

Campaign Curtain Falls in Punjab: AAP, Cong, SAD, BJP Set for High-Stakes Panchayat Polls

1.36-cr voters to decide fate of candidates as parties clash over development, governance, and political revival

MONIKA MALIK ■ Chandigarh

A charged political season in rural Punjab drew to a close on Friday evening, with a frenetic burst of rallies, accusations, development claims and counterclaims marking the final hours of campaigning for Sunday's Zila Parishad and Block Samiti elections. With 1.36 crore rural voters — over 63 percent of the state's electorate — set to decide the fate of 9,500-plus candidates, all major parties ended their outreach with sharpened messaging, unmistakable urgency and an eye firmly on the larger battle of 2027.

The polls, spread across 23 Zila Parishads and 154 Block Samitis, are widely being viewed as a test of ground strength for the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), a recovery opportunity for the Congress amid internal churn, and a revival opening for both the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Campaigning built up over the past week, but it was Friday's final push — packed with roadshows, village meetings, social-media blitzes and aggressive last-minute appeals — that brought the tone and temperature of Punjab's rural politics sharply into focus.

AAP, SAD, Congress, and BJP framed their closing arguments around rural development, performance records and the blame

narratives they hope will stick, as each party sought to convince voters that Sunday's ballot is not merely about panchayats but about the direction of the state itself.

AAP STAKES ITS CAMPAIGN ON PERFORMANCE AND PROMISES

The ruling AAP sought to convert its governance record into an electoral shield, with Ministers fanning out across districts on Friday. Cabinet Ministers Aman Arora and Harbhajan Singh ETO canvassed in Jandiala Guru, while Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema addressed gatherings in Dirba, repeating the party's familiar pitch: delivery over rhetoric, execution over promises.

Cheema reminded voters of free power, job appointments, and welfare schemes. "Opponents mocked us when we promised 300 units of free electricity," he told villagers, "but today more than 90 percent households are getting zero bills. We have given thousands of jobs, and we continue to deliver on our promises."

Yet the ruling party did not end its campaign without controversy. A video of AAP MLA Narinder Kaur Bharaj alleging that an independent candidate in Jhaneri village had previously sought protection from AAP functionaries despite being linked to poppy husk and liquor trade triggered sharp reactions. The BJP circulated

the clip online with the charge that "MLA admits her people are selling drugs", signaling how drug politics remains a combustible element in Punjab's rural campaigns.

AAP leaders also leaned on development-linked messaging through social media. A video posted by villagers of Thui in Patiala thanking the State Government for releasing Rs 50 lakh each to 149 villages associated with the legacy of Guru Tegh Bahadur was widely amplified, even as Opposition parties accused AAP of distributing "poll-timed development assurances". Sources indicated that several villages were told that their grants could be enhanced if AAP candidates won by large margins — a charge the party denied.

SAD LEANS HEAVILY ON THE PARKASH SINGH BADAL LEGACY

SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal spent Thursday in Gidderbaha and Friday in Bathinda and Ferozepur, leaning on what has become his central campaign line — the development credentials of former Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal.

At multiple stops, Sukhbir reminded voters that "the maximum development in Punjab happened under Parkash Singh Badal", listing water-logging removal in Gidderbaha, irrigation channels, free power for tubewells, universities, thermal plants, cancer

institutes, and welfare schemes such as Atta-Dal, Shagun, and old-age pension.

He also attacked both AAP and Congress, challenging them to name "one major development work" they had done for Punjab's rural poor. SAD leaders claimed that the ruling government rejected nomination papers of many of their candidates, and Sukhbir asked voters to "break the arrogance of AAP" by voting in large numbers for the Akali Dal.

BJP PAIRS CENTRAL SCHEMES WITH CORRUPTION AND MINING ATTACKS

The BJP's rural pitch revolved around two planks — Central Government support for Punjab's villages, and the party's attacks on illegal mining, which it claims remains rampant under AAP's watch. Working president and Pathankot MLA Ashwani Sharma campaigned across rural belts on Thursday and Friday, accusing the State Government of ignoring the issues raised by villagers. Sharma pointed to posters in Anandpur Sahib demanding action against mining, adding that "the government must answer on real issues."

At the state level, senior BJP leader and former Minister Manoranjan Kalra accused the Mann Government of failing to produce a rural development report card in nearly four years. Addressing the media in Chandigarh, Kalra said that AAP leaders had held "over

ten press conferences without presenting even one major rural development achievement", adding that core issues such as water scarcity, poor roads, and incomplete projects had not been addressed.

Challenging Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann directly, Kalra asked him to "name just one major achievement for Punjab's villages". He also listed unfulfilled manifesto promises including re-enacting the Sir Chhotu Ram Rent Act, providing aid to labourers after crop loss, deposits for farmers' daughters, village-level Aam Aadmi Clinics and education loans for farmers' children.

CONGRESS CAMPAIGNS UNDER PRESSURE, BUT PUSHES BACK

Even as internal tensions continued to simmer within its Punjab unit, the Congress attempted to project unity on the campaign trail. Leaders insisted that the party would perform well despite the alleged rejection of many of its candidates' nomination papers.

AICC secretary in-charge of Punjab Ravindra Dalvi said that the party was confident of a strong showing. "The State Government is using the administrative machinery, but all our leaders are campaigning," he said. Senior leaders like Bhupesh Baghel reviewed strategy with Punjab Congress president Amarinder Singh

Warring earlier this week.

The Congress entered the campaign battling self-inflicted turbulence after Dr Navjot Kaur Sidhu, wife of Navjot Singh Sidhu, alleged ticket-selling within the party and claimed that anybody wanting to be projected as chief ministerial face would need Rs 500 crore. The party suspended her, while Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa sent her a legal notice. Dalvi, however, told workers that "infighting was a problem in the past but not anymore".

Despite the internal drama, Congress leaders insisted that local body elections favour strong local faces rather than state-level stars, and hoped that he polls will help reposition the party as the principal challenger to AAP ahead of 2027.

