pictures of his girlfriend and luring him into a fraudulent investment scheme.

The accused, identified as Micheal Iga, allegedly residing without valid documentation in Burari area, offered the complainant a “lucrative business opportunity” involving purchase of a “rare oil” from Assam, police said.

“The complainant, a resident of Kishan Garh, had connected with a woman on a dating app. She allegedly gained his confidence by claiming to work for a beauty-products company and offered him a lucrative business opportunity involving

the purchase, and resale of a rare oil from Assam at high profit margins,” Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Amit Goel said.

Trusting her assurances, he transferred ₹1,90,000 to multiple bank accounts, after which she blocked him. Police said the identity used on the dating app was fake, and the entire narrative about the oil trade was fabricated. An FIR under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita was registered.

Using technical surveillance, digital footprint analysis and money trail, the police traced Iga, who had allegedly been shifting locations across Delhi-NCR to evade detection. He was eventually arrested from Burari, the officer said.

Four mobile phones, a laptop, six debit cards used for routing defrauded funds, and ₹22,500 in cash were recovered from him, he added.

Taiwan Film Festival 2025 to debut first Taiwan-India co-production

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The 2025 Taiwan Film Festival is set to return to the capital on 12-13 December at PVR Priya Cinema, Vasant Vihar, bringing a curated selection of contemporary Taiwanese cinema to Indian audiences.

Organised by Taiwan's Ministry of Culture and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Center (TECC) in India, this year's edition marks a landmark moment in cultural collaboration between the two countries.

The festival's highlight is the special screening of Demon Hunters, the first-ever Taiwan-India co-produced feature film. Blending Taiwanese folklore with Indian storytelling elements, the film incorporates classic Bollywood-style dance sequences and serves



2025 Taiwan Film Festival in New Delhi

December 12-13, Priya PVR

broader creative sector. The lineup also features two additional Taiwanese films showcasing the diversity of the island's cinematic landscape. A Chip

Odyssey, a documentary exploring the rise of semiconductor giant TSMC, offers a deep dive into Taiwan's pivotal role in global technology and the international supply chain. Meanwhile, Hunter Brothers, an Indigenous drama, examines themes of identity, tradition, and generational conflict within Taiwan's Indigenous communities.

Organisers say the festival aims to use cinematic storytelling to strengthen cultural ties and create new channels for exchange between filmmakers, producers, and institutions in Taiwan and India. Over the two-day event, audiences can look forward to an opening ceremony, film screenings, and post-screening discussions with visiting filmmakers and cultural representatives from both countries.

Police nab member of Bawaria gang

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Police has arrested a wanted member of the Bawaria gang, who is an alleged interstate criminal and was on the run in more than a dozen cases. The accused, identified as Sanjay alias Jhallu, a resident of Shamli in Uttar Pradesh, was traced to Mandi Gobindgarh in Punjab, where he had been hiding to evade arrest, police said.

Sanjay, a proclaimed offender, is involved in 34 criminal cases across Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, including attempted murder, robbery, snatching, burglary, theft and Arms Act violations. He had also been convicted earlier in a snatching case registered at Adarsh Nagar police station, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Harsh Indora said.

The accused had been actively running an organised

crime syndicate with his associates while frequently shifting between UP, Haryana and Punjab to avoid detection. The Uttar Pradesh Police had also declared a cash reward for his arrest, he said. Police tracked Sanjay's movements for nearly two weeks. A raid was conducted on Sunday at his hideout in Mandi Gobindgarh, where he was apprehended, the DCP said.

During interrogation, Sanjay told police he began committing robberies and snatching incidents over a decade ago, along with associates from his village, operating across several states, including Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Chandigarh and parts of southern India. Police said he repeatedly resumed criminal activities after securing bail and stopped appearing in court, leading to multiple non-bailable warrants and proclaimed offender proceedings.

1.11 crore PMAY houses sanctioned: Khattar



The Centre has sanctioned 1.11 crore houses under two schemes of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, with 95.54 lakh of those houses having already been completed and handed over to beneficiaries, Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar informed the Rajya Sabha on Monday.

Attacks on ECI part of conspiracy: Rajnath Singh

Defence Minister and senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh on Monday accused the opposition parties of attacking bodies such as the Election Commission of India as part of a conspiracy to weaken the institutions of the country. Interjecting in a discussion on 150 years of Vande Matram in Lok Sabha, Singh said constant migration, deaths and rapid urbanisation lead to



Revanth targets 10% national GDP for Telangana by 2047



CM A Revanth Reddy on Monday said he wanted Telangana to contribute 10 per cent to the national GDP by 2047. Speaking at the Telangana Rising Global Summit 2025, he also said the state Government wants to replicate the model of Guang-Dong province in China whose economy is the largest of any province in China.

Patna airport runway needs expansion: Aviation Minister

The runway at Patna airport needs expansion, and the Government has been repeatedly requesting additional land from the Bihar Government while operating the airport based on all safety risk assessments, Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu said in the Rajya Sabha on Monday. According to Naidu, the current runway at Patna airport is not suitable for operating many types of aircraft due to load penalties.



Siddaramaiah to follow high command on turmoil

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Belagavi (Karnataka)

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday reiterated that he will abide by the Congress high command's decision on the leadership change issue in the state. The CM has been repeatedly stating for the last few days that he and Deputy CM DK Shivakumar will go by what the high command decides on the chief minister change.

"Will abide by whatever the high command decides," Siddaramaiah told reporters in response to a question on his son and Congress Member of the Legislative Council (MLC) Yathindra Siddaramaiah's statement that there is no question of leadership change as of now, and that he believes that the former will continue as CM for five years. Earlier in the day, Yathindra claimed that

the Congress high command has said that there is no leadership change in the state.

"I have been saying this, which is not new. I feel that, as of now, there is nothing like leadership change. I hope that he (Siddaramaiah) will complete his five-year term," Yathindra told reporters at the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha.

To a question that Siddaramaiah had been asked to come to Delhi in January, Yathindra said the Congress high command calls the chief minister for various issues. So he will go there and discuss. He will also talk about the prevailing situation in the state, he said.

Yathindra also admitted that there was confusion over the leadership issue because, "the Deputy Chief Minister was asked whether he wants to be the CM. There are aspirants in all the political parties. The high



Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah

command has said that they will not decide it now."

According to Yathindra, the Congress Legislative Party (CLP) elects a candidate for a

definite period. It is the CLP which decides who should be the chief minister. He claimed that, "The Congress high command has made it clear

that there is no leadership change as of now." Yathindra further claimed that high command had a meeting recently where they said they

have not taken any decision and postponed it. "So, as of now, there is no talk on the change of leadership in Karnataka," he claimed.

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

The speculation was fuelled by an alleged "power-sharing" agreement involving Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar in 2023. However, both CM and Deputy CM had recently held breakfast meetings at each others residences, on the instructions of the high command, which is seen as a move to pause the leadership tussle between the two and to signal Siddaramaiah's continuation as the CM for the time being, especially ahead of the Belagavi legislature session.

22 MLAs close to Fadnavis, may cross over: Aaditya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Nagpur

Shiv Sena (UBT) legislator Aaditya Thackeray on Monday claimed that 22 MLAs from a Mahauti ally have "grown close" to Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and are ready to switch sides, an oblique reference to Deputy CM Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

In June 2022, the Shiv Sena split following a rebellion led by Shinde, resulting in the collapse of the then Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi Government.

Later, in January 2024, assembly speaker Rahul Narwekar held that the Eknath Shinde-led faction was the "real" Shiv Sena, which is a constituent of the ruling Mahayuti in the state along with the BJP and Deputy CM Ajit Pawar's NCP.



Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis at Vidhan Bhawan on the first day of the Winter session of State Assembly in Nagpur

"There is one party and two factions on the treasury side. Twenty-two MLAs from one faction have grown close to the CM. They have good funds and they have started dancing to the tune of the CM," Aaditya Thackeray claimed, without naming the Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

The 22 MLAs are "ready to switch (sides)," he further claimed while talking to reporters in the Vidhan Bhawan premises here.

The Worli MLA also said that someone from these 22 legislators calls himself "vice-captain", a veiled reference to Industries Minister Uday Samant.

Actress assault case: Kerala Govt to appeal against verdict

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kochi

Kerala Government on Monday said it will appeal against the verdict in the actress assault case in which Malayalam actor Dileep was acquitted while six others were found guilty.

Announcing the decision, State Law Minister P Rajeev said the survivor didn't get complete justice through the present verdict.

"Though those who were directly involved in the crime were found guilty by the court, it was not the verdict everyone expected," he told reporters, shortly after the court acquitted the actor in the case.

"The state Government has always stood strongly with the survivor, and that will be continued," Rajeev

said. Pointing to the strong stand taken by the prosecution, he said it had even submitted a five-volume argument note at the court with regard to the case. "The Government has decided to go on appeal against the verdict. I have already talked to the chief minister and the DGP in this regard. The prosecution has been directed to initiate further proceedings in this regard," he added.

State Cultural Affairs and Cinema Minister Saji Cheriyan also said the Government has always supported the survivor, and its stance is to ensure the guilty are punished, however high-profile they are.

While KPCC chief Sunny Joseph said the verdict pronounced by the principal sessions court was not satisfactory, Leader of

Opposition VD Satheesan said declaring those who had direct involvement in the crime as guilty was a relief. Joseph, in a video message, accused the prosecution of completely failing in proving the conspiracy part in the case and assuring justice to the survivor.

Meanwhile, speaking to reporters in Kozhikode, Satheesan said what the survivor went through is a tragedy that should never happen to any woman. This judgment finding six accused directly involved in the crime guilty will help prevent such incidents from recurring.

When asked whether the prosecution has failed to prove the conspiracy angle in the case, he said that will be clear only when the detailed judgment is released.

Over 8,700 to gather as Rajasthan hosts first Pravasi Rajasthani Diwas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jaipur

Rajasthan will celebrate its first-ever Pravasi Rajasthani Diwas at the Jaipur Exhibition Convention Centre (JECC) on 10th December, bringing together more than 8,700 Non-Resident Rajasthanis and industrialists who have registered to be part of this landmark occasion organised under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma.

The event has been envisioned to strengthen the bond between Rajasthan and its global diaspora by inviting them to Connect, Collaborate, and Contribute to the state's ambitious goal of becoming a \$350 billion economy by 2030, a vision that CM Sharma has been championing through diaspora outreach programmes held in Hyderabad, Surat, and Kolkata ahead of main event, where he declared, "We have drawn up an action plan towards becoming a 350 billion dollar economy in the next five years, and I invite you all to be a part of this historic growth story of Rising Rajasthan."

To translate this vision

THE EVENT HAS BEEN ENVISIONED TO STRENGTHEN THE BOND BETWEEN RAJASTHAN AND ITS GLOBAL DIASPORA

into action, the programme will feature sectorial sessions engaging diaspora members, industry leaders, and policymakers across Industry, Tourism, Education, Healthcare, and Water Resources, while an exclusive NRR Roundtable will provide an interactive platform for Non-Resident Rajasthanis to discuss investment opportunities and share their global expertise — an initiative aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Viksit Bharat' vision that aims to transform Rajasthan's diaspora network into a strategic force driving sustainable development.

Laying the institutional foundation for this engagement, the state cabinet recently approved the Non-Resident Rajasthani (NRR) Policy-2025, which establishes an NRR Investment Facilitation Cell along with Investment Liaison Officers and Advisory Councils comprising overseas experts

and business leaders, complemented by a dedicated Non-Resident Rajasthani Department with the Additional District Collector appointed as nodal officer in every district to assist NRR families, while the Rajasthan Foundation now operates 26 chapters worldwide including in New York, London, and Riyadh to maintain this global connect.

The event will also be witnessing the announcement of Pravasi Rajasthani Samman Awards honouring distinguished diaspora members for their achievements in business, science, art, philanthropy, and social service, with thirty-three eminent personalities attending as state guests at a venue thoughtfully designed to reflect Rajasthan's rich culture and heritage through a 'Progress Path' showcasing the state Government's achievements and folk art-inspired souvenirs that will ensure Pravasi Rajasthanis carry home fond memories of their home land before the celebrations continue with the Rising Rajasthan Partnership Conclave on December 11-12.

Third AIESC meeting boosts bilateral cooperation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Third Australia-India Education and Skills Council meeting (AIESC) held in New Delhi on Monday was chaired by Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Minister of Education, Government of India and Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship and Education, from the Indian side. From Australia, the meeting was chaired by Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, Government of Australia and Hon. Mr. Andrew Giles MP, Australian Minister for Skills & Training.

The meeting was also attended by Dr Sukanta Majumdar, Minister of State for Education and DoNER; Hon Julian Hill MP, Assistant Minister for International Education, Govt of Australia, Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, School Education, Dr Vineet Joshi; Secretary, Higher Education; Ms. Debashree Mukherjee, Secretary, Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, senior Government officials from both the sides and Vice-Chancellors & representatives of Australian universities.

The third AIESC meeting reviewed the ongoing initiatives under school education, higher education, research, and skill develop-



ment, and reaffirmed the commitment to deepen institutional linkages, expand mobility pathways, and strengthen regulatory cooperation. AIESC is a bi-national body that guide the strategic direction and strengthen the partnership between the two countries in the fields of the education, training, research and skill ecosystem.

Speaking on the occasion Pradhan said that the 3rd AIESC served as a great opportunity to build upon the progress made since the inaugural meeting of AIESC, break new ground in

Australia-India education, skills and research partnership, open wider avenues for India's youth, and further deepen our bilateral engagements across the full spectrum of education and skill development as well as in areas of national and global priority.

He appreciated the Australian Ministers and the delegation for the substantive discussions on the agenda items— school education, higher education and research and skills and also for their vigorous efforts to elevate the AIESC platform to a higher-level.

Pradhan further said that education, skills and research are the key pillars of India-Australia Strategic Partnership. Both India and Australia remain committed to working together and collaborating more in Early Childhood Care and Education, technology adoption, sports education, building institutional capacities, empowering teachers, preparing youth for critical and emerging areas, like AI, advanced materials, semiconductors, MedTech, energy, and sustainability and also for innovative skilling partnerships, he

added.

Taking forward the spirit of collaboration and ambition, the Minister urged all stakeholders to successfully implement the outcome-centric and in-depth discussions held today across school, higher and skill education and to ensure that the bridges built today continue to grow stronger in the years to come.

Speaking on the occasion, Hon Jason Clare MP, Australian Minister for Education, said "This is a win-win. It is good for Australia and it is good for India. "It is a great sign of the strength of the relationship between India and Australia. There is no such collaboration with any other country in the field of education and skill development. This shows deep trust and faith between India and Australia."

Highlighting the depth and uniqueness of the India-Australia skilling partnership, Jayant Chaudhary stated that the two countries share a one-of-its-kind institutional platform that is translating discussions into tangible outcomes through structured frameworks, such as, the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications (MRQ) 2023, a dedicated Skills Mapping Framework for demand assessment, and the signing of three key MoUs to strengthen cooperation.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A total of 5.17 lakh Waqf properties were initiated on the UMEED portal while 2,16,905 properties were approved by the designated approvers during the six-month window provided, according to the data provided by the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

The UMEED Central Portal for management of Waqf Properties in India, launched by Union Minister of Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju on June 6, 2025, officially closed for uploads on December 6, 2025, completing its six-month window, as per the UMEED Act, 1995 and the clear directions of the Supreme Court.

In the final count, the momentum significantly accelerated as the deadline approached, the ministry said in a statement.

Many review meetings, training workshops, and high-level interventions even at the secretary-level injected renewed pace into the process, making the upload surge in the last hours, it said.

According to the data provided by the ministry, 5,17,040 Waqf properties were initiated on the portal with 2,16,905 properties approved by the designated approvers. A total of 2,13,941 properties have been submitted by makers and remain in the pipeline as of the dead-

line, the ministry said, adding that 10,869 properties stood rejected during verification

"To support this massive national exercise, the Ministry of Minority Affairs conducted continuous workshops and training sessions with State/UT Waqf Boards and Minority Departments," the statement said.

A two-day master trainer workshop was also conducted in Delhi to equip Waqf Boards and State/UT officials with hands-on training for the uploading process, the ministry said.

Senior technical and administrative teams were deputed across states, and seven zonal meetings were held nationwide.

A dedicated helpline was also set up at the Ministry office for technical support and quick resolution of issues arising during the uploads.

Since the launch of the portal, secretary, Ministry of Minority Affairs, Chandra Shekhar Kumar took 20 plus review meetings, consistently guiding, motivating, and monitoring States/UTs to ensure timely and accurate uploading of existing Waqf property details, the statement said.

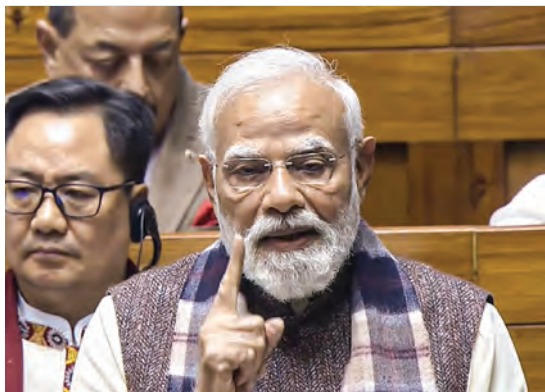
The conclusion of this phase marks a significant milestone in bringing transparency, efficiency, and unified digital management to Waqf properties across India under the UMEED framework, it said.

States Focus



PRIYANK KHARGE SLAMS BJP FOR NEGLECTING OPPOSITION DUTIES

Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge on Monday hit out at the BJP ahead of the Assembly session, alleging that the party has abandoned its responsibilities as an opposition and was instead focusing only on trivial issues. Speaking to reporters on the premises of Suvarana Vidhana Soudha, Kharge took a dig at the BJP for remaining silent on matters that fall under the purview of the central government. Responding to a question that the BJP was going to target the Congress government in the session, Kharge said, "Let them do it. They have abandoned their responsibilities as an opposition."



PM MODI URGES BIHAR NDA MPS TO SHOULDER 'GREATER RESPONSIBILITY'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday told the NDA MPs from Bihar to work with more vigour for the welfare of the people after the ruling alliance's resounding victory in the recent Assembly elections, saying "with great victory comes great responsibility". Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) MP Shambhavi Choudhary said the prime minister conveyed the message to a delegation of NDA MPs when they called on him here to congratulate him for the NDA's massive victory in the Bihar polls.

"OVER 90% OF LARGE FARM FIRES IN PUNJAB, HARYANA NOW GO UNDETECTED"

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

More than 90 per cent of large farm fires in Punjab and Haryana are now going undetected by the official monitoring systems as farmers are shifting stubble-burning activities to late afternoons, according to a new analysis published on Monday. The Stubble Burning Status Report 2025 by the International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology (iFOREST) said this led to major underestimation of the contribution of stubble burning to Delhi's air pollution this year.

iFOREST said the government's current monitoring protocol, run by the Consortium for Research on Agroecosystem Monitoring and Modeling from Space (CREAMS) of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, is unable to detect most farm fires as it relies mainly on polar-orbiting satellites that observe India only between 10.30 am and 1.30 pm.

This narrow time window no longer matches farmers' burning practices, it said.

At the same time, the report finds real progress on the ground, with burnt areas in Punjab and Haryana falling by 25-35 per cent over recent years. iFOREST said burnt-area mapping provides a more accurate picture than active fire counts, which currently suggest a much larger decline. Chandra Bhushan, CEO of iFOREST, said, "Our analysis provides incontrovertible evidence that India's current stubble-burning monitoring system is structurally misaligned with ground realities. "Farmers have shifted burning to the late afternoon, while our monitoring relies on satellites that capture active fires only during a narrow time window (10:30 am to 1:30 pm).

J&K Police raid hotels over Form-C violations

MOHIT KANDHARI
■ Jammu

The Jammu and Kashmir police conducted a massive drive against several hotels and a homestay for violating the mandatory Form-C reporting norms required under the Immigration & Foreigners Act in Srinagar on Monday.

The drive was conducted close on the heels of the detention of a Chinese national who had entered Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir without permission and later stayed in an unregistered guest house in Srinagar in the last week of November 2025. The drive was conducted across several 'hot spots' of Srinagar frequented by foreign tourists.

Official sources claimed that after the Pahalgam terror attack, over 2500 foreign nationals have visited the valley along with domestic travellers.

The Chinese national was detained by the security forces after he was allegedly found using a social media app for chatting.

At present, the police officials are trying to join the dots and figure out the purpose of his visit to Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir, especially when, as per his tourist VISA, he was only permitted to visit Buddhist religious places in Varanasi, Agra, New Delhi, Jaipur, Sarnath, Gaya and Kushi Nagar.

According to a police spokesman, in the Rajbagh area, Hotel Blossoms, Hotel Grand MS, and Hotel Golden Forest had allowed foreign nationals to check in without submitting Form-C to the Foreigners Registration Office (FRO). Accordingly, FIR No. 65/2025 U/S 8 & 23-B of the Immigration & Foreigners Act was registered at Police Station Rajbagh. Similarly, in the Khanyar area, Hotel Khyber, located in Khayam, was also found violating Form-C reporting requirements. Despite repeated instructions, the management failed to produce any proof of Form-C submission. As a result, FIR No. 57/2025 was registered under relevant sections of law at Police Station Khanyar, the police



REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO

spokesman said.

In the busy Lal Bazar area, IMY Home Stay, Nowabagh Bagwanpora, owned by Mohammad Aslam Baktoo S/o Late Habibullah Baktoo, was found operating without Form-C compliance for Starobinsky Lior, a foreign national from Israel, along with others. The manage-

ment had deliberately concealed the stay of the foreign guest and failed to submit the mandatory online Form-C reporting. Accordingly, FIR No. 60/2025 U/S 8 and 23(b) of the Immigration & Foreigners Act was registered at Police Station Lal Bazar.

In another hotspot of the

Nishat area, a house owner, namely Mohammad Ashraf Zargar S/o Mohammad Ramzan Zargar R/o Vakeel Colony, Brein was found in non-compliance with the mandatory reporting of Form C to FRO. In this connection, FIR No. 101/2025 U/S 8-23(b) of the Immigration and Foreigners Act was regis-

Odisha records 40,947 crimes against women: Report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhubaneswar

A total of 40,947 cases of crimes against women, including 3,205 rapes, were registered in Odisha in 15 months till September, according to data provided by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi in the assembly on Monday.

These cases were reported since July 1, 2024, Majhi said, in reply to a written question by BJD legislator Prasanna Acharya.

The BJP came to power in the state in June 2024, ending the 24-year rule of the Naveen Patnaik-led BJD government. The opposition has been regularly criticising Majhi's government,



alleging that crimes against women have increased after the BJP came to power in the state.

According to data provided by the CM, 202 cases of

attempted rape, 1,476 cases of sexual harassment, 9,851 cases of molestations, 2,310 cases of public disrobing of women, 8,863 cases of kidnapping of women, 796

eve-teasing and 556 stalking cases were registered in the state during the period.

Among the other cases registered were 129 trafficking, 277 dowry homicides, 49 dowry suicides, 5,861 dowry tortures, 6,773 non-dowry tortures and 152 voyeurism. Four cases of acid attack were also lodged during the period.

Majhi said several steps have been taken to improve the quality of investigation, fast-tracking of the cases and improving the conviction rate. Investigative Units on Crime Against Women (IUCAW) are functioning in 29 districts. These units take up investigation of important and sensitive cases, he said.

Bengal CM Mamata slams centre over IndiGo crisis

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday slammed the Centre for mishandling the IndiGo crisis and asked the government to arrange for special train services as an alternative to ferry stranded passengers back to their destinations.

"Thousands of passengers are stranded at airports. so what is the alternative for them? This is a travel disaster as maximum number of flights has been stopped," Banerjee told in Kolkata even as the crisis involving India's largest air service provider entered its seventh day.

Alleging that the BJP-led Centre was only concerned about its votes and not the

interests of the people at large, Banerjee asked "the Government of India to make a plan to resolve the issue," adding, "it seems that the BJP is only concerned about capturing the institutions and not the interests of the people."

Speaking on the issue of Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing to Bengali Novelist — and the creator of the coinage "Vande Mataram" — Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, as "Bankim Da" Banerjee attacked the former for being "unaware of the history of Bengal." This, though the Prime Minister corrected himself the next moment naming the pre-Independence writer as "Bankim Babu."

Attacking the saffron lead-



ership she said, "they not only do not know history of Bengal but also they have been in the habit of Bengali icons like Netaji Subhas

Chandra Bose, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Rabindranath Tagore, Vidya Sagar." She said "things have come to such a pass that

today anyone who speaks the Bengali language is promptly dismissed as a Bangladeshi which is humiliation of the Bengali culture." Referring to Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls the Chief Minister also attacked the Election Commission of India for thrusting it on the people of Bengal in "most unplanned manner." She said, "it is difficult to understand why SIR was imposed in such an unplanned manner to be completed in a matter of mere two months why was there such a hurry."

The Chief Minister was likely to begin a two-day trip of Cooch Behar in North Bengal where she would take up the SIR issue in public rallies, Trinamool Congress sources said.

Randhawa slams Navjot Kaur's ₹500 crore CM chair claim

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

After her "500 crore for CMs chair" claim, Congress general secretary Sukhjinder Randhawa on Monday said it was "unfortunate" that Navjot Kaur Sidhu made such a remark and asked how much was paid when her husband Navjot Sidhu was made a minister and then the Punjab Congress president.

Randhawa, the former deputy chief minister of Punjab, also said the Congress faces threat from no one in the state but from such people within.

"It is unfortunate that Navjot Kaur Sidhu has made such a statement. Navjot Sidhu joined the Congress from the BJP, and he was made a minister. They should tell how much was paid for Sidhu to become a minister. He was made the number 2 minister. How much was paid? "Then he was made the Punjab Congress



Committee (PCC) president. They should reveal how much was paid then," Randhawa told reporters outside Parliament. He also said they all worked with Sidhu and stayed with him when he was made the minister and then the PCC president.

"The party is supreme, the party president is supreme. The chief minister remains under him and

comes later," the Congress leader claimed.

"My sister Navjot Kaur should tell how much money was paid for Sidhu to become the PCC president. For three-and-a-half years, Congress workers in Punjab have been beaten up and facing action from the ruling dispensation in Punjab. Why were they (Sidhus) silent for all this time?

Jharkhand migrants killed in Goa nightclub fire cremated

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Ranchi

The last rites of the three migrant workers from Jharkhand, killed in the fire at the Goa nightclub, were performed at their native places on Monday.

Pradeep Mahto (24) and Binod Mahto (20), two brothers from Fatehpur village in Lapung in Ranchi district, and Mohit Munda (22) of Govindpur village in Khunti district died in the inferno that ravaged the North Goa club post-midnight on Sunday.

A total of 25 people, including 14 staff members of the nightclub, were killed in the fire.

The bodies of Pradeep, Binod and Mohit, who used to work at the nightclub, were brought back to the state in the morning by a flight.

The mortal remains of Pradeep and Binod were cremated on the bank of the Karo river in Lapung, around 60 km from the state capital, in the presence of villagers and block officials.

The brothers had migrated to Goa about a year ago and



Family members and relatives of Mohit Munda, who was killed in the fire at a nightclub in North Goa mourn during his last rites in Khunti district of Jharkhand

PTI

used to send around ₹30,000 per month to their family. "Both were unmarried. They were scheduled to celebrate Holi with us next year," their elder brother Phagu Mahto said.

Mohit's last rites were performed as per tribal customs at his native village.

Agriculture Minister Shilpy Neha Tirkey, who coordinated with the Goa government to bring back the bodies, said all three belonged to her

Mandar constituency.

"The bodies were sent to their native villages in special ambulances. I will request Chief Minister Hemant Soren for some welfare provisions for the families of the victims," she told PTI.

The Labour Department has handed ₹50,000 each to the families of the victims as immediate assistance.

Disaster Management Minister Irfan Ansari said compensation of ₹4 lakh

each would be provided to the kin of the workers.

"There is no such particular provision in this regard. However, as it is a very pro-people government led by Chief Minister Hemant Soren, we have decided to give the compensation," he told reporters outside the assembly.