THE ELECTORAL BATTLEFIELD

Across Punjab's countryside, 19,181 booths have been set up for Sunday's elections. Of 357 Zila Parishad constituencies, polling will be held in 342, with 15 candidates already elected unopposed — 12 in Tarn Taran and three in Amritsar, all from AAP.

In block samitis, 181 of 2,863 seats are uncontested, with AAP dominating these too. In total, 196 candidates have been elected unopposed, most from the ruling party. For the remaining seats, 9,579 candidates are in the fray. The counting will be held on December 17.

SEC Enforces Strict Police Neutrality, Stations IAS/IPS Observers for Fair Polls

PNS ■ Chandigarh

A sweeping set of directives and deployments marked the State Election Commission's preparations for December 14 Zila Parishad and Panchayat Samiti polls, as the Commission simultaneously ordered strict police neutrality and stationed senior civil and police observers across the State to safeguard the integrity of the fiercely contested rural elections.

Triggered partly by the Punjab and Haryana High Court directive and partly by recent controversies that dented public confidence, the SEC's twin actions underlined its resolve to enforce a transparent and violence-free polling process.

Acting on the High Court's

instruction, the SEC issued a firm advisory to the Director General of Police (DGP), directing that every police official involved in election duty must maintain absolute impartiality. The Commission warned that any lapse — real or perceived — could undermine public faith, especially in polls contested overtly on party lines.

The SEC referred pointedly to the recent viral audio clip allegedly involving a senior Patiala police officer, noting that such episodes had "disturbed public perception of neutrality" and warranted corrective intervention. It instructed all SHOs, DSPs and field officers to respond to complaints without political bias, avoid any presence at political events unless deployed for security, and ensure no voter, candidate or

supporter faces intimidation or unlawful detention.

DSPs have been asked to scrutinize vague or open-ended FIRs that could be misused against political opponents. Police teams must intensify patrolling, erect nakas, prevent impersonation, seize weapons, and maintain strict oversight in SC-dominated and other sensitive polling areas. The Commission has also mandated round-the-clock security for polling parties, EVMs and election material at storage centres until counting is completed on December 17.

Complementing the policing framework, the SEC has placed IAS and senior PCS officers as Election Observers in every district. These observers — stationed from December 12 until results are

declared — will monitor field conditions, ensure compliance with Commission instructions, and report directly to the SEC as required.

To further reinforce neutrality, six senior IPS officers have been designated as Police Observers in key districts including Patiala, Sangrur, Barnala, Tarn Taran, Rupnagar, Jalandhar, Kapurthala and Moga. Candidates may contact these observers directly if they believe intervention is needed.

With all preparations declared complete, the SEC has sought to assure voters that every mechanism — administrative, policing and supervisory — is now in place to ensure that Punjab's rural electorate can cast its vote freely, safely and without fear.

Election panel Orders Airtight Ballot Security as Channi Alleges 10% Extra Ballots Printed to 'Rig' Rural Polls

MONIKA MALIK ■ Chandigarh

Concerns over ballot manipulation in Zila Parishad and Panchayat Samiti elections escalated on Friday, prompting the State Election Commission (SEC) to issue an urgent, statewide directive mandating airtight custody and verification of every ballot paper. The move followed allegations by former Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, who accused the State Government of printing and distributing 10 percent excess ballots to "rig rural booths" through pre-marked votes.

Channi, campaigning in Kharar, alleged that the ruling party had "already handed over" surplus ballot papers to its constituency in-charges, who would pre-stamp them and insert them into boxes using "friendly BLOs and identified absentee voters". He claimed that lists had been prepared at each booth naming 100 voters who no longer reside in their villages — allegedly to facilitate proxy voting with these pre-marked ballots.

Charging the government with "booth-looting preparations", Channi said that Congress would resist any attempt to subvert the

mandate and take action against those involved if such malpractice succeeded.

Amid the political heat and rising apprehensions after a report of alleged fake ballot printing in Ambala, the SEC moved quickly to reinforce safeguards. In a detailed advisory to all Deputy Commissioners-cum-District Electoral Officers, the Commission ordered watertight documentation, secure storage, and strict issuance protocols for ballot papers at every stage.

The SEC reiterated that only authorized presses may print ballots, which carry serial numbers on both sheets and counterfoils. Presiding Officers must sign each ballot's backside before issuance, tally used and unused papers meticulously, display empty ballot boxes before sealing, and ensure secure transport to receipt centres. It also directed heightened scrutiny during counting and mandated protected storage of all counted ballots thereafter.

While political accusations continue, the SEC underscored that no unauthorized ballot must enter the polling process under any circumstance, placing full responsibility on district and poll officers to enforce the safeguards.

Punjab CM bats for strategic tie up with UK

PNS ■ Chandigarh

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday batted for strategic tie up between the state and United Kingdom (UK) for further developing the state as a hub of investment and manufacturing.

During a meeting with a high-level delegation from the UK High Commission in Chandigarh, led by the Deputy High Commissioner Alba Smeriglio, Mann underscored the need for further cementing business partnerships, with both sides expressing strong commitment to deepen ties. He highlighted Mohali as one of the best-organized cities globally and emphasized Punjab's robust potential to emerge as a manufacturing powerhouse. Noting the eagerness of Punjab's students to pursue opportunities in the UK

BRIEFS

HOME MINISTER AMIT SHAH TO UNVEIL EX-PM VAJPAYEE'S METAL STATUE IN PANCHKULA ON DEC 24



Panchkula: Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Friday said that on December 24, on the eve of the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister and Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Union Home Minister Amit Shah will unveil Vajpayee's statue at Atal Park in MDC Sector 1, Panchkula. Shah will also participate in other events organized in Panchkula, Saini added. Talking to Reporters after inspecting the arrangements for the event at Atal Park, Saini said that after unveiling the 41 feet tall metal statue of Vajpayee, Shah will inaugurate a mega blood donation camp at Atal Park. He will also inspect the exhibition set up at the state BJP office, "Panchkamal." He said that Home Minister Shah will then take the salute at the passing-out parade of about 5000 police personnel at the Tau Devi Lal Sports Stadium, Sector 3. Shah will also attend the "Veer Bal Diwas" programme to be held the same day as the chief guest.

HARYANA CM LAUNCHES ESSAY WRITING CONTEST FOR SCHOOLS TO MARK 'VEER BAL DIWAS'

Chandigarh: Reaffirming the government's commitment to honouring the sacrifice of Sahibzadas Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Friday virtually inaugurated an essay writing competition across schools in the state to commemorate 'Veer Bal Diwas'. "The initiative aims to ensure that the message of the Sahibzadas' martyrdom, courage and steadfast commitment to truth reaches every child in Haryana," he added. During the programme, lakhs of students joined the virtual event from different districts. The Chief Minister interacted with them and encouraged them to reflect on the inspirational lives of the young martyrs. Saini said that reading and understanding the Sahibzadas' story reinforces clarity of purpose and strengthens determination among students. He added that the competition is being held in four languages, Hindi, English, Punjabi and Sanskrit, so that children can express their thoughts with ease and showcase their abilities through well-crafted essays. He conveyed his best wishes to all participants.

COLD WEATHER CONDITIONS PREVAIL IN PUNJAB HARYANA

Chandigarh: Cold weather conditions continued to prevail in Punjab and Haryana, with Chandigarh recording 6.8 degrees Celsius, two degrees below normal on Friday, the Meteorological office said. In Punjab, Amritsar registered a low of 5.9 degrees Celsius, one degree above normal, Ludhiana 6.4 degrees Celsius, Patiala 6.9 degrees Celsius, Pathankot 6.6 degrees Celsius and Bathinda 6 degrees Celsius, the MeT department added. Faridkot and Gurdaspur recorded their respective minimums of 5.2 and 7.2 degrees Celsius, it said. Chandigarh, the joint capital of the two states, experienced cold weather at 6.8 degrees Celsius, two degrees below normal. In Haryana, Ambala's minimum was 8.5 degrees Celsius while Hisar registered a low of 6.2 degrees Celsius, two degrees below normal. Kamal recorded a low of 7 degrees Celsius while Narnaul's minimum was 6.5 degrees Celsius. Rohtak, Bhiwani and Sirsa registered their minimum temperatures of 7.8, 8.5 and 7.8 degrees Celsius, respectively. **PUNJAB CHOSEN FOR EARLY ROLLOUT OF ENHANCED TOEFL IBT TEST**

Chandigarh: The global assessment organisation, ETS, that conducts the TOEFL iBT test, on Friday, organised a "TOEFL Experience Days" event here to share details of the enhanced version of the exam, set to be launched on January 21, 2026. Educational Testing Service (ETS) Executive Director (Global Partnerships and Sales Management) Sidnei Rodrigues de Souza said Punjab is among the few regions worldwide selected for early information on the updated test. "We are updating both the content and overall flow of the TOEFL to strengthen its connection with real-world communication. The test will also include adaptive questions based on each test taker's proficiency level. AI-powered scoring will make evaluation more precise," he said. He added that Punjab has been chosen because of the region's strong interest in overseas education. ETS said Chandigarh and Punjab are key markets for its operations in northern India. The organisation currently runs three active test centres in Chandigarh, which handle a high number of candidates and ensure smooth service delivery. During the event, educators and advisors explored the new test format, the principles behind the redesign, and updates to scoring and preparation.

ANIL VIJ ORDERS SUSPENSION OF ASI FOR DELAY IN RECORDING VICTIM'S STATEMENT

Chandigarh: Haryana Energy, Transport, and Labour Minister Anil Vij on Friday directed the immediate suspension of an Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) for delaying the recording of a victim's statement in a case of abetment to suicide. The suspension orders were given by the Minister while chairing the during the District Grievance Redressal Committee meeting in Kaithal. He also directed the formation of a committee under the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) to thoroughly investigate the matter and submit a report within 10 days. In a separate fraud case transferred to Kamal and subsequently closed after a local probe, Vij ordered an inquiry by the Panchkula Police Commissioner. He sternly directed the officers to avoid negligence in resolving public grievances, warning of strict action for any lapses. In the meeting on Friday, 17 cases were tabled before the Minister, including 10 pending and seven new complaints. In a complaint, a couple reported that while one accused had been arrested in their daughter's abetment-to-suicide case, no action was taken against others. During the hearing, it emerged that the ASI at Pundri police station delayed recording the victim's hospital statement, prompting Vij to order the officer's suspension.

SACRED HEART GIRLS CELEBRATE STATES OF INDIA



Chandigarh: A burst of colour, culture, and flavours swept through Sacred Heart Senior Secondary School, Sector-26, as Class IV girls arrived in the traditional attire of states ranging from Punjab and Haryana to Tamil Nadu, Odisha, West Bengal and more. Carrying signature dishes from their home states, they turned the classrooms into a miniatu

PHYSICAL POSSESSION NOTICE

Branch Office : ICICI Bank Limited Plot No-23, Shol Tower, 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005

The Authorised ICICI Bank Officer under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued Demand Notice to the borrower(s) mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice.

Having failed to repay the amount, the Notice is issued to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described below, by exercising powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property. Any dealings with the property will be subject to charges of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower(s)/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Physical Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs)	Name of Branch
1.	M/s. Balkar Singh Commission Agent/ Balwinder Singh/ Rajwanti Kaur/ 129805001270	Address-1: Commercial Property Bearing Booth No. 139, Size 10 Feet X 23 Feet= 230 Sq. Feet, Situated At New Grain/ Sabji Mandi, Batala, Tehsil Batala & District Gurdaspur, Punjab, Admeasuring An Area- 230 Sq. Feet Bounded By: North: As Per Sale Deed, South: As Per Sale Deed, East: As Per Sale Deeds, West: As Per Sale Deed/ Address- 2: Commercial Property Bearing Booth No. 138, Size 10 Feet X 23 Feet= 230 Sq. Feet, Situated At New Grain/ Sabji Mandi, Batala, Tehsil Batala & District Gurdaspur, Punjab, Admeasuring An Area- 230 Sq. Feet Bounded By: North: As Per Sale Deed, South: As Per Sale Deed, East: As Per Sale Deed, West: As Per Sale Deed/ Address- 3: Commercial Property Bearing Booth No. 136, Size 10 Feet X 23 Feet= 230 Sq. Feet, Situated At New Grain/ Sabji Mandi, Batala, Tehsil Batala & District Gurdaspur, Punjab, Admeasuring An Area- 230 Sq. Feet Bounded By: North: As Per Sale Deed, South: As Per Sale Deed, East: As Per Sale Deed, West: As Per Sale Deed/ Date Of Symbolic Possession- December 10, 2025.	January 22, 2025 Rs. 1,01,57,557.98/-	Batala, Gurdaspur

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/guarantor(s) is/are hereby issued a 30 day Notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold after 30 days from the date of publishing this Notice, as per the provisions under Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date: December 10, 2025
Place: Batala & Gurdaspur

Sincerely Authorised Officer,
For ICICI Bank Ltd.