Ansari urged the Centre to provide compensation of ₹1 crore to the families of each deceased.

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Order Order

HC adjourns hearing on plea seeking ASI survey of Gyanvapi's wazukhana



The Allahabad High Court on Monday adjourned hearing on a plea seeking an ASI survey of the 'wazukhana' area, excluding the structure described by the Hindu side as shivling, inside the Gyanvapi mosque at Varanasi till January 16. When the case was taken up on Monday, the court was informed that a related matter is pending before the Supreme Court. Subsequently, the court adjourned the hearing.

Justice Rohit Ranjan Agarwal is hearing the civil revision petition filed by Rakhi Singh, one of the plaintiffs in the Gyanvapi case. The petition has been filed challenging an order of a Varanasi judge passed on October 21, 2023 which refused to direct the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to survey the wazukhana (ablution) area except for the structure which the Hindu side calls a shivling and the Muslims describe as a fountain inside the Gyanvapi mosque located adjacent to the Kashi Vishwanath temple.

In her revision, Rakhi Singh has pleaded that the survey of the wazukhana area is necessary in the interest of justice. It shall benefit the plaintiff(s) and defendants alike and help the court arrive at a decision in the suit, the plea said.

Red Fort blast case: Delhi court extends NIA custody of 3 doctors, preacher by 4 days

A Delhi court on Monday extended the NIA custody of three doctors and a preacher, who were arrested in connection with the November 10 Red Fort blast case, by four days. All four accused – Dr Muzammil Ganai, Dr Adeel Rather, Dr Shaheena Saeed and Maulvi Irfan Ahmed Wagay – were produced before Principal and Sessions Judge Anju Bajaj Chandna on the expiry of their 10-day NIA custody granted on November 29.

Mediapersons were barred from covering the court proceedings, which were held under tight security in and around the Patiala House district court premises.

Till now, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has made seven arrests in the case, which is linked to a 'white-collar' terror module busted by the Jammu and Kashmir Police.

"The agency continues to pursue various leads in connection with the suicide bombing, and has been conducting searches across states in coordination with the respective police forces to identify and track the others involved in the gruesome attack," the agency said in a statement earlier.

SC seeks ED's response on journalist bail plea

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to file its response within three days on a bail plea of journalist Mahesh Langa in a money laundering case linked to an alleged financial fraud. A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi also asked senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the jailed journalist, to file rejoinder, if needed, to the ED's response within two days of it being filed.

The top court fixed the

case for further hearing on December 15.

During the brief hearing on Monday, Sibal said a journalist has been facing as many as six cases. "The journalist is accused of extortion," the counsel for the ED said and sought a short adjournment on the ground that Solicitor General Tuhar Mehta was unavailable at the moment.

The top court on September 8 sought responses from the Gujarat Government and the ED on Langa's bail plea. While issuing the notices on Langa's bail plea, the bench asked, "What kind of a journalist is he?" "With due

of India' with separate pending petitions challenging the validity of the provisions of the Rajasthan Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2025.

The top court had earlier agreed to hear some separate pleas raising similar issues and sought replies from the state Government.

During the hearing on Monday, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the bench that similar matters are pending consideration before



SC orders 30% seats for women in bar councils

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday directed that 30 per cent seats in State Bar councils, where the election process has not been set in motion, be kept for women advocates.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said for the current year, the State Bar councils where elections are yet to be held should fill 20 per cent seats with women candidates and 10 per cent by co-option if there are not many desirous lawyers to contest.

The top court directed that a proposal for co-option shall be placed before the court in regard to the State Bar councils where the number of contesting women lawyers are inadequate.

At the outset, senior advocate Manan Kumar Mishra, who is also the chairperson of the Bar Council of India (BCI), informed the bench that the election process as per court's earlier direction has commenced in six Bar bodies with notification of the poll.

He submitted that the BCI, in principle, is of the view that



there should be at least 30 per cent women's reservation in the State Bar councils, and suggested that for the present year, the councils should be permitted to fill up the posts by co-opting women candidates.

He also proposed that 15 per cent of seats be filled by way of co-option of women members.

However, the bench said it

would be appropriate if co-option is restricted to only 10 per cent seats.

The bench said it would not be prudent to reserve seats for women in the Bar councils, where the election process has already commenced.

It said in the Bar councils of Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Telangana, where elections have been notified, the

women members who are contesting the polls shall contest with full spirit, and the voters shall also make endeavours to ensure that adequate representation is provided to female advocates in the councils.

It made a similar appeal to the voters of the Bar councils of Bihar and Chhattisgarh, where elections have been notified. For the remaining

Bar councils, the bench said 30 per cent seats shall be represented by women advocates out of which 20 per cent shall be by election and 10 per cent by co-option.

It said, "Wherever the women members of the Bbar are reluctant to come forward and contest the 20 per cent seats, the process of co-option in such Bar councils shall be undertaken so that

eventually women get 30 per cent representation in the executive council."

The top court was hearing pleas filed by advocates Yogamaya M G and Shehla Chaudhary seeking reservation of one-third of seats for women in all State Bar councils.

Senior advocate Meenakshi Arora, appearing for the petitioners, said that a blanket order for 30 per cent women's reservation across all state Bar councils may not be practical, as many states have very low percentages of practising women advocates.

On December 4, the top court asked the BCI to ensure 30 per cent reservation for women in the upcoming state Bar council elections. The pleas filed by Yogamaya and Chaudhary also sought that at least one office-bearer post be reserved for women lawyers on a rotational basis.

The pleas were filed relying upon the May 2, 2024, order of the top court, in which it was directed that one-third of seats in the executive committee of the Supreme Court Bar Association, including one office-bearer post, be reserved for women.

Land-for-jobs scam: CBI seeks time to verify status of accused persons



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The CBI on Monday sought time from a Delhi court to verify the status of various accused persons in the alleged land-for-jobs scam involving RJD chief Lalu Prasad, his family members and others.

Special CBI Judge Vishal Gogne is hearing the case on whether there is sufficient evidence to frame charges against the accused.

The judge had, on December 4, directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to file a report after verifying the status of the accused in the case. Of the 103 accused, four

have died. "Some time is sought on behalf of the CBI to verify the status of various accused persons in terms of the previous order. List on December 10," the judge said on Monday.

On November 10, the judge had deferred the order on framing charges against the accused till December 4.

The CBI had filed chargesheets against Lalu Yadav, his wife and former Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi, their son and former deputy chief minister Tejashwi Yadav and others in connection with the alleged scam.

The prosecution has alleged that appointments in the Group-D category of

the Indian Railways' West Central Zone based in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, were made during Lalu Yadav's tenure as the railway minister from 2004 to 2009 in return for land parcels gifted or transferred by the recruits in the name of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) supreme's family members and associates.

The CBI has also claimed that the appointments were made in violation of norms and that the transactions involved benami properties, amounting to criminal misconduct and conspiracy. The accused have denied the charges and claimed that the case is politically motivated.

Court acquits actor Dileep, convicts six in 2017 actress sexual assault case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kochi

A Kerala court on Monday acquitted Malayalam cinema star Dileep in the sensational 2017 actress sexual assault case, in which six people, including the main accused charged with committing the crime, were pronounced guilty. In a case that made national headlines while sending shockwaves over the top actor's alleged involvement in the matter, three others, including Dileep's close friend Sarath, were also acquitted.

Coming out from the court, Dileep said that there was a "real conspiracy" by some police officials and a section of media to implicate him in the case earlier with an eye on destroying his career.

Dileep also said that his first wife and actress Manju Warrier started a conspiracy to tag him in the case. The Left Government in Kerala said it would prefer an appeal against the lower court verdict while reiterating its support to the survivor, a multi-lingual female actor who has worked in a number of Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu movies.

Apart from Dileep (57), the eighth accused in the case, the court also acquitted three others — Charley



Thomas (A7), Sanil Kumar alias Mesthri Sanil (A9) and Sarath (A15). The verdict was pronounced by Ernakulam District and Principal Sessions Judge Honey M Varghese, in a tightly packed courtroom here.

Judge Honey M Varghese began by substantiating the offences charged in the case and then declared the first six accused — Sunil, Martin Antony, Manikandan B, Vijesh VP, Salim H, and Pradeep, guilty.

"Since the offenses are grave and serious in nature and perpetrated against a woman, accused not entitled to get benevolence of the Probation of Offenders Act.

Bail bonds of A1 to A6 are cancelled and remanded to custody," the court ordered. They were charged under Sections of the then IPC and IT Act, including criminal conspiracy, wrongful confinement, gang rape, kidnapping or abducting a woman and criminal force to a woman with an intent to outrage her modesty. Later, after reading out the charges against Dileep, the court found him not guilty.

Dileep was acquitted after the court ruled the prosecution failed to substantiate the charges, including criminal conspiracy, wrongful confinement, assault, gang rape, and related IPC offences.

IndiGo crisis serious matter, says SC, Delhi HC agrees to hear plea on Dec 10

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Woes of flyers hit by mass flight cancellations by IndiGo found a compassionate ear in the Delhi High Court, which agreed to hear one of the pleas on December 10, while the Supreme Court termed the consequent chaos a "serious matter", but stopped short of intervening.

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said lakhs of people are stranded at the airports, even though the apex court refused to accord an urgent hearing to a plea seeking judicial intervention into the matter, saying the Centre had taken steps to address it.

IndiGo cancelled 500 flights and plans to operate 1,802 services on Monday, the civil aviation ministry said.

The airline has delivered 4,500 bags out of a total of 9,000 to the passengers, and will deliver the rest in the next 36 hours, the ministry said in a statement.

When a plea concerning the cancellation of flights by IndiGo was mentioned in the top court, a bench headed by the CJI said, "It is a serious matter. Lakhs of people are stranded at the airports. We know that the Government of India has taken timely action and cognisance of the issue."

The CJI, who was heading a bench comprising Justice Joymalya Bagchi, added, "We know people may have health issues and other important issues, etc."

Over the day, a separate petition seeking directions to the Centre to provide support and refunds to affected passengers was mentioned in the Delhi High Court. A bench of Chief



Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela listed the matter for hearing on December 10.

Before the apex court, a lawyer mentioned the issue and said there have been a lot of flight cancellations by IndiGo over the last few days, and the passengers were suffering.

"The cancellations are not informed to the flyers," he said, adding that around 2,500 flights were delayed and flyers were hit at 95 airports across the country. In the High Court, the counsel for the petitioner said they had filed a PIL on the crisis with the airline.

"Several people are stuck. The ground situation at airports is inhumane. We are expecting the court to pass orders to IndiGo and ground support staff for people stranded at the airports.

There is no proper system for refunds," he said. When the High Court pointed out that

the Government had already passed some directions in the matter, the counsel responded in the affirmative.

The bench said the PIL will be listed for hearing on December 10.

IndiGo has been facing heat from both the Centre and the passengers for cancelling hundreds of flights since December 2, citing regulatory changes in the pilots' flight duty and regulations norms. The disruptions have left lakhs of passengers stranded at airports across the country.

Over 250 IndiGo flights were cancelled from Delhi and Bengaluru airports on Monday as the disruptions of the airline's flight operations entered the seventh day, sources said.

At the Delhi airport, 134 flights were cancelled — 75 departures and 59 arrivals — while at the Bengaluru airport, the carrier cancelled 117 services — 65 arrivals and 62 departures, they said.



Editor's
TAKE

Why India needs a legal right to disconnect

A nation cannot build a future on depleted minds and exhausted bodies. Supriya Sule's Bill offers not just legal protection but a cultural reset

Stress has become endemic in the corporate world, and "burnout" is now the widely accepted term for it. Burnout is a state of intense physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged and excessive work-related stress. These two words capture the reality of today's corporate workforce on a massive scale. The death of 26-year-old chartered accountant Anna Sebastian Perayil, whose death was linked to severe work-related stress, is a case in point.

The irony is that most people do not even realise they are experiencing it, seeking treatment is a far cry. Reports of suicides and worsening mental health due to work pressure are increasingly common. Both mental and physical health deteriorate sharply, leaving individuals drained, cynical, and exhausted. Fatigue, insomnia, headaches, detachment, and disturbed sleep have become alarmingly routine.

The constant ringing of the smartphone and the rise of hybrid digital work culture have erased personal boundaries, making it difficult for many to have any "me time". Being available 24×7 has turned into a modern form of slavery that takes a heavy toll on lives.

To restore work-life balance, Supriya Sule has taken an important initiative. If her proposal succeeds, it may soon become law, introducing penalties for employers who overstep time boundaries and encroach on workers' personal lives. Supriya Sule's Right to Disconnect Bill, 2025, is a long-overdue intervention, seeking to restore a basic but endangered human need: the right to switch off and relax.

The core premise of the Bill is simple yet transformative. It states that employees should not be penalised for choosing not to respond to work-related communication after office hours. The bill sets to end the culture of checking messages throughout the day, during dinner, on weekends, and even on holidays. Studies have repeatedly shown that such constant pressure to check phone leads to sleep deprivation, chronic stress, emotional burnout, and a slow erosion of family life.

The Bill recognises that mental health is not separate from productivity; it is its very foundation. Importantly, the legislation does not ignore the realities of India's competitive and diverse business landscape. Sule's proposal allows companies to set their own after-hours communication norms through Employees' Welfare Committees. Companies that disregard these provisions could face penalties equivalent to one per cent of their total employee remuneration, ensuring that compliance is mandatory and damages are for real.

Yet the path ahead is not without challenges. India's workforce is vast and varied, and cultural attitudes often equate overwork with dedication. Smaller firms may fear compliance burdens, while multinational companies may worry about servicing their offshore clients. Besides, enforcement remains a perennial weakness in India.

Despite these obstacles, the direction is clear and the move is a step in right direction. For India to continue its progress, it must safeguard the well-being of its workers.

SAARC@40: An idea that refuses to die

As the world reorganises around regional blocs and shared vulnerabilities, South Asia cannot afford to remain disconnected. SAARC may be dormant, but its spirit endures, waiting for a political moment that restores its relevance



SANTHOSH
MATHEW

Forty years ago, on a December morning in 1985, South Asia embarked on an ambitious experiment. Seven neighbours — united by shared histories yet separated by borders, suspicion and political complications — met in Dhaka to outline a collective vision for peace, prosperity and cooperation. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) emerged from that hope, designed to transcend bilateral tensions and forge a regional identity grounded in development. Four decades later, that optimism feels remote. The organisation has been effectively frozen since 2014, its institutional vitality drained by enduring political hostilities. Yet, paradoxically, the idea of SAARC is more essential today than ever. The phrase "SAARC is dead, long live SAARC" captures this duality: the institution may be dormant, but the logic of regional cooperation remains compelling.