STATE BANK OF INDIA

Home Loan Centre, Ist Floor, Shaheed Udham Singh Chowk, Ferozpur

Possession Notice [Under Rule 8(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002]

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised officer of the State Bank of India, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (Act No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice to borrower(s)/ guarantor(s), on the date mentioned hereunder, calling upon the borrower(s)/guarantor(s), to repay the amount mentioned in the respective demand notice, within 30 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower(s)/guarantor(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower (s)/guarantor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Physical Possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under sub section(4) of section 13 of the Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on the date mentioned against below accounts.

The borrower(s)/guarantor(s) in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of the State Bank of India, Home Loan Centre, Ferozpur for an amount being less amount of recovery made, if any other charges/expenses, costs, thereon.

The Borrower's/Guarantors attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)	Description of the Movable/Immovable Assets	Date of Demand Notice	Date of Physical Possession	Amount Outstanding
1. Sh Baldev Singh S/o Sh Ajit Singh, Resident of Street No. 21 (R), Dogar Basti, Faridkot (Borrower)	Residential House, constructed on plot, measuring 102 Sq Yards, i.e. 100/106th share of land measuring 17 Kanal 11 Marla Khasra No. 550, Khata No. 7157/17-11	16.06.2025 Published on 08.07.2025	09.12.2025	Rs. 14,86,329.89 as on 16.06.2025, less recovery if any, plus further interest.
2. Sh Gurdit Singh S/o Sh Gulzar Singh Resident of Gali No 1, Near Baba Nagar Public School, New Harindra Nagar, Faridkot (Guarantor)	Agward Vania Ka Faridkot vide Title Deed No. 4250 dated 27.03.2017 in the name of Sh Baldev Singh S/o Sh Ajit Singh and bounded as East: 15' Rasla, West: 15' Hardev Singh, North: 60' Inder Kumar			other charges and expenses hereon.

South: 60' Seller

Date: 13.12.2026 PLACE: FARIDKOT AUTHORISED OFFICER

UCO BANK

(A Govt. of India Undertaking)

Branch Office: Batala (0919)

LOCKER NOTICE

It is hereby notified that certain Bank clients who had taken Bank lockers on rent in the Batala Branch of our Bank have not responded to the Bank's Notices, at the last known address for operating/surrendering the Locker/clearing arrears of rent. Accordingly in terms of Locker Agreement for hiring of the locker duly accepted by the hirers, the Bank may break open / take repossession by breaking open the lockers of such hirers to check the contents kept therein for security reasons/realize its dues, charges and expenses by public or private sale of the part or whole of the contents of the locker and hold the balance of the contents or proceeds of sales at the entire risk and responsibility and cost of the hirer(s). Though it is not obligatory on the part of the Bank to give such Public Notice yet it is being done for the interest of clients/hirers.

Sr. No.	Name of Lessee	Locker No.	Address	Overdue Amount
1.	Surinder Pal Advocate	AA 070	Civil Court Batala	5,310/- + Other Charges thereon
2.	Balbir Kang S/o Raj Kang	AA 076	VPO Kaliah, P.O. Batala	6,400/- + Other Charges thereon
3.	Jagjivan Kumar S/o Hari Chand Aggarwal	AA 038	Satguru Enclave Mann Farm Amritsar, Jalandhar Road, Batala.	5,310/- + Other Charges thereon
4.	Surinder Kumar Pardeep Kumar	BA 161	I/s, Nehru Gate, Batala	5,310/- + Other Charges thereon

Contact Number: 98550-93330
Dated : 12.12.2025 Place : Batala Branch Head

punjab national bank

...the name you can BANK upon!

HMT, Pinjore (293900), E-mail: , M.: 99889-50226

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the following persons have availed locker facilities from Bank.

Sr. No.	Locker No.	Name of Locker Hirer(s)	Address	Amount Dues	Amount Dues from
1.	AEO0409	Jagdish Chand Sehgal and Kantla Sehgal	2858, Sector 37-C, Chandigarh	Rs. 10,100/-	01.06.2021
2.	AB00153	Sudarshan Kumar and Renu	H. No. 172, Sector 6, Panchkula	Rs. 21,300/-	20.04.2021
3.	AA00066	Tarsem Chand and Surjit Kaur	1582 B-2, Vishwakarma Colony, Near Chona Chowk, Pinjore	Rs. 12,000/-	03.10.2020
4.	AB00100	Anil Kumar and Krishna C/O Unison Furniture, Near Rohtak Hotel, Pinjore	R/O Unison Furniture, Near Rohtak Hotel, Pinjore	Rs. 12,500/-	13.08.2020

These persons have failed and neglected in making payments towards the locker rentals to the Bank or have not used from last 3 Years. The Bank has issued the notices to them via Letter to their last known recorded address with the Bank, advising them to make the repayment of locker rentals or operate the locker if not operated from last 3 Years.

This is final notice to notify that if the above mentioned persons fails to pay the arrears of locker rentals to the Bank / Operate Locker on or before 17.03.2026, the Bank shall break and open the locker at locker hirer's risk and responsibility, as per the Banking Law and Practice and take inventory of items, if any, lying in locker and keep the same in Bank's custody until such time the arrears of rent along with interest, expenses, charges etc. are paid to the Bank.