South Asia itself embodies profound contradictions. It is home to nearly 40 per cent of the world's democracies, each with its strengths and complexities. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka together represent one of the most diverse political landscapes on earth. Bangladesh's strides in poverty alleviation, Bhutan's pioneering Gross National Happiness framework, Sri Lanka's social indicators, Nepal's federal evolution, Maldives' climate resilience, Pakistan's active civil society, Afghanistan's enduring cultural heritage and India's unmatched electoral scale all testify to a region rich in innovation and vitality.

To see South Asia only through the prism of conflict is to overlook its immense civilisational, demographic and strategic advantages. This potential, however, has been consistently undermined by geopolitical mistrust, particularly between India and Pakistan. SAARC's stagnation is rooted in this unresolved hostility. Without political trust at the highest level, regional structures lose momentum. The cost of this paralysis has been significant. South Asia remains among the least economically integrated regions in the world. Intra-regional trade hovers around a mere 5 per cent, compared with ASEAN's over 25 per cent. High tariffs, rigid borders and bureaucratic obstacles have stifled the movement of goods, services and ideas that could dramatically uplift the region.

Against this backdrop, the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) deserves renewed focus. Operational since 2006, SAFTA was designed to dismantle tariff and non-tariff barriers and build a seamless regional market. Fully implemented, it could transform South Asia economically by strengthening supply chains, reducing logistics costs and opening vast new opportunities for employment and investment. The stakes are large: nearly 736 million South Asians still live in



TO SEE SOUTH ASIA ONLY THROUGH THE PRISM OF CONFLICT IS TO OVERLOOK ITS IMMENSE CIVILISATIONAL, DEMOGRAPHIC AND STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES. THIS POTENTIAL, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY UNDERMINED BY GEOPOLITICAL MISTRUST, PARTICULARLY BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN

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 The Pioneer

extreme poverty. Global comparisons illustrate what is possible. The African Continental Free Trade Area is projected to raise Africa's regional income by 7 per cent and lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty by 2035. With its larger consumer base and energetic private sector, South Asia could achieve even more if SAFTA were revived with genuine political commitment.

But cooperation must extend beyond trade. South Asia's civilisational heritage — Hinduism, Buddhism and Sufi traditions — offers a reservoir of cultural connections that can be harnessed to rebuild trust even when politics stagnates. India's soft power initiatives, such as the Buddhist Circuit, the revival of Nalanda University, the International Solar Alliance and the International Big Cat Alliance, create platforms that transcend political divides. These efforts draw on the ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam — the world is one family — and demonstrate that meaningful regional collaboration does not always require formal institutional momentum.

India's neighbourhood-first policy has, in many ways, kept the idea of SAARC alive. The South Asia Satellite exemplified technological cooperation, supporting communication and disaster management across the region. India's vaccine diplomacy during the COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted its role as a regional first responder. When global supply chains collapsed, India supplied vaccines and essential medical aid to Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bangladesh and other neighbours. More recently, India's rapid assistance during the Sri Lankan floods under Operation Sagar Bandhu reaffirmed its consistent commitment to regional humanitarian support. Such gestures cannot replace formal diplomacy, but they help rebuild trust and demonstrate the tangible value of cooperation.

Every member of SAARC, however, must recognise what is lost by leaving the organisation dormant. South Asia faces shared, transnational problems — climate change, water scarcity, terrorism, cybercrime, unemployment and migration — that no country can solve alone. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure provides a useful example of how coordinated security cooperation strengthens collective resilience. A comparable mechanism within SAARC could enhance intelligence-sharing and counter-terrorism efforts at a moment when radicalisation and cyber threats are growing.

Equally significant is the demographic challenge. South Asia has the world's largest youth population, with nearly 100,000 people entering the labour force each day, yet UNICEF estimates that more than half will lack the skills needed for employment by 2030. Without regional frameworks for mobility, innovation, skilling and academic exchange, this demographic dividend could be squandered, even though instruments such as the dormant SAARC Youth Charter offer a ready framework for collaboration.

A reimagined SAARC must also prioritise mobility. Visa liberalisation, academic exchanges, cross-border tourism and digital corridors can revive cultural linkages and unlock economic potential. Drawing on Europe's multiple-entry visas or ASEAN's reciprocal arrangements, South Asia could adopt Mutual Favourable Access to facilitate travel, study and business with transformative impact.

Ultimately, SAARC's future may lie in redefining it as a flexible development platform focused on digital public goods, climate resilience, health networks and research collaboration. India's digital governance tools — UPI, Aadhaar architecture, e-governance and tele-health — could anchor such a partnership, reaffirming a shared South Asian destiny rooted in cooperation, connectivity and collective prosperity.

The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

Confronting popcorn brain in the digital age



SAKSHI
SETHI

2ND OPINION
THE PIONEER

In the relentless pulse of our digital era, silence has become a scarce commodity. Screens glow from dawn to midnight; alerts blink with the insistence of tiny sirens; content arrives in bursts designed to captivate and distract. In this environment of continuous cognitive stimulation, a troubling behavioural pattern has entered educational conversations: Popcorn Brain Syndrome. Though not a medical diagnosis, the term vividly expresses a growing reality—minds conditioned to crave rapid, high-intensity digital input, much like kernels bursting unpredictably in hot oil. For educators, this is no passing metaphor but a looming crisis. Increasingly, teachers observe shrinking attention spans, heightened restlessness, and an erosion of the ability to engage in deep, sustained thinking. The modern student,

equipped with limitless access to information, is paradoxically losing the capacity to grapple with it meaningfully. When the brain becomes accustomed to the quick bursts of dopamine offered by fast-paced media, slower, more reflective tasks—reading, writing, analytical reasoning—begin to feel burdensome. The very foundation of real learning is compromised. The signs are subtle yet unmistakable. A student sits in class, eyes fixed on the teacher, but their attention flickers. A phantom notification tugs at their mind; an impulse to check a device momentarily derails focus. This mental hopping mirrors popcorn in motion—bright, brief, and directionless. What suffers in the process is not merely academic performance, but the deeper capacities that shape intellectual maturity: critical thinking, creativity, emotional steadiness, and the ability to connect ideas in meaningful ways. Reflection, that slow and steady cultivator of insight, becomes a rarity.

Teachers now carry a dual mandate: to deliver curriculum content and to rebuild the cognitive stamina necessary to absorb it. It is a daunting task—almost like teaching a child to find stillness while surrounded by whirlpools of distraction. Yet it is not an impossible one. Recognising that Popcorn Brain is a cultural construct—not a personal failing—is the first step. Our digital environment is designed to hook, stimulate, and fragment; young learners are simply

responding to the architecture around them. The solution, therefore, is not to reject technology but to reintroduce balance. Classrooms can become places where deliberate pauses are woven into the learning fabric. Slow reading exercises, device-free discussions, and moments of reflection can act as anchors.

Teachers can cultivate an atmosphere where depth is celebrated over speed, where observation matters as much as reaction. Simple routines—journaling, mindful breathing, silent thinking—can gently retrain wandering minds. Parents, too, play a pivotal role. Children absorb what they see, not what they are told. A home where conversation, play, and unstructured time coexist with digital tools helps restore natural rhythms of attention. The partnership between school and family is essential to recalibrating young minds. The broader education system must recognise this phenomenon as a silent disruptor of learning outcomes. As curricula grow more rigorous, attention has become a critically limited resource, making investment in executive function, emotional regulation and digital discipline urgent. Without intervention, Popcorn Brain will continue to fragment focus across classrooms, undermining deep engagement and sustained understanding that are essential for shaping thoughtful, purposeful thinkers.

The writer is an educator and counsellor

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IndiGo disruptions signal deeper crisis

There has been widespread chaos at several airports as turbulence in IndiGo's operations continues unabated, leaving passengers anxious, exhausted, and stranded for over a week. Mass cancellations and delays have transformed terminals into scenes of distress, with travellers sleeping on floors and, in some cases, near operational areas. Many passengers missed job interviews, family emergencies, and long-planned commitments, despite tickets being reissued multiple times only to face repeated cancellations. While IndiGo has stated that operations will stabilise by December 15, this assurance rings hollow for those still marooned without clarity or support. The situation reflects not merely operational failure but a deeper issue of regulatory oversight. Both IndiGo and the DGCA ignored early warning signs arising from new pilot duty norms.

Instead of adjusting manpower to meet regulatory requirements, IndiGo expanded its winter schedule, fully aware of its staffing limitations. It is deeply concerning that regulatory authorities appeared to yield under pressure, easing norms to manage public inconvenience. Such short-term relief undermines aviation safety and accountability. This crisis must serve as a moment for corrective action, not quiet compromise.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Goa tragedy highlights safety failures

Apropos "Goa nightclub blaze kills 25" (Dec. 8), the devastating incident once again exposes how routine disregard for safety norms turns leisure spaces into sites of avoidable tragedy. Reports indicate a convergence of structural violations, inadequate exits, and delayed emergency access—conditions that make disaster inevitable rather than accidental. More troubling is the apparent awareness of these violations by multiple authorities, followed by delayed or diluted action.

As Goa's tourism economy expands, the need for professional oversight becomes critical, especially in venues with high crowd density and limited evacuation options. Safety cannot depend on goodwill or post-incident outrage. Mandatory clearances, transparent licensing, and regular inspections must be strictly enforced. Officials who ignore violations must be held as accountable as operators who commit them. Infrastructure issues such as narrow access roads and informal expansions further compound risk and must be addressed urgently. A coordinated emergency protocol involving municipal bodies, fire services, and police should be standard, not reactive. A time-bound review of all public entertainment venues would be a constructive first step toward preventing future tragedies.

A MYILSAMI | TAMIL NADU

Aviation regulation under scrutiny

It takes years to build a reputation, but only days to destroy it. The ongoing IndiGo crisis appears less accidental and more self-inflicted, aided by regulatory inertia. Despite being aware of revised pilot duty norms, both the airline and the DGCA failed to act in time. IndiGo's decision to expand its winter schedule without adequate crew strength reflects corporate arrogance rather than operational prudence.

Equally culpable is the regulator's delayed auditing and passive oversight, which allowed the situation to escalate into a national disruption. When the crisis peaked, the DGCA appeared compelled to dilute enforcement to ease passenger hardship, effectively allowing the airline to escape accountability. Such precedents are dangerous in a safety-critical sector like aviation.

This year has already witnessed tragic incidents, including an aircraft crash in Ahmedabad, helicopter accidents in Uttarakhand, and an ATC systems failure in Delhi.

Together, these point to systemic vulnerabilities. The current disruption offers the aviation ministry a crucial opportunity to conduct a comprehensive review and institute reforms.

BAL GOVIND | NOIDA

THE NAMAMI GANGA PROGRAMME: GANGA GHATS REVEAL ADMINISTRATIVE LAPSES

The front-page report of 8 December on the deteriorating condition of Ganga ghats exposes a grim and deeply troubling account of man-made neglect. The collapse of ghat infrastructure across Uttarakhand and along the Gangetic plains is the result of multiple failures, foremost among them weak municipal accountability compounded by persistent local political interference.

Ghats are often sanctioned to serve constituency interests, even when locations are ecologically fragile or geographically unsuitable.

The Namami Ganga programme was conceived as an ambitious and essential initiative to conserve the river and protect surrounding plains from floods during the monsoon. Yet, crores of rupees have been squandered

due to poor planning, inadequate supervision, and indifference on the ground. Public apathy has further aggravated the problem, with citizens frequently neglecting their responsibility to maintain cleanliness and preserve environmental assets created for their benefit.

Ganga ghats are sensitive environmental interventions requiring expert design and sustained oversight by conservation architects and geological scientists, yet serious consultation with such specialists appears largely absent. Local municipal authorities must therefore be held fully accountable for maintenance and for regulating public access during vulnerable periods to prevent further degradation.

VINOD JOHRI | DELHI

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Misuse of FRA: Undermining forest rights framework

From recognising ineligible encroachments to manipulating community forest rights, the law meant to protect vulnerable groups and safeguard forests is being bent and exploited. This misuse now threatens both conservation goals and the long-term credibility of India's forest rights framework



Although the Forest Survey of India, in its 2023 report, indicates an increasing trend in the country's forest cover, a major undisclosed ailment is affecting the heart of India's forest conservation efforts: the alleged widespread misuse of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006. Apart from procedural irregularities and misreading of provisions noticed in the implementation of the FRA, the major and substantive issues are the recognition of post-2005 encroachments on forest land as Individual Forest Rights (IFR) for habitation or cultivation, and the mass-scale grant of management rights (named Community Forest Resource Rights, or CFRR, under the FRA Rules amended in 2012) in cases of grossly ineligible claims.

The pattern of misuse of the FRA was initially highlighted by the 2011 NC Saxena Committee Report. The Committee, an inter-ministerial body, raised serious concerns about the recognition of ineligible claims. It found evidence that "fresh encroachers, with business interests in forest lands", were manipulating the Act in states such as Maharashtra and Assam. The Committee pointed to specific instances of forest land being cleared after the cut-off date of December 13, 2005 in protected areas such as Kawal Sanctuary and Yaval Sanctuary, stressing that the FRA was never intended to be a "ploy to distribute national wealth of forest land to all claimants irrespective of their real legal eligibility". The FRA is meant exclusively for Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribes (FDSTs) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs).

The Maharashtra Forest Department launched a detailed study in 2012 covering 35,044 finally approved Individual Forest Rights (IFR) cases, encompassing over 60,000 hectares of forest land across six districts.

The Department established a system using Cartosat-1 satellite images from 2005, 2007, and 2011, overlaid with GPS polygons delineating land parcels for each claim. Data on granted cases was available on the website of Maharashtra's Tribal Research and Training Institute (TRTI), which had developed and utilised a robust, transpar-



THE FACT ALSO REMAINS THAT GENUINE COMMUNITIES AND ELIGIBLE LANDS, SUCH AS SACRED GROVES AND COMMUNITY-OCCUPIED, CUSTOMARILY AND RULE-BASED MANAGED AREAS AWAITING FORMALISATION OF THEIR MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE UNDER THE FRA, HAVE SIMPLY BEEN LEFT OUT

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ent, and technology-driven verification system for comparing land-use status before and after the December 2005 cut-off date, documenting approximately 2.9 lakh polygons under IFR claims.

Despite this technological safety net based on satellite imagery, it was found that about 16 per cent of the studied cases were granted IFRs on lands that were clearly ineligible-being fully barren, tree-covered, or a mixture of both, as seen in satellite images. More than 3,000 cases showing land-use change, specifically conversion to cultivation after the 2005 cut-off date, were also found to have been cleared as valid claims. Additionally, approximately 4 per cent of cleared claims exceeded the maximum permissible limit of four hectares.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) amended the FRA Rules in 2012, effectively downgrading the evidentiary value of satellite imagery. Such imagery, as well as other uses of technology, could thereafter be used only to "supplement" other forms of evidence and not as a replacement. Critics argue that this move prioritised subjective claims over objective science. As a result, while many states, including major ones such as Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, reportedly discontinued their use,

Maharashtra's well-grounded system was not only derailed but the invaluable dataset of 2.9 lakh GPS polygons embedded in satellite imagery also reportedly became untraceable. Notably, in response to a requirement from the Forest Survey of India (FSI) for analysis in compliance with the Hon'ble Supreme Court's February 2019 order in Writ Petition (C) No. 109/2008, Maharashtra did not make the data available. With regard to eviction of encroachers, no state has initiated proceedings against those with rejected claims, and even the Hon'ble Supreme Court, on February 28, 2019, stayed its own eviction order within fifteen days.

The right to minor forest produce is mandated to be limited to the quantity traditionally collected by beneficiaries. However, the recognition process has been misused to grant rights over the entire commercial MFP output and trade, often to Gram Sabhas, disregarding the heterogeneity and occupational diversity of their members. As a result, new intermediaries are emerging in states such as Maharashtra and Odisha. They operate as contractors in league with tendu leaf traders, while the intended empowerment of FDST and OTFD communities for resource conservation and democratic local governance envisioned by the FRA

is subverted. A similar atmosphere is being created in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh to dismantle their federation-based systems.

With regard to CFRRs, these are being illegally recognised almost unabated on government forest lands (such as Reserved or Protected Forests under working plans), even though their specified location is statutorily limited to "customary common forest land" or "community forest resource" as defined in the Act. Further, CFRRs are being granted to ineligible communities that do not meet the criteria under Section 3(1)(i), which requires proof of a traditional role in protection and conservation of the land under claim. Such grants to ineligible entities have been facilitated by amendments to the FRA Rules themselves, whereby the presence of even a few Scheduled Tribes or OTFDs qualifies a Gram Sabha to submit a claim. Shockingly, scrutiny of 80 randomly selected sanctioned cases from districts in Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh reveals that all are illegal recognitions. Meanwhile, genuine communities and eligible lands, such as sacred groves and customary rule-based managed areas awaiting formalisation under the FRA, have been excluded.

Unfortunately, misuse of the FRA has been continuously and systematically

ignored despite repeated complaints. Foresters objecting to ineligible claims in Sub-Divisional and District-level Committee meetings are often branded anti-tribal and persecuted. Pressurised, and frequently backed by political authorities and civil society, Committees tend to exceed the Act's provisions with impunity, without recognising that the long-term sustenance of forest rights depends on the sustainability of forest resources. While the MoTA issues regular instructions for reconsideration of rejected claims, it has never mandated scrutiny of approved claims, even on a sample basis. By reiterating that implementation responsibility lies with States and Union Territories, it overlooks the implication that reviewing rejected cases while ignoring illegally granted ones amounts to implicit permission for continued misuse.

Objective and verifiable scientific evidence must be treated as the primary defence against fraudulent claims, not merely a supplement to easily manipulated traditional evidence. The FRA Rules must therefore be amended to restore the high evidentiary value of satellite imagery and GPS data. The government, in accordance with Section 13 of the FRA, must demonstrate a genuine commitment to enforcing all existing laws.

Prosecution of powerful individuals misusing the FRA for land speculation or for harming the interests of genuine beneficiaries can act as a strong deterrent. While the Central Empowered Committee's recent action regarding alleged irregularities in IFRs granted to Podu cultivators in Telangana is welcome, rectifying errors requires significant resources and political neutrality. Comprehensive retraining must therefore be provided to Committee members to ensure strict implementation of the Act, and they must be held accountable for permitting demonstrably false claims.

The government should prioritise the establishment of a National Audit Mechanism for technology-based scrutiny of approved cases and cancellation of all illegally recognised rights. The MoTA, in collaboration with the FSI and the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), must develop and maintain a centralised database to securely store GPS polygons and records of recognised claims nationwide. Given the scale of potential error, the FRA must not be allowed to undermine conservation laws or the rights of genuine, eligible forest dwellers.

Towards a home-grown knowledge ecosystem



India's Viksit Bharat aspiration by 2047 transcends traditional capital investment. While tangible infrastructure remains critical, the primary constraint to sustained, high-quality growth is the knowledge ecosystem deficit. To successfully transition from a middle-income economy to a fully developed nation, India must aggressively cultivate a robust, home-grown intellectual infrastructure; one encompassing R&D, credible think tanks, advanced data infrastructure, and scalable domestic innovation capacity.

India's gross expenditure on R&D (GERD) remains persistently low at just 0.65 per cent of GDP, far below advanced economies such as the US and Germany (3 per cent), as well as emerging markets like China (2 per cent). This places India well under the global average of approximately 1.8 per cent, reflecting a structural under-investment in innovation. This structural weakness is compounded by a profound imbalance: only about 5 per cent of India's R&D spending comes from the private sector, compared to approximately 70 per cent in the US.

While the 2025-26 Union Budget increased national R&D allocations to ₹61,028 crore, representing only 1.28 per cent of the Central Budget, the scale is still insufficient to trigger the kind of innovation acceleration India needs. The government's announcement of a ₹1 lakh crore Research Development and Innovation (RDI) Fund in 2025 could be transformative, but its impact will hinge on execution discipline and meaningful alignment with private-sector investment. For the fund to succeed, execution discipline must include transparent governance, mandated industry co-funding, and a focus on measurable outcomes tied to national priorities.

This chronic underinvestment depresses innovation output, technological absorption, and productivity growth. OECD studies show that a 1 per cent rise in business R&D increases productivity by approximately 0.13 per cent, and an equivalent increase in public R&D yields about 0.17 per cent productivity growth. If India does not correct its R&D deficit, it cannot realistically close its productivity gap with peer economies

India's innovation output has improved. Patent grants have grown fourfold, from 7,509 (2010-11) to 28,391 (2020-21), and patent applications have risen from approximately 39,400 to 58,500 (Economic Survey 2022). In 2023, India was among the fastest-growing patent origins globally (WIPO). The gap, though, remains large. India's patent portfolio is still only a small fraction of China's or the United States', and over 70 per cent

of high-quality publications come from fewer than 200 institutions, signalling an ecosystem that remains narrow, institutionally shallow, and highly concentrated.

Yet India has proven that strategic investments yield transformative outcomes. ISRO's space programme, built on modest budgets and indigenous capabilities, has delivered world-class missions such as Chandrayaan and Mangalyaan at a fraction of global costs. India's digital public infrastructure (DPI) has revolutionised financial inclusion and service delivery and now serves as a model for developing nations worldwide. These successes demonstrate that when India invests in knowledge systems with clarity and commitment, the results can leapfrog conventional development paths. Talent is not the constraint. Institutional depth is.

A successful knowledge ecosystem requires more than isolated R&D labs; it needs the systemic translation of research into actionable policy and practice. Strong, independent domestic think tanks, policy centres, and data institutions are critical for:

- Contextualisation: Bridging the gap between academic research and on-the-ground implementation, generating timely, granular, India-focused data for evidence-based governance, which global firms often lack.
- Diffusion: Ensuring technology and best practices are adapted and diffused to MSMEs and lagging regions, mitigating the concentration of innovation within a few large firms or urban centres.
- Intellectual sovereignty: Protecting India's development agenda from being shaped by foreign-funded or non-contextual research, and offering a cost-efficient alternative to large, protracted global consulting engagements for structural and social reforms.

India's current policy research landscape remains fragmented. While NITI Aayog plays an important role in policy formulation, the broader ecosystem of independent think tanks and research institutions operates at a limited scale with constrained resources. Many rely heavily on external grants, limiting their ability to pursue long-term, strategic research agendas.

Global studies show that a 1 per cent increase in R&D intensity typically delivers a 0.13-0.17 per cent annual boost in productivity growth (OECD). Raising R&D spending could help India break into the upper-middle-income bracket, strengthen industrial competitiveness, and power high-skill job creation in digital technology, biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and clean technology

To realise this vision, policymakers must act with long-term focus. Key steps should include:

- Raising R&D investment to globally competitive levels. Set a clear national target for R&D

intensity; for example, gradually increasing from approximately 0.65 per cent to at least 2 per cent of GDP by 2047, with an increasing share from the private sector. This will require not only higher government outlays but also incentives such as tax credits, grants, and public-private partnerships.


- Institutionalising long-term funding for domestic think tanks and policy research bodies. Create a dedicated Viksit Bharat Knowledge Fund or similar endowment, allowing multi-year grants, seed funding for new institutions, and stable operating resources.
- Building a National Knowledge Ecosystem. Link universities, research institutes, think tanks, industry, and government into a network that facilitates research, innovation, technology transfer, policy formulation, and diffusion of knowledge, especially to MSMEs and lagging regions.
- Promoting technology diffusion beyond large firms. Provide support for smaller firms and regional enterprises to adopt or adapt technologies through subsidies, incubation, outreach, and technical assistance.


- Expanding the notion of a "domestic Big Four" beyond consulting firms. Encourage the emergence of large, credible, Indian-owned knowledge institutions and think tanks that can compete globally in consultancy, policy research, data analytics, design, and technology transfer.


India's CSR spending has grown sharply, from ₹26,278 crore in FY22 to ₹34,909 crore in FY24 (Bharat CSR Performance Report, 2024), yet less than 3 per cent of this pool supports research, policy, or knowledge infrastructure. Redirecting even 5-10 per cent of CSR funding towards knowledge creation-such as think tanks, public data systems, applied research labs, and digital public goods-would significantly strengthen India's intellectual capacity. In parallel, industry must deepen its own R&D investment by leveraging fiscal incentives, building in-house research capabilities, and expanding industry-academia collaboration. Together, these shifts would reduce dependence on imported technologies and external consulting, while building the long-term competitiveness required for India's innovation-driven growth.

For India to become a developed nation, it must invest as much in brains, ideas, and institutions as in roads, ports, and industrial parks. Countries that mastered the knowledge game-South Korea, Germany, and Japan-used it to leapfrog into high-growth, high-productivity, high-innovation economies. India's story must now follow that path. Viksit Bharat requires Viksit Buddhi; a developed nation needs developed minds. The time to build is now.

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The Pioneer

Understanding the Yogi factor



The figure of Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, invariably triggers a familiar, polarised debate. To his supporters, he is the 'Hindu Hriday Samrat', a decisive administrator who has restored order and pride. To his detractors, he is a deeply divisive communalist and a symbol of majoritarian assertion that undermines India's secular fabric. This binary, however, is a lazy and inadequate framework — a relic of an older political vocabulary that fails to capture the complexity of his political project. To understand Yogi Adityanath's enduring influence, one must look beyond the simplistic communal-versus-secular lens.

His politics represents a far more sophisticated and potent synthesis: a unique blend of spiritual authority from the Gorakhnath Peeth, a strategic project of "subaltern Hindutva", and a governance model framed around "Lok Kalyan" (public welfare). This model is rooted in a politics of labharthi (beneficiary) and a law-and-order situation unimaginable in Uttar Pradesh before 2017. It fulfils a public craving not just for a normal life but for a quality of life that many felt was sacrificed under the previous guise of social justice. These elements converge into a powerful form of identity politics that is fundamentally reshaping the Indian polity.

At the core of Yogi Adityanath's identity is his role as the Mahant, or head priest, of the Gorakhnath Peeth. This is not merely a religious title; it is the bedrock of his philosophical outlook and an autonomous source of political legitimacy. The Peeth, belonging to the Nath Panth tradition, carries a legacy of spiritual and temporal influence that predates modern political parties by centuries. This role grants him an authority insulated from the whims of party politics, setting him apart from career politicians. Crucially, the Peeth's ideology provides a philosophical bridge connecting the spiritual to the material.

The principle of 'Lok Kalyan' is central here. Adityanath articulates a vision in which spiritual values are not antithetical to material progress but are its very foundation. He has often stated that India's spiritual traditions provide a "moral compass to humanity", rooted in compassion and the principle of 'live and let live'. He argues that "spirituality, cultural advancement, and material development all require a safe, civilised, and clean environment". This philosophy allows him to seamlessly frame the construction of a temple and the building of an expressway as complementary, not contradictory, acts-both presented as sacred duties in the larger project of national rejuvenation.

This refutes the Western-inspired dichotomy that separates the sacred from the profane, offering a holistic vision in which development is imbued with cultural and spiritual meaning.

Perhaps the most politically astute element of the Yogi model is its project of 'subaltern Hindutva'-a conscious effort to broaden the social base of Hindu nationalism beyond its traditional upper-caste anchor. This is a strategic move to dismantle the caste-based political fortresses of parties such as the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party, whose politics of social justice gradually converted into fiefdoms of specific families and castes. This re-engineering operates on multiple fronts. First, there is the radical inclusivity historically associated with the Gorakhnath Peeth itself, an unorthodox institution known for its openness to lower castes.