The Bank reserved the rights to adjust the cash, if any found in the locker against the outstanding dues of the above persons to the Bank and it shall be treated as proper discharge on claims, shall be entertained thereafter in the regards. For the balance dues of locker rental, the Bank reserves its right to proceed legally against the locker hirer/s for recovery of its dues.

Date: 12.12.2025 Place: HMT, Pinjore AUTHORIZED OFFICER

ICICI Home Finance

Corporate Office: ICICI Home Finance Company Limited ICICI HFC Tower, (Andheri- Kuria Road, Andheri (East), Mumbai- 400059, India

Branch Office: 2nd floor, SF-384, Opposite Vodafone Office, Central Mall 32, Mall Road, Amritsar (Punjab) - 143001

[See proviso to rule 8(6)] Notice for sale of immovable assets

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of ICICI Home Finance Company Ltd., will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is", as per the brief particulars given hereunder;

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Legal Heirs. Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured assets/ with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price/ Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of Auction	One Day Before Auction Date	SARFAESI Stage
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)	(I)
1.	Narinder Kumar (Borrower) Sonia Sharma (Co-Borrower) Lan No. LHPTK00001472109	Property At K No. 25R/20/2 (0-18), Kwt No. 59, Khtni 353, 25R /21/1 (0-0) 26r/15/3 (1-11) Located Near Village Naushera, Murjarian Road Near Pind Chowa, Teh. Dinanagar, Distt. Gurdaspur- 145001	Rs. 5,50, 862,04/-	Rs. 46,27, 194/-	December 22, 2025 11:00 AM	December 29, 2025 11:00 AM	December 26, 2025 Before 05:00 PM	Symbolic Possession

The online auction will be conducted on website (URL Link-https://BidDeal.in) of our auction agency ValueTrust Capital Services Private Limited. The Mortgagors/ notice are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till December 26, 2025 before 05:00 PM else these secured assets will be sold as per above schedule. The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) RTGS/ Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at ICICI Home Finance Company Limited Branch Office Address Mentioned on top of the article on or before December 26, 2025 before 04:00 PM. The Prospective Bidder(s) must also submit signed copy of Registration Form & Bid Terms and Conditions form at ICICI Home Finance Company Limited Branch Office Address Mentioned on top of the article on or before December 26, 2025 before 05:00 PM. Earnest Money Deposit Demand Draft (DD) should be from a Nationalized/Scheduled Bank in favor of "ICICI Home Finance Company Ltd. - Auction" payable at the branch office address mentioned on top of the article.

For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Home Finance Company Limited on 9920807300.

The Authorized Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit https://www.icicifh.com/

Date: December 13, 2025 Authorized Officer, "ICICI Home Finance Company Limited", Place: Gurdaspur CIN Number:- U65922MH1999PLC120106

PUBLIC NOTICE

BEFORE SH. NAVEEN, DANICS ASSISTANT ESTATE OFFICER, EXERCISING THE POWERS OF THE ESTATE OFFICER, U.T., CHANDIGARH.

SUBJECT: Transfer of ownership in respect of Residential Site No.2395, Sector 35-C, Chandigarh (RPL-15338), to the extent of 25% share of Late Sh. Joga Singh in the name of (i) Smt. Kuldeep Kaur W/o Late Sh. Kuldeep Singh, (ii) Sh. Balpreet Singh S/o Late Sh. Kuldeep Singh and (iii) Sh. Indevjit Singh S/o Late Sh. Kuldeep Singh, on the basis of Regd. Will dated 23.04.1998 of Late Sh. Joga Singh and Intestate Death of Late Sh. Kuldeep Singh S/o Late Sh. Joga Singh (beneficiary of Regd. Will dated 23.04.1998).

It is notified for the information of the general public and all concerned that as per record of this office, Sh. Joga Singh was the co-owner of Residential Site No.2395, Sector 35-C, Chandigarh to the extent of 50% share. It has been informed by Smt. Kuldeep Kaur & others that Sh. Joga Singh has expired on 03.11.1999, leaving behind the following legal heirs:- (1) Smt. Charan Kaur (Wife-Died) (2) Sh. Sohag Singh (Son) (3) Ms. Gurpreet Kaur (Daughter) (4) Sh. Jagmohan Singh (Son) (5) Sh. Kuldeep Singh (Son-Died) Legal heirs of Late Sh. Kuldeep Singh (1) Smt. Kuldeep Kaur (Wife) (2) Sh. Indevjit Singh (Son) (3) Sh. Balpreet Singh (Son) Now, Smt. Kuldeep Kaur W/o Late Sh. Kuldeep Singh, Sh. Indevjit Singh S/o Late Sh. Kuldeep Singh and Sh. Balpreet Singh S/o Late Sh. Kuldeep Singh have applied for the transfer of ownership in respect of residential Site No.2395, Sector 35-C, Chandigarh, to the extent of 25% share held by Late Sh. Joga Singh, on the basis of Regd. Will dated 23.04.1998 and Intestate Death of Late Sh. Kuldeep Singh (beneficiary of Regd. Will dated 23.04.1998) If anybody has any information about any other legal heirs of the deceased other than mentioned above, the same may be intimated to the Estate Officer, U.T., Chandigarh immediately. If anybody has any objection upon the mutation of the said share in the said property, in favour of the above named applicant(s), then he/she/they may furnish the same in writing supported with affidavit duly attested by Magistrate/Notary in the office of the undersigned within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which the said share in the said property will be mutated in favour of the legal heirs of above said beneficiaries and no further claim whatsoever shall be entertained at any later stage.

SH. NAVEEN, DANICS ASSISTANT ESTATE OFFICER EXERCISING THE POWERS OF ESTATE OFFICER, U.T., CHANDIGARH

PUBLIC NOTICE

Before SH. NAVEEN, DANICS, Assistant Estate Officer, Exercising the powers of the Estate Officer, U.T., Chandigarh.

Subject: Transfer of ownership in respect of Residential Site No. 364, Sector 32-A, Chandigarh (RPL-17622), to the extent of 50% share of Late Smt. Bishan Devi in the name of Sh. Surjit Singh Meelu S/o Late Sh. Dilbagh Rai, on the basis of Regd. Will dated 01.11.1993 of Late Smt. Bishan Devi.

It is notified for the information of the general public and all concerned that as per record of this office, Smt. Bishan Devi was the co-owner of Residential Site No. 364, Sector 32-A, Chandigarh, to the extent of 50% share. It has been informed by Sh. Surjit Singh Meelu that Smt. Bishan Devi expired on 07.01.2015, leaving behind the following legal heirs:-

Sr. No.	Name of the Legal Heir	Relation with deceased
1.	Sh. Dilbagh Rai	Husband (Died)
2.	Sh. Surjit Singh Meelu	Son
3.	Smt. Anvash Devi	Daughter
4.	Sh. Charanjit Singh Meelu	Son (Died)

Legal heirs of Late Sh. Charanjit Singh Meelu

1.	Smt. Rajinder Kaur	Wife
2.	Sh. Naginder Singh	Son

Now, Sh. Surjit Singh Meelu S/o Late Sh. Dilbagh Rai has applied for the transfer of ownership in respect of residential Site No. 364, Sector 32-A, Chandigarh, to the extent of 50% share held by Late Smt. Bishan Devi, on the basis of Regd. Will dated 01.11.1993. If anybody has any information about any other legal heirs of the deceased other than mentioned above, the same may be intimated to the Estate Officer, U.T., Chandigarh immediately. If anybody has any objection upon the mutation of the said share in the said property, in favour of the above named applicant, then he/she/they may furnish the same in writing supported with affidavit duly attested by Magistrate/Notary in the office of the undersigned within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which the said share in the said property will be mutated accordingly in the name of above said beneficiaries and no further claim whatsoever shall be entertained at any later stage.

Naveen, DANICS, Assistant Estate Officer, Exercising the powers of Estate Officer, U.T., Chandigarh

PUBLIC NOTICE

That Sh. Purnee Kumar S/o Sh. Harna Singh and Smt. Sapna Devi W/o Sh. Purnee Kumar (hereinafter referred to as the Mortgagor) is purchasing the House No. 1276, measuring 00 Kanal 03 Marla 1-1/2 Sarsahi (95.66 Sq. Yards), bearing Khawat/Khatoni No. 197/247 and 357/495, comprised under Khaska No. 76/9/2(2)-2, 77/13/4(1)-5, 12(6-19), Kitta 03, land measuring 10 Kanal 06 Marla, share to the extent of 19/1236 i.e. 00 Kanal 03 Marla 1-1/2 Sarsahi, situated at Guru Nanak Nagar, Sector-19, Village Bhankarpur, Hadbast No. 236, MC and Tehsil Zirakpur, Tehsil Derabassi & Distt. S.A.S. Nagar Mohali, Punjab from Smt. Sapna Gang W/o Sh. Rajiv Gang, According to the said Mortgagor, the below mentioned document is misplaced:-

1. Original Sale Deed dated 05.12.2012 Bearing Vastak No. 12901 executed by Smt. Bawa Kaur W/o Sh. Gurcharan Singh in respect of land measuring 00 Kanal 03 Marla 1-1/2 Sarsahi in favour of Sh. Ajay Chaudhary S/o Sh. Jeewan Chaudhary.

That Mortgagor have agreed to create mortgage in favour of my clients UC Housing Finance Limited Chandigarh in respect of the mortgage of above said property. In this regard following LAR No. 2025/037887, Serial No. 233028, on dated 06.12.2025 in Chandigarh, Police Station, lodged by Smt. Sapna Gang D/o Sh. Kailash Chand (Smt. Sapna Gang W/o Sh. Rajiv Gang for the misplace of original document All person/s having any claim against or in respect of the said property more particularly described in the schedule hereunder or any part thereof by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), Gift, trust, inheritance, family arrangement, Maintenance, bequest, partnership, possession, lease, sublease, tenancy, license, lien, charge, pledge, easement or otherwise howsoever are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to me/us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned herein below within 15 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim of claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned and my client shall proceed with the disbursement of loan and creation of mortgage in respect thereof. (Please contact Ashish Goyal, Advocate, #2831, Sector-15, Panchkula, M. No. 9872333331)

So, if any individual/institution will claim anything regarding the missing documents, then contact undersigned.

Ashish Goyal & Associates, #2831, Sector-15, Panchkula.

Asset Recovery Branch, Ground Floor, CO Annex Building, Pandeshwara, Mangalore, Karnataka - 576001, Mob. No. 91641-46426. Email Id : arb.hubballi@unionbankofindia.bank

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

APPENDIX- IV-A [See proviso to rule 8 (6)] Sale notice for sale of immovable property

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and to the Borrower/s and Guarantor/s in particular by the Authorized Officer, that the under mentioned property mortgaged to Union Bank of India, taken possession under the provision of Section 13(4) of Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, will be sold by E-Auction as mentioned below for recovery of under mentioned dues and further interest, charges and costs etc, as detailed below.

The property is being sold on "AS IS WHERE IS WHATEVER THERE IS AND WITHOUT RECOURSE BASIS" as such sale is without any kind of warranties and indemnities.

EMD SHALL BE DEPOSITED AND LINKED/MAPPED WITH THE PROPERTY ID BEFORE THE STARTING OF E-AUCTION

The under mentioned property/ies will be sold by "Online E-Auction through website https://baanknet.com. on 30.12.2025 from 12.00 NOON to 05.00 PM with auto extension of 10 Minutes.

1)*Any encumbrances over the property/ies is not known to the Bank/Secured Creditor.

2) For further detail please contact Mr. Lakshmeesha K Bhargav (Chief Manager), Contact No. 9164146426.