Second, and more crucially, was the founding of the Hindu Yuva Vahini, an organisation that gave prominent positions and a sense of agency to youth from OBC and Dalit communities, alongside their mobilisation in the Ram Janmabhumi Andolan by his guru, Mahant Avaidyanath. This created a populist, often aggressive, form of 'non-Brahmin Hindutva'. It empowered non-dominant castes by tapping into their "anxieties and aspirations" — their desire for recognition and a share of power that they felt was denied to them by established 'social justice' parties. By offering a platform within a pan-Hindu identity, the Yogi model convinced a significant section of the subaltern electorate that their interests were better served by aligning with a majoritarian project than by remaining within caste-specific silos. This strategic inclusion is not about erasing caste but about subsuming it within a larger religious-political identity positioned against a perceived common 'other'.

This leads to the third pillar of his strategy: a distinct form of identity politics that constructs a pan-Hindu social coalition while positioning itself as a corrective to the "politics of appeasement", a term used to critique policies aimed at Muslim minorities. His discourse consistently contrasts this alleged appeasement with his government's commitment to 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', reflected in his labharthi politics. The implicit and often explicit message is the dawn of a new era in which the majority community receives its due. This is identity politics on a grand scale, appealing to a sense of historical grievance and majoritarian entitlement. The success of this strategy is starkly evident in electoral outcomes. The BJP, under his leadership, secured a massive majority in the 2022 State Assembly elections without fielding a single Muslim candidate.

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

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The Pioneer

The real AI revolution in banking: Decision packs, not algorithms



SUNDAR
SUNDARARAJAN

Rethinking the race in banking

For nearly a decade, the financial industry has been obsessed with the wrong race. Banks have focused on who can deploy the smartest models, the fastest algorithms, or the most advanced AI platforms. Yet the real transformation underway is not about faster predictions or more complex math. It is about making better decisions.

The competitive frontier is shifting. Success is no longer determined by model accuracy alone. Predictions only hold value when paired with context and alerts only matter when they contribute to decisions that are consistent, defensible and trusted. In banking today, AI is no longer a race for speed-it is a race to prevent breakdowns before they occur.

The limits of model-only thinking

Banking operates in deeply interconnected environments. Every customer interaction, exception case and transaction activates a web of operational decisions that must work seamlessly. Models can detect anomalies at scale, but without institutional context, they rest on assumptions that can quickly unravel under real-world pressures.

The risk is rarely a single bad decision. It is the gaps between systems, where incomplete or contradictory information can slip through unnoticed. A customer's cash flow in the core system may suggest stability, while transaction history hints at stress. Branch notes, call-center transcripts and chat interactions add further fragments, rarely reconciled. When AI is applied on top of unchanged processes, it magnifies inconsistencies rather than correcting them, making operational cracks increasingly costly as pilots scale to production.



AI works-but only with context

Modern AI excels at pattern recognition, anomaly detection, document interpretation, and structured data triage. McKinsey estimates generative AI could unlock between 200 and 340 billion dollars annually for global banking-but only where context already exists. Early successes are seen where structured data is available, single-customer views are real and workflows are intentionally redesigned to integrate AI inputs, rather than patched superficially.

A striking example comes from HSBC. Their AI-powered transaction-screening engine now



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processes more than 900 million transactions per month, identifying more suspicious activity while reducing false positives. The real breakthrough was not the algorithm itself, but pairing detection with structured decision packs and audit-ready trails. By consolidating history, evidence, exceptions and reason codes into a sequenced context pack, analysts can focus on informed decision-making instead of unraveling contradictions. This approach also addresses regulatory concerns over undocumented overrides a systemic weakness that decision packs directly resolve.

The enduring role of human judgment

Even the most sophisticated AI models stumble when faced with intent, ethical considerations, rare events, market shocks or adversarial behavior. Humans, however, excel at interpreting nuance and cross-domain context. Yet humans alone cannot sustain consistent, auditable decisions at scale. Judgment becomes reliable only when supported by structured evidence, transparent lineage and clear

operational controls-the very artifacts AI can provide at speed and volume.

The emerging hybrid model blends both capabilities. AI aggregates, alerts, summarises, and contextualises information, while humans are routed to the right decision at the right moment, applying ethics, accountability and experience. Automation does not replace judgment; it restores the conditions for good judgment to prevail.

Decision packs: engineering context into workflows

Leading banks are moving beyond delivering raw alerts to analysts. They are creating decision packs-structured, sequenced bundles of information delivered precisely when a decision is required. These packs weave together customer history, channel behavior, transaction patterns, risk flags, documents, prior actions and reason codes into a coherent, actionable view.

In trade finance, for example, AI might flag irregular document signatures, sanctions-list hits, or routing anomalies. The human officer adds

supplier-buyer history, commodity pricing trends, geopolitical insights and country risk into the decision-making process. The resulting decision is informed, defensible, timely and aligned with policy. Context-aware banking transforms the question from "What does the model say?" to "What does the model say within the full context the institution can recover and verify?" This shift closes the gaps that historically caused inconsistency, omission and operational fragility.

Operating models matter more than models

Across the industry, there is growing consensus: the operating model-how decisions are designed, governed, and executed-delivers far more value than the model architecture itself. Banks that extract the most value from AI maintain auditable override controls, human-in-loop workflows, strong data lineage, cross-channel decision rights and scalable accountability. In practice, a model contributes perhaps ten to twenty percent of value, while the remaining eighty to ninety percent comes from how decisions are operationalized. AI cannot fix broken workflows, but effective workflows make AI meaningful.

Fewer contextless decisions, not faster decisions

Banks do not simply need faster decision-making. They need fewer decisions made in the absence of context. The purpose of AI is not to replace bankers but to remove the breakdowns that force decisions to be made using incomplete fragments.

Forward-looking institutions are designing systems where ledgers record not only the model output, but also the decision pack, the human override and the governance trail. This creates a future where decisions are explainable, repeatable and trusted at scale.

The future: AI-assisted, context-rich, human-governed banking

The real revolution is subtle but profound. It is not AI replacing bankers; it is AI replacing the conditions that constrained them for decades. Banks that embrace decision packs will achieve consistent decision-making at scale, strengthen regulatory defensibility, reduce operational fragility, unlock deeper predictive intelligence, and build enduring trust with customers and regulators.

The path ahead is clear. The banks that will thrive in the AI era will not be those with the fastest algorithms. They will be the ones capable of making the best decisions, armed with context, evidence and human judgment at the right moment.

Labour codes: Legally accurate, socially transformative, and politically defining. A landmark reform of the Modi era



ASEERVATHAM
ACHARY

India, that is *Bharat* had long been burdened by laws created during the British regime, shaped by a colonial mentality that openly viewed *Bharatiyas* as their slaves and servants. Those laws were never meant to empower the people of this land.

They were crafted only to safeguard the interests of foreign rulers and to keep the native population dependent, restricted and voiceless. For decades, *Bharat* waited for a Government with the conviction to break free from these outdated colonial structures. This long pending transformation became possible only under the Modi Government, which has consistently delivered bold decisions, structural reforms and governance that truly serves the nation.

In the past decade, the Modi Government has brought a historic reform package that has reshaped the governance landscape of India, making it simpler, transparent and friendly for innovation and growth. More than 40000 unnecessary compliances have been abolished, around 1500 obsolete laws have been repealed and several existing regulations have been streamlined to reduce the burden on citizens, businesses and startups.

Through legislative action, more than a dozen laws have been simplified. Around 280 provisions have been removed to make governance more accessible and citizen centric. These reforms are fully aligned with the vision of *Atmanirbhar Bharat* and the goal of making India a developed nation by 2047.

Taking this reform journey to the next level, the Modi Government has now implemented the four Labour Codes from 21 November 2025. These Codes replace 29 scattered and confusing laws with one modern, clear and worker friendly framework. For the first time, India has a labour system that supports today's economy, today's workforce and tomorrow's aspirations. It gives workers better protection, ensures fair wages, improves safety and strengthens industries so India can compete globally.



This change was long overdue. Most of our old labour laws were written even before independence viz., Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923, Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926, Trade Disputes Act, 1929, Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946, etc.

The economy changed, industries changed, technology changed, but those laws remained frozen in the past. Workers suffered. Employers struggled. Compliance became a maze. The new Labour Codes finally break

this cycle and bring India into a new era of simple rules and honest governance.

A broad range of benefits across sectors

The new Labour Codes bring clear, future ready protections for workers across every sector of the economy. Fixed term employees now receive the same benefits as permanent staff including leave, medical cover and social security, with gratuity eligibility reduced from five years to one. Gig and platform workers get formal recognition for the first time, with aggregators contributing to their social security and Aadhaar linked UAN ensuring portable benefits across states.

Contract workers gain transparent protection, social security and health coverage from principal employers, along with annual free health check-ups. Women workers are assured equal pay, protection from discrimination and the freedom to work night shifts and in all sectors with full safety and consent. Youth workers benefit from guaranteed

minimum wages, mandatory appointment letters and wages during leave.

The Labour Codes mark a historic step in modernising India's workforce by aligning with international standards on wages, gender equality and occupational safety. Over 2.78 million workers die globally each year from occupational accidents and diseases, highlighting the relevance of OSH provisions in the Codes.

MSME workers receive minimum wages, safe working conditions, double overtime wages and timely salary payments. Beedi and cigar workers are protected with fixed working hours, double overtime rates and bonus eligibility after thirty days. Plantation workers receive mandatory safety training, medical facilities for families and education support for children.

Audio visual and digital media workers including journalists and artists get clear wage structures, appointment letters and social security. Mining workers are protected under national safety standards, receive free annual health

check-ups and regulated working hours. In hazardous industries, annual medical tests and safety committees are mandatory. Women are empowered to work safely even in high-risk environments.

Textile and migrant workers receive equal wages, PDS portability and protection for pending dues. IT and ITES workers get timely salaries, equal pay, social security and strong grievance redressal. Dock workers gain formal recognition along with provident fund, pension, insurance and essential workplace facilities.

Additional transformative reforms under the labour codes

A national floor wage now guarantees that every worker receives a dignified minimum earning ensuring uniform protection across the country. Gender neutral job opportunities and wages have been emphasised extending equal rights and safeguards to all workers including transgender persons.

To replace outdated inspection systems an inspector cum facilitator model has been introduced focusing on guidance and compliance support rather than fear and harassment. Disputes will now be resolved in a time bound manner through two member Industrial Tribunals giving workers and employers faster and predictable outcomes.

Paperwork has been simplified through single registration, single licence and single return replacing the earlier system of multiple overlapping filings. Workplace safety has also been strengthened with the creation of a National OSH Board to ensure uniform safety standards across sectors. Mandatory safety committees in major establishments further enhance accountability and on site protection.

Higher factory applicability limits ensure that smaller units are not overburdened by excessive regulations while core safeguards for workers remain fully intact. These reforms collectively reflect a clear commitment to worker dignity, workplace safety and smoother industrial operations.

Labour codes: modernising workplaces and empowering MSMEs

The new Labour Codes bring clarity, transparency and digitisation to India's labour framework. Clear rules on contract labour, retrenchment and fixed-term employment will reduce disputes and help MSMEs formalise previously informal arrangements. Mandatory appointment letters, wage linkages to the national floor and timely payments encourage proper records and digital payroll adoption.

Recognition of fixed-term employment provides flexibility for project or seasonal work while ensuring wage and benefit parity, including gratuity after one year. Expanded ESIC, EPF and insurance coverage for casual, fixed-term, gig, platform and hazardous sector workers strengthens social security for all.

Provisions on safety, welfare and timely wages are expected to improve workplace conditions, raise morale and create a more motivated workforce. Experts note that these reforms will lead to structured, predictable and cooperative labour management, benefiting both workers and businesses.

Global backing for India's labour codes

The Director General of the International Labour Organisation praised India's decision to implement the four Labour Codes, calling it an important step toward stronger social protection and fair wage systems. He emphasised that social dialogue between the Government, employers and workers will play a key role in ensuring positive outcomes for both labour and industry.

The International Social Security Association also welcomed the reforms, stating that India's Labour Codes add powerful momentum to global efforts for building stronger and more inclusive social security systems. ISSA highlighted that India's initiative strengthens global progress toward wider coverage, better protection and stronger institutional capacity.

Opposing for the sake of opposing

The Opposition's stand against these reforms is baseless and unjustified. Their poster marches and dramatic protests are nothing more than political theatrics designed to manufacture issues where none exist. These reforms have been thoughtfully drafted to protect workers' interests and to strengthen Bharat's workforce. It is difficult to comprehend why the Opposition is resisting measures that clearly benefit the nation.




Do they not want Bharat's workers to have stable and secure employment? Do they not want gig workers, platform workers and contract workers to receive the protections they deserve?

Do they not want women and youth to receive equal pay for equal work? Do they not want workers to access gratuity, health support and social security?

Do they not want our labour force to become more skilled and our economy to grow faster? What exactly are they protesting? Only they can answer, because their objections clearly do not align with national interest.

Despite the opposition raised by the Left supported Trade Unions, Modi Government has delivered reforms that will protect workers, will formalise jobs and will strengthen the workforce while enabling businesses to grow, proving its commitment to a modern and prosperous India.

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Aligning Corío with India's critical

PROSPECT



Nandil Biswa Sarma from Assam participates in the 'Ironman 70.3' in Bahrain. Nandil is son of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma

15 CRORE PM JAN DHAN ACCOUNTS ARE INOPERATIVE



As many as 15 crore, or 26 per cent of the total 57.07 crore Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) accounts, are inoperative, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said on Monday. "The data regarding number of inoperative accounts vis-a-vis women, rural and semi-urban areas that are closed under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), is not centrally maintained. However, there are about 15.09 crore inoperative PMJDY accounts out of the total 57.07 crore PMJDY accounts in the country," he said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.

Replying to another question, Chaudhary said as on September 30, 2025, banks have a total of 7.81 crore KCC accounts with an outstanding amount of ₹10.39 lakh crore, of which public sector banks (PSBs) have a total of 2.22 crore KCC accounts with an outstanding amount of ₹4.19 lakh crore.

Under Stand-up India Scheme, he said, banks have sanctioned 2.75 lakh loans amounting to ₹62,791 crore, of which PSBs have sanctioned 2.28 lakh loans amounting to ₹51,191 crore.

Further, under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, banks have disbursed ₹2.54 lakh crore till October, 2025 during the current FY 2025-26, out of which PSBs have disbursed ₹1.03 lakh crore.

Replying to another question, he said the International Monetary Fund (IMF) report on 'Growing Retail Digital Payments (The Value of Interoperability)' dated June 2025 had recognised Unified Payments Interface (UPI) as the world's largest retail fast-payment system (FPS) by transaction volume.

Further, as per ACI Worldwide report on 'Prime Time for Real-Time' 2024, UPI has around 49 per cent share in the global real-time payment system transaction volume.

Assam Govt to hand over 992 acres to AAI for Silchar greenfield airport

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

The Assam Government decided to hand over 3,000 bighas (nearly 992 acres) of land at Doloo Tea Estate in Cachar district to the Airports Authority of India (AAI) for the construction of a greenfield airport, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. Addressing a press conference after a cabinet meeting on Sunday, Sarma said the panel approved an increase of 500 bighas from the earlier decision to allocate 2,500 bighas (826.45 acres) for the proposed airport near Silchar.

"The cabinet approved the transfer of 3,000 bighas at Doloo Tea Estate in Silchar to the AAI for the construction of a greenfield airport," Sarma said, adding that the decision will pave the way for obtaining the Union Cabinet's nod for the project. The State Government had proposed a new airport in Silchar spread over 2,500 bighas as the existing facility at Kumbhirgram is a defence airport and expansion of the facility to



Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma addressing media after Cabinet meeting

accommodate the increasing demands of air traffic is not possible.

In November 2022, the Assam Government had distributed financial assistance to 1,296

families living at Doloo Tea Estate "as a goodwill gesture". Earlier that year, a controversy had arisen over the State Government's efforts to acquire land for setting a greenfield airport with the then Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia claiming that no such proposal was received for the facility from the BJP-led State. It was later clarified that the land was being acquired at AAI's request.

Because of the confusion, land acquisition at the tea eState for the airport had led to protests by the garden workers, but the Government assured that no worker would be evicted from their homes and there would be no job loss.

The State Government had previously announced a compensation of ₹50 crore for the acquisition of land at Doloo, Lalbagh and Mainagarh tea gardens for setting up the greenfield airport.

Talking about other cabinet decisions, the CM said the Government has approved allotment of land to 1,200 families under flagship

scheme Mission Basundhara. The cabinet also approved a joint project to be set up at State-run Assam Engineering College and Dassault Systems India Pvt Ltd.

"The project, to be established over 5,000 sq ft at a cost of ₹243 crore, will offer courses related to aerospace and defence, automotive and electric vehicles," Sarma said. Of the total cost, the Assam Government will contribute ₹43 crore, while Dassault Systems will invest Rs 200 crore, he added.

Sarma further said the cabinet granted administrative approval for the construction of Assam's second Sainik School at Longvaku in Karbi Anglong district.

"The school will be built at a cost of ₹335 crore, of which 80 per cent will be borne by the Ministry of Defence and the remaining 20 per cent by the Assam Government," he added. Besides, the cabinet approved compensation to 884 families for land acquired during the construction of the four-lane National Highway in Dima Hasao district.

PSU banks write off ₹6.15 lakh cr over 5.5 years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Public sector banks have written off loans worth ₹6.15 lakh crore in the last five and a half years, Parliament was informed on Monday. "As per Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data, PSBs have written-off an aggregate loan amount of ₹6,15,647 crore, during the last five financial years and the current financial year till September 30, 2025 (provisional data)," Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.

There has been no capital infusion in Public Sector Banks (PSBs) by the Government since FY2022-23, he said, adding, PSBs have significantly improved their financial performance,

turning profitable and strengthening their capital position. PSBs now rely on market sources and internal accruals to meet their capital requirements and they have raised ₹1.79 lakh crore capital from market through equity and bonds since April 1, 2022 till September 30, 2025, he said.

He further said, banks write-off NPAs, including those in respect of which full provisioning has been made on completion of four years, as per RBI guidelines and policy approved by banks' board. Such write-off does not result in waiver of liabilities of borrowers to repay, he said. Further, he said, recovery in written-off loans is an ongoing process and banks continue pursuing their recovery actions initiat-



ed against borrowers under the various recovery mechanism available to them, such as filing of a suit in civil courts or in Debts Recovery Tribunals (DRT), action under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (SARFAESI)

Act 2002, filing of cases in the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 etc.

As provisioning for bad loans has already been done and the write-off process does not entail any actual cash outflow, the bank's liq-

uidity position remains intact, he said. Moreover, banks evaluate/consider the impact of write-offs as part of their regular exercise to clean up their balance-sheet, avail tax benefit, optimise capital base, enhance lending capacity and boost investor sentiments, he added. Replying to

another question, Chaudhary said, banks and financial institutions have traditionally been the primary source of export finance in India. The total export credit disbursed by Public Sector Banks, SIDBI and Exim Bank in the last five years (FY 20-21 to FY 24-25) stood at ₹21.71 lakh crore, he said.

In another reply, Chaudhary said, 5,83,291 fraud cases were registered in the last four and a half years till September 2025 amounting to ₹3,588.22 crore. Of this, he said, ₹238.83 crore have been recovered.

With increasing digital payment transactions in the country, incidence of cyber frauds including digital payment frauds have also gone up in the last few years, he said.

Attorney General inaugurates State-of-the-art Club House in Noida

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Noida

The newly constructed Club House-cum-Community Centre at Heart Beat City, Sector-107, Noida, was inaugurated on Monday, marking a significant step in delivering fully serviced residential ecosystems to the residents. The facility was officially opened by the Chief Guest, R. Venkataramani, Attorney General for India and Learned Court Receiver for Amrapali projects.

He was present alongside Ravi Bhatia and DK Mishra, Court Committee Members, KP Mahadevaswamy, CMD, NBCC and Dr Suman Kumar, Director

(Commercial), NBCC, as well as officer bearers of the Apartment Owner's Association and residents.

The Club House stands as a testament to NBCC's (National Buildings Construction Corporation) commitment to completing and upgrading amenities for the erstwhile Amrapali projects, which it took over under the guidance of the Learned Court Receiver and Committee members. NBCC has successfully completed all residential units in Heart Beat City.

Spread across 5,200 square metres of built-up area, the Club House is a ground plus two-storey structure equipped with three lifts. It is designed to be a vibrant social



Dignitaries present during the inauguration of Club House-cum-Community Centre at Heart Beat City, Sector-107, Noida

and recreational hub, offering a comprehensive suite of amenities to enhance the residents' living experience.

RInfra setting up integrated solar manufacturing ecosystem

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Anil Ambani-led Reliance Group on Monday said its arm Reliance Infrastructure is setting up one of India's most advanced, fully integrated solar manufacturing ecosystems spanning ingots, wafers, cells and modules.

According to an investors presentation of Reliance Infrastructure, the manufacturing facility will have next-gen technology.

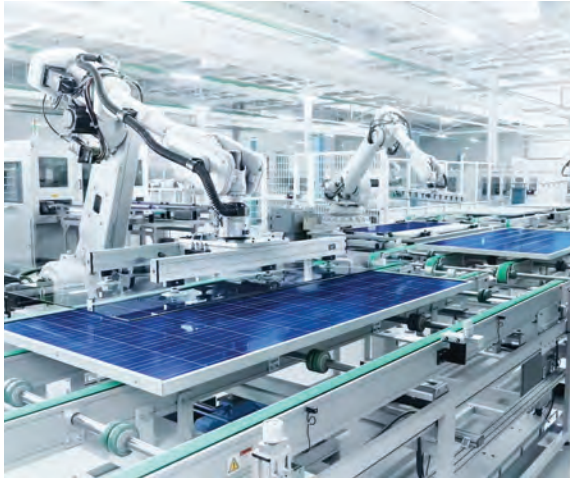
The facility will bridge large demand-supply gap as India will need 55-60 GW of solar modules annually by 2030, while upstream capacity remains significantly short.

It will be a high-value, vertically integrated platform

to reduce import dependence and strengthen India's clean energy security. It is establishing an end-to-end battery manufacturing ecosystem covering cell manufacturing, pack assembly and grid-scale containerised BESS (battery energy storage system)

As per the presentation, India's installed stationary storage base is less than 1 GWh today and will rise to 250 GWh by 2032. Domestic manufacturing currently meets less than 10 per cent of expected demand.

Reliance Group's another firm Reliance Power said in its investor presentation that Reliance NU Energies is powering the shift from plain-vanilla solar to hybrid and firm, round-the-clock (RTC) renewable energy.



Trident Group to invest ₹1500 Crore in modernising sustainable paper manufacturing and terry towel production in Punjab

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Trident Group, one of India's leading agro-based and environmentally responsible paper manufacturers, has announced a ₹1500-crore investment to upgrade its sustainable paper operations and Terry Towel production at its Punjab unit. The move strengthens the company's commitment to eco-friendly manufacturing and future-ready technologies.

The announcement follows Trident's strong presence at PaperEx 2025, where it showcased its expanded range of sustainable, wheat-straw-based paper—produced without



cutting a single tree. The company also highlighted its shift toward automation, digitalisation and circular manufacturing, aimed at improving efficiency, reducing waste and enhancing production accuracy.

Trident is further expanding its portfolio with new

copier, maplitho and notebook variants designed to meet evolving consumer and institutional needs.

Speaking on the announcement, Rajnish Kumar Gera, CEO – Paper & Chemicals, Trident Group, said: "This investment marks a new phase of transforma-

tion for Trident. It reinforces our commitment to sustainable, zero-tree paper manufacturing while accelerating our shift toward a technologically advanced, resource-efficient ecosystem. By strengthening automation and expanding our eco-smart product portfolio, we are preparing for the next generation of sustainable solutions for our customers."

With this investment and technology-driven transformation, Trident Group is poised to further strengthen its position as a leader in sustainable manufacturing, delivering high-quality, environmentally responsible products to markets in India and across the world.

Constl, Ciena achieve 1 Tbps transmission across 1,450 km long-haul network

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Capitalising on India's burgeoning digital economy, digital infrastructure provider Constl has successfully tested and deployed a record-breaking 1 terabit per second (Tbps) line rate on a single optical channel across the 1,450 km Mumbai-Chennai route.

The breakthrough, achieved in collaboration with global networking leader Ciena, utilised Ciena's Wave Logic 6 Extreme (WL6e) solution on one of Constl's most critical corridors, without the need for regeneration. Constl is a subsidiary of the Space World Group. This milestone makes

Constl India's first digital infrastructure provider to achieve a 1 Tbps transmission rate over a long-haul distance. The WL6e upgrade is set to significantly boost Constl's ambition to become the network of choice for hyperscalers operating in India.

The deployment effectively doubles the fibre wavelength capacity from 800 Gb/s to 1.6 Tb/s compared to its earlier WaveLogic 5 Extreme deployment, delivering a strong competitive edge by increasing capacity while simultaneously reducing cost per bit, improving spectral efficiency and lowering power consumption.

"Since inception in 2023—just two years ago—Constl

has deployed over 12,000 km of fibre and connected around 100 data centres across 13 Indian cities, powered by Ciena's industry-leading optical technology," said Ankit Goel, Chairman and Founder, Space World Group. "This milestone positions us to expand our terrestrial fibre network and deliver high capacity 800GbE services for the AI era." Constl's successful trial is also seen as a testament to the high-quality fibre infrastructure the company is laying across the country.

Amit Malik, Vice President and General Manager, Asia Pacific, Japan and India, Ciena, reinforced the partnership's focus on future-ready connectivity. "Constl is com-

mitted to developing networks tailored to hyperscaler requirements and Ciena's coherent optics are recognised as the best-in-class platform for high-capacity AI services. Together, we are driving next-generation connectivity to support India's digital future and AI ambitions."

Constl specialises in delivering advanced digital infrastructure solutions purpose-built for hyperscalers, telcos and OTT/CDN providers, operating a pan-India high-speed network.

Ciena is a global leader in high-speed connectivity, known for building adaptive networks to support exponential growth in bandwidth demand.

Napoli beat Juventus 2-1 in Serie A

Nice fans boo team during 7th loss

1191 posts lying vacant in SAI: Sports minister

La Liga: Real Madrid lose 2-0 to Celta Vigo

Nice fans boo team during 7th loss

A group of Formula 1 cars are shown racing on a track. In the background, a large white smoke plume is visible, indicating a crash or collision. The cars are in various colors, including red, blue, and yellow. The track is bordered by a concrete wall.

New Cadillac team, old faces
The F1 grid expands to 22 cars for the first time since 2016 as Cadillac becomes the 11th team with backing from General Motors.

India begin official T20I WC build-up against South Africa

TAPAN MOHANTA
■ Cuttack

The return of Shubman Gill and Hardik Pandya will lend fresh sheen and much-needed completeness to reigning world champions India when they begin their official march towards the home T20 World Cup with the opening match of a five-game series against South Africa on Tuesday.

This series marks the start of India's formal build-up to the February showpiece, where they will play 10 T20Is — five against South Africa followed by another five against New Zealand — before opening their title defence against the USA at the Wankhede on February 7.

The defending champions will look to enter this phase with clarity of intent as they refine roles, streamline combinations and settle the XI that will carry the weight of expectations in front of home crowds.

India have been a formidable T20I unit post their World Cup triumph in the format last year, where they won eight matches in a row to lift the title.

Since then, they have extended their tally to 26

wins with only four losses, including a seven-match streak during their Asia Cup victory in Dubai.

They have not lost a T20I series in this period, and with only minor tweaks needed, they will be hoping to sharpen the edges against the side they defeated in the T20 World Cup final.

Gill's return comes after he missed almost a month of cricket owing to a neck spasm suffered while attempting a slog sweep during the opening Test against the Proteas.

Having played non-stop cricket since the last IPL and with India facing a packed season ahead, his workload management will be closely monitored.

But for Gill, who has 837 runs from 33 T20Is at an average of 29.89, this series also doubles up as vital preparation heading into the ICC event.

His reunion with Abhishek Sharma brings back a high-impact opening pair that marries brute force with clean, classical strokeplay.

Abhishek, fresh from a standout tour of Australia where he topped India's scoring charts with 163 runs in the 2-1 victory, has been in monstrous domestic touch.



India's Shubman Gill during a practice session on the eve of the first T20 cricket match of a series between India and South Africa at Barabati Stadium in Cuttack, Odisha

In the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20s, the Punjab left-hander hammered 304 runs at an average of 50.66 and a staggering strike rate of 249-plus, including a breathtaking 52-ball 148 against Bengal as Punjab posted 310/5.