Name of the Account	Name of the Borrower/Mortgagor and Guarantor	Demand Notice Date	Outstanding Amount	Reserve Price
M/s Novamexx India Pvt. Ltd.	1. M/s Novamexx India Pvt. Ltd., represented by its Directors- Mr. Anil Kumar Gupta & Mr. Nait Ram Goyal, Address: House No. 16, Road No. 20, Punjabi Bagh Extension, New Delhi-110026, Alternate Address: Plot No. 12, SEZ Textiles, KIADB Industrial Area, H.N. Pura Road, Hassan, Karnataka- 573201. Guarantor(s): 1. Mr. Anil Kumar Gupta S/o Ram Kishan Gupta, House No. 16, Road No. 20, Punjabi Bagh Extension, New Delhi-110026. 2. Mr. Nait Ram Goyal S/o Brij Lal Goyal, House No. 16, Road No. 20, Punjabi Bagh Extension, New Delhi-110026. 3. Mr. Ajay Gupta S/o Ram Kishan Gupta, Opposite Dr. Giridharilal Garg's Hospital, Mandi Dabwali, Distt. Sirsa, Haryana -125104.	12.08.2016	Rs. 13,41,72,162/- (Rupees Thirteen Crore Forty One Lakh Seventy Two Thousand One Hundred Sixty Two Only) as on 31.10.2025 + Future Interest + Other expenses.	Rs. 47,00,000/- Rs. 4,70,000/- Rs. 1,00,000/-

Details of the Property to be sold Commercial Property (Plot/Shop), on which commercial building with total plinth area 804 Square feet is constructed an area measuring 1 Kanal 0 Marla (605 Sq. Yards) and bearing Khaska No. 1003/1, Khewat/Khatauni No. 210/301, Situated in Village Killianwali, Tehsil Malout & District Muktsar, Punjab, belonging to Sri Anil Gupta & Sri Ajay Gupta). Bounded as under: North: Property of Kumar Studio, South: Killianwali Road, East: Kali Mata Mandir, West: 20' Wide Gali.

Type of Possession: Symbolic.

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided on Secured Creditor's website i.e. www.unionbankofindia.co.in and website: https://baanknet.com. In case of problem related to EMD transfer/EMD refund or any issue related to Finance & account, bidders can directly contact the help desk no. 82912 20220 & email ID support.baanknet@psballiance.com. The contact details are also provided in the help desk menu of the login page of the link: https://baanknet.com. For Registration and Login and Bidding Rules visit https://baanknet.com.

STATUTORY 15 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6)/Rule 9(1) OF STATUTORY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES 2002

This may also be treated as notice u/r 6(2), 8(6) & 9(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 to the borrower/s, guarantor/s & Mortgagor/s of the said loan about the holding of E-Auction Sale on the above mentioned date.

DATE: 12.12.2025 PLACE : Mangalore AUTHORISED OFFICER, UNION BANK OF INDIA

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE

SR. NO.	NAME OF DEPARTMENT	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE DEPARTMENT	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	PWD B&R, KAITHAL	SPECIAL REPAIR OF 4 NOS ROAD I.E 1) RATTA KHERA TO BUBAKPUR (ID 9454), 2) KHERI GULAM ALI TO RAMTHALI (PAHARPUR TO RAMTHALI) KM. 8.14 TO 14.54. (ID 6973) 3) KAITHAL GUHLA TO KHARKARA ROAD (ID 6975) 4) ANOLI SCHOOL TO NASIB SUKHEDEV SINGH FARM IN KAITHAL DISTT. (ID 7047) (FLOOD DAMAGE ROAD) (ODR) (GUHLA CONSTITUENCY)	CLOSING DATE 18.12.2025	345.69 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9466390260 PWDEEPP2KTL@GMAIL.COM
2	PWD B&R, CHANDIGARH	DEVELOPMENT OF PLANTATION IN CENTRAL VERGE OF FOUR LANNING OF NH-72 AMBALA NARAINGARH ROAD KM. 1.00 TO 3.50 (BALDEV NAGAR CHOWK TO NARAINGARH ROAD) IN AMBALA DISTRICT	15.12.2025 23.12.2025	5.18 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9779691170 hortdivisionhrpwd@yahoo.com
3	PANCHAYATI RAJ, FARIDABAD	CONSTRUCTION OF DRAINS AND TREATMENT PROCEDURE OF WASTE WATER (GWM) AT VILLAGE BEHALPUR BLOCK BALLABHAD DISTRICT FARIDABAD + 6 WORKS	11.12.2025 19.12.2025	220.19 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9467990567 prexeeng.fdb@hry.nic.in
4	PANCHAYATI RAJ, BHIWANI	CONSTRUCTION OF DRAIN FROM H/O RAJKUMAR DUHAN TO H/O SHISHPAL AT VILLAGE BAGANWALA (DMF)	11.12.2025 16.12.2025	6.21 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01664243927 prexeeng.bhw@hry.nic.in
5	PANCHAYATI RAJ, FARIDABAD	PAVEMENT OF RASTAS WITH IPB AND SIDE DRAINS AT VILLAGE DHAUD BLOCK FARIDABAD DISTRICT FARIDABAD VAGY	11.12.2025 19.12.2025	47.77 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9467990567 prexeeng.fdb1@gmail.com
6	PANCHAYATI RAJ, BHIWANI	BLOCK KATRU VILLAGE JUI KHURD+CONST. OF NEEVEN SOAKAGE PIT. GWM + 5 WORKS	11.12.2025 16.12.2025	44.81 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01664243927 prexeeng.bhw@hry.nic.in
7	PANCHAYATI RAJ, FATEHABAD	JALLOPUR (INSTALLATION OF PIPELINE AT MOGA NO 50800/L FROM FIELD OF RAVI KAMBOJ TO FIELD OF KULJEET SINGH AT VILLAGE JALLOPUR BLOCK NAGPUR. DISTRICT FATEHABAD VANGY + 1 WORKS	11.12.2025 18.12.2025	16.79 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01667230855 prexeeng.fdb@hry.nic.in
8	PANCHAYATI RAJ, REWARI	PROVIDING CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR CONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE GURAWARA, BLOCK JATUSANA, DISTRICT REWARI	2469.69 LACS	10.12.2025 16.12.2025	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9466112077 xenpr.rwr@gmail.com
9	DIRECTOR GENERAL, SUPPLIES & DISPOSALS PANCHKULA, HARYANA	TENDER FOR PROCUREMENT OF SMARTPHONES ALONGWITH MDN FOR 6347 FRONTLINE HEALTH WORKER(S) I.E. MPWH (F) ANWS AND 664 CHOS REQUIRED BY DIRECTOR, NATION HEALTH MISSION, HARYANA.	12.12.2025 12.01.2026		https://etenders.hry.nic.in dsndharyana.gov.in	0172-2570122 Supplies@hry.nic.in
10	FOOD&SUPPLIES CONTROLLER, ROHTAK	LABOUR&CARTAGE AND TRANPORTATION	15.12.2025 20.12.2025		https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9467511722 dfsroh@gmail.com