Hardik Pandya's comeback is equally significant.

Out for more than two months after a quadriceps injury during the Asia Cup, the all-rounder marked his return in style with a 42-ball 77 not out for Baroda in the SMAT before bowling four

overs at full tilt for 1/52.

He arrived here a day ahead of the squad, trained solo at the Barabati Stadium, bowled for 20 minutes and went through an extended physical routine.

His presence not only deepens India's batting but restores the balance of a bowling attack built heavily on flexibility. One of the central conversations ahead of the series has been skipper Suryakumar Yadav's prolonged lean patch.

The contrast between his

dazzling IPL 2025, where he amassed 717 runs for Mumbai Indians, and his underwhelming T20I returns have been striking.

Since taking over as full-time T20I captain in July last year, his form has dipped to an average of 15.33 with 184 runs in 15 innings, he has not scored a fifty in the last 20 games, and his strike rate has reduced to 127.77 from the 187-plus he clocked in 2022. Even in the SMAT this season, he failed to reach a fifty, scoring 165 runs from



five matches. Any drastic move before the World Cup looks unlikely, but the next 10 T20Is will add fodder to conversations surrounding both his form and captaincy.

The wicketkeeper-batter debate — Sanju Samson or Jitesh Sharma — remains equally tantalising.

India's handling of the pair during the Australia series raised eyebrows, with Samson batting only once, promoted to No. 3, before Jitesh was backed for the last three T20Is.

Since India's World Cup triumph, Samson has been the team's third-highest run-getter, flourishing as an opener with three centuries, including two in South Africa. But Gill's return as vice-captain pushed Samson down the order into a role he rarely occupies in T20 cricket. In the recent SMAT, Samson looked in excellent touch with two fifties, two 40s and a 56-ball 73 not out against Andhra, while Jitesh managed modest returns for Baroda with a top score

of 41 from six outings.

South Africa, for their part, welcome back tearaway pacer Anrich Nortje for his first international appearance since last year's T20 World Cup final.Marco Jansen's evolution as a genuine all-rounder adds heft to the visitors; his blistering 93 in the Guwahati Test and 70 off 39 balls in Ranchi underscored a renewed authority with the bat to go with his established potency with the ball.

Teams (from):

India: Suryakumar Yadav (c), Shubman Gill (vc), Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Sanju Samson (wk), Jitesh Sharma (wk), Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Shivam Dube, Washington Sundar, Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Harshit Rana, Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravathy.

South Africa: Aiden Markram (captain), Ottineil Baartman, Corbin Bosch, Dewald Brevis, Quinton de Kock, Tony de Zorzi, Donnovan Ferreria, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, George Linde, Keshav Maharaj, Kwena Maphaka, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Tristan Stubbs. (PTI)

No major changes in T20 squad before World Cup: Skipper Salman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Karachi

Pakistan's T20 skipper Salman Ali Agha has ruled out any major changes in his squad for the Men's T20 World Cup next year, saying the side has shown a marked improvement after the players were given specific roles in recent months.

Pakistan, who had made big changes to its side following the Asia Cup final defeat to India earlier this year, bringing in Abdul Samad, Babar Azam, Usman Khan and Naseem Shah, defeated South Africa at home in a three-match T20I series and then won the Tri-series, also involving Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka, last month.

"In my personal opinion, I don't see any major changes in the national T20 squad before the World Cup," Salman said on a Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) podcast.

"I think the current combination we have will be the



one we will have in the World Cup. Every player had been given a specific role in recent months and with that the team had moved forward," he added.

Pakistan are scheduled to play six T20 games before the World Cup, scheduled to be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka from February 7 till March 8 next year, and Salman said the limited number of matches will make it difficult to make major changes.

"We have six T20 matches

to play before the World Cup and I don't think we can make any big changes now in these remaining matches. We have to show consistency and move forward with the current combination," he said.

Experienced allrounder Shadab Khan, who was the vice-captain of the side before he got injured in May and underwent a shoulder surgery in London, is now rehabilitated and is set to make a comeback in the Big Bash in Australia.

Hardik gives us lot of options: Suryakumar

TAPAN MOHANTA
■ Cuttack

India captain Suryakumar Yadav believes Hardik Pandya's return will restore the tactical depth and balance that shaped the team's Asia Cup surge when the world champions take on South Africa in a five-match T20I series starting here on Tuesday.

The ace India seam-bowling all-rounder, who sustained a left quadriceps injury and missed the Asia Cup final, is fully fit and in fine form after making his comeback in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy.

His timely return ahead of next year's T20 World Cup has brought back the much-needed flexibility and balance, with his new-ball spells offering India the cushion to field three, even four spinners.

"I think what you saw in the Asia Cup also, when he was bowling the new ball, he opened a lot of options, lot of combinations for us with respect to playing XI," Suryakumar said on the eve of the series-

opening T20I.

"That's what he brings to the table. His experience, the way he has done really well in all the matches, all good games also, all bigger games in ICC events.

"I think that experience will count a lot. His presence will definitely give a good balance to the side."

Incidentally, Pandya, who landed a day early in Cuttack and trained solo at Barabati Stadium, skipped the optional session on Monday, but the skipper confirmed that both he and Shubman Gill — returning from a neck spasm — are available.

"Right now, both of them look healthy and fit," he said.

For India, this series is the start of a 10-match run into the home T20 World Cup in February, but Suryakumar said the groundwork was laid long back.

"Our 2026 T20 World Cup preparation began right after we won the T20 World Cup in 2024... Our preparation is similar. The preparation started after the T20 World Cup 2024 got over.



Since then, we have been trying new things and everything is working for us."

He underlined that India's recent success stems from consistency of selection. "I feel in the last 5-6 series which we have played, we have tried and played with a similar combination. We have not changed too much... Everything is going well. We wanted to continue the same way."

Delhi end SMAT campaign with win over Uttarakhand



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Ahmedabad

Yash Dhull and skipper Nitish Rana scored fine half-centuries as Delhi finished third in Group D, behind Jharkhand and Rajasthan who advanced in the premier domestic T20 competition.

Both Dhull (52 off 37) and Rana (51 off 29) had a productive tournament but the team failed to qualify for Super 8 stage after a disappointing first leg of the Ranji Trophy.Delhi made 162 for seven in 20 overs before limiting Uttarakhand to 144 for seven. Prashant Chopra (54 off 50 balls) top scored for Uttarakhand.

Leg-spinner Suyash Sharma and Digvesh Singh Rath

two wickets each for Delhi that stemmed the flow of runs.

Jharkhand topped Group D after a 36-run win over Rajasthan, maintaining their unbeaten run in the group stage.

Jharkhand hammered 215 for five courtesy quickfire contributions from Virat Singh (69 off 36), captain Kushagra (55 off 37) and Robin Minz 58 off 27). Rajasthan could only manage 179 in 19.2 overs.

Brief scores:

Delhi 162/7 in 20 overs (Yash Dhull 52, Nitish Rana 51; Agrim Tiwari 2/18). Uttarakhand 144/7 in 20 overs (Prashant Chopra 54; Suyash Sharma 2/27, Digvesh Rath

2/22). **Jharkhand** 215/5 in 20 overs (Virat Singh 69, Robin Minz 58; Kukna Ajai Singh 1/23). Rajasthan 179/10 in 19.2 overs (Karan Lamba 52; Sushant Mishra 3/21).

Yash Thakur stars as Vidarbha beat Andhra by 19 runs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Lucknow

Vidarbha pacer Yash Thakur halted Andhra in its tracks by grabbing four wickets to guide his side to a 19-run victory in a Group A final-round match of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy here on Monday.

Andhra, who have already qualified for the next stage along with Mumbai from the group, failed to overhaul Vidarbha's 154/8, with the 26-year-old right-hand bowler returning excellent figures of 4/22 to restrict the opponents to 135/9.

Thakur, who also had a five-wicket haul in an earlier match, ended his SMAT campaign with 18 scalps.

Vidarbha's innings revolved around Aman Mokhade's 50 and keeper-batter Akshay Wadkar, who scored a 33-ball 41 with Andhra



pacer Satyanarayana Raju's 4/26 playing a big role in restricting the opponents to a below-average score.

However, Andhra fared even worse when they came out to bat, losing three wickets for 31 runs

including India player Srikar Bharat for a golden duck. Pyla Avinash scored a 37-ball 44 but that was not enough as seven players could only manage single-digit scores.

In another match, young Assam pacer Sadek Hussain returned a four-wicket haul on way to defeating Kerala by five wickets.

Brief scores:

Vidarbha 154/8 in 20 overs (Aman Mokhade 50, Akshay Wadkar 41; Satyanarayana Raju 4/26) beat Andhra 135/9 in 20 overs (Pyla Avinash 44; Yash Thakur 4/22) by 19 runs.

Kerala 101 in 19.4 overs (Sadek Hussain 4/19, Abdul Aij Kuraishi 2/16, Avinov Choudhury 2/15) lost to Assam 105/5 in 18.5 overs (Pradyun Saikia 41 not out; KM Asif 2/22) by 5 wickets.

Bihar humble UP by 6 wickets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kolkata

India's T20 specialist Rinku Singh failed to fire with the bat as Bihar humbled Uttar Pradesh by six wickets in their Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy Group B match on Monday.

Opener Piyush Singh shone with a 54-ball 57 to help Bihar complete a chase of 145 with four balls to spare after Mangal Mahrouf returned excellent figures of 3/12 in four overs to help his team restrict UP to 144 for six in the allotted 20 overs. Mahrouf, who bowls medium pace, was well supported by skipper Sakibul Gani (1/20) and Sakib Hussain (1/31), both picking up

a wicket each in their full quota of overs but Amod Yadav was expensive as he leaked 50 runs for a solitary success. Batting at number seven, Prashant Veer top-scored for UP with an unbeaten, counter-attacking 40 off 26 balls after IPL star Rinku was dismissed for a 25-ball 19 by Mahrouf at the Jadavpur University Campus ground.

Middle-order batter Sameer Rizvi was shown the door by Mahrouf after a 17-ball 22, while pacer Shivam Mavi remained not out on 13 off 12 balls.

Had it not been for the 50-run seventh-wicket stand between Veer and Mavi, UP would have probably ended up with less than what they

eventually got.

Replying with the bat, Bihar were off to a great start as the opening du of Piyush and wicketkeeper Ayush Loharuka (36 off 36 balls) added 83 runs in 11.3 overs to lay the foundation for a successful chase.

Piyush hit four boundaries and a six during his stay in the middle, before Bipin Saurabh provided the finishing touches with a breezy, unbeaten 26 off 16 balls.

Prince Yadav was the most successful bowler for Uttar Pradesh, finishing with figures of 3/24 in four overs.

Bihar won the toss and opted to bowl first, a decision that worked well for them.

Brief scores:

Uttar Pradesh 144/6 in 20 overs (Prashant Veer 40 not out; Mangal Mahrouf 3/12) lost to Bihar 145/4 in 19.2 overs (Piyush Singh 57; Prince Yadav 3/24) by 6 wickets.


Maharashtra 161/7 in 20 overs (Rahul Tripathi 83; Vasuki Koushik 3/20) beat Goa 146 all out in 19.3 overs (Lalit Yadav 49; Jalaj Saxena 3/22, Tanay Sanghvi 3/23, Vicky Ostwal 3/27) by 15 runs.

Hyderabad 146/8 in 20 overs (Pragnay Reddy 43; Jagit Singh 3/36, Chiragvir Dhindsa 2/18, Sandeep Sharma 2/33) lost to Chandigarh 147/6 in 19.5 overs (Arjun Azad 63, Shivam Bhambri 42; Chinntla Rakshan Readdi 2/36, Chama V Milind 2/27) by 4 wickets.



Sambalpur Municipal Corporation
Sambalu
Notice No. 14352 Dt. 06.12.2025
Email id: sambalpur.mud@mcin

'e' Procurement NOTICE.
Bid Reference No.: 22/SMC-SBP/2025-26
Tender ID No.: 2025.ORDUB.122594
The Municipal Commissioner on behalf of Municipal Corporation, Sambalpur invites tenders in Single Cover System. Bid documents consisting of specification the Schedule of Quantities and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen the Govt. Website i.e. <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>
1. Number of Civil works: 41 (Forty One) numbers
2. Estimated Costs: 3.03 lakhs & 42.27 lakhs
3. Period of completion: As per NIT
4. Date and time of availability of the bid documents in the portal: From 11.00 AM of 09.12.2025 To 05.00 PM of 18.12.2025
5. Last Date/Time for receipt of bids in the portal: 05.00 PM of 18.12.2025
6. Bids will be opened on: 11.00 AM of Dt. 19.12.2025
7. Name and address of the officer inviting bid: Municipal Commissioner, Sambalpur Municipal Corporation, Sambalpur
Commissioner
Sambalpur Municipal Corporation
OIPR-13122/11/0150/2526



Odisha State Road Transport Corporation
Paribahan Bhawan, Sachivalaya Marg,
Bhubaneswar, Odisha 751009
Email: osrtc@od.gov.in; Phone No.: 0674-2530908

Notice No. 14517
Date: 06.12.2025
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) FOR EMPANELMENT OF AGENCY/ OPERATOR FOR SELECTION OF AN AGENCY TO SUPPLY AND DELIVER BULK FUELS TO OSRTC.
Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC) invites Proposal from interested agencies for the above-mentioned RFP. Please refer to the RFP document for details.
The RFP document shall be available from 08/12/2025 onwards in the following web portal: www.osrtc.org and <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any further intimation (i.e. Corrigendum/ Addendum/ Responses to the queries/ Clarifications) shall be uploaded in the above website only.
Applicants are required to submit a duly filled RFP Proposal as per the prescribed formats online on or before 26/12/2025 by 05:00 PM. The RFP Proposals received shall be opened at 04:00 PM on 29/12/2025.
In case of any queries/clarifications, E-mail at osrtc@od.gov.in
OSRTC reserves the right to accept or reject bid process without assigning any reasons thereof.
General Manager (Operation)
Odisha State Road Transport Corporation
OIPR-38002/11/0032/2526