Classifieds

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Maninder Kaur Sullach W/o Arvinder Pal Singh Sullach R/O 79/1, near Ram Nagar Khadi Ashram, Karnal, Haryana, declare that I have changed my name from Maninder Kaur Sullach to Maninder Kaur. Let me be known as Maninder Kaur in future.

I Arvinder Pal Singh S/o Avtar Singh and Maninder Kaur, wife of Arvinder Pal Singh, R/O 79/1, near Khadi Ashram, Karnal, Haryana, declare that I have changed my name from my son, Vishwajeet Singh Sullach, to Vishwajeet Singh. He should be known as Vishwajeet Singh in the future

I, Arvinder Pal Singh Sullach, S/o Avtar Singh R/O 79/1, Ram Nagar, near Khadi Ashram, Karnal, Haryana, declare that I have changed my name from Arvinder Pal Singh Sullach to Arvinder Pal Singh. I should be known as Arvinder Pal Singh in the future.

I Hitherto Known as Iqbalpreet Singh S/o Amarjeet Singh Residing at Village Bhateri, District Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab, Have Changed My Name and shall Hereafter Be Known as Iqbal Singh Khattar.

I, Bharti W/o Sh. Jitender Pal Singh R/O House No.872 NA, Shiv Colony, Near Rawat Clinic Dharampur, Pinjore Tehsil Kaika, Panchkula, Haryana, have changed my name from Bharti to Bharti Verma.

I, Nikhil Jain S/o Sushil Kumar Jain R/o 180, Ward No.3, Old Anaj Mandi, Gohana-131301, Sonipat have changed my name Nikhil to Nikhil Jain for all future purposes.

I, Raveena D/o Sh. Vijay pal Singh, R/O House no. 352 Shastri Nagar, Manimajra, Chandigarh have changed my name from Raveena to Raveena Dhanola.

I, No-14404581K, Rank-HAV HEM RAJ (Retd.) residence of VILL-AGAMPUR, PO-ANANDPUR SAHIB, TEHSIL-ANANDPUR SAHIB, DISTRICT-RUPNAGAR declare that I change my son's name AKASHDEEP to AAKASHDEEP IN MY ARMY RECODS.

It is for general information that I, GURMAIL SINGH SON OF BALVIR SINGH R/O SUKHNA ABLU TEHSIL GIDDERBAHA DISTT SRI MUKTSAR SAHIB PUNJAB PIN CODE 152031, declare that name of my minor daughter namely RAPINDER KAUR, aged 08 years has been wrongly written as ARPAN KAUR in her Aadhar Card No. 4030-0781-3680. The actual name of my minor daughter is RAPINDER KAUR, which may be amended accordingly. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection.

I No 14681994X Rank NK vinit kumar singh S/o Ravindra Singh R/O Village -Karanpura Mathiya, Post -Karanpura Teh-Goreyakohti, Dist Siwan (Bihar)pin code -841506 declare that in my army record my father name is wrongly written as Rabindra singh, whereas her correct name is Ravindra Singh.

I, No. JC-315830M Rank NB/Sub Name C Murugan unit 440(I) Engr Sqn C/o 56 APO presently residing at 19/33(2), Kanaman Thottam, Attoor, Veeyannoor, Distt. Kanyakumari, State-Tamil Nadu-629177 declare That I have changed my minor daughter name from M Daksa to Daksha M vide Affidavit dated 12.12.2025 before the court of Bathinda.

I, Kamlesh W/o Ramchander R/o Vill Dhangar, Teh & Distt Bhiwani, declare that have changed my name from Kamlesh Devi to Kamlesh for all future purposes.

I, Sushil Kumar W/o Sh. Vinod Kumar R/o Flat No. 304, GH-71, Sector 20, Panchkula, Haryana have changed my name from Sushil Kumari to Sushil Kumari Ahir.

I Puneet Miglani s/o Sharvan Kumar r/o H.No. 765/12, Kaillash Mandir, Punjabi Bazar Jind declare that I have changed my name from Puneet to Puneet Miglani for all future purposes.

I, Mukemo Rani, w/o Sh. Sandeep Kumar, resident of village Magharpura, Tehsil Naraingarh, District Ambala, Haryana, in my husband's A/c Uco Bank number 24930110090909 my name recorded Rashi (Nominee) instead of Mukemo Rani. My real and correct name is Mukemo Rani.

I, Bijender Singh S/o Gaje Singh R/O H.No. 339/29 New Durga School Ram Nagar Rohtak Road Tehsil and District Jind have Changed my name from Bijender Singh to Vijender Kumar.

I, Amit S/o Jashmer R/o Village Julani Tehsil and District Jind have Changed my minor daughter name from Arnoor to Harnoor Saharan.

I, Rajesh S/o Ramesh Chand R/O H.No. 75/15 Hari Nagar, Safidon Gate Jind Tehsil and District Jind have Changed my name from Rajesh to Rajesh Garg.

I, Anu W/o Rajesh Garg R/O H.No. 75/15 Hari Nagar, Safidon Gate Jind Tehsil and District Jind have Changed my name from Anu to Annu Garg.

I, Randeep Singh S/o Ranvir Singh R/o 13 Block 2 Nilokheri, PO Padhana, Karnal, have changed my name Randeep to Randeep Singh.

I, Rajdeep Kaur W/o Rajinder Singh R/o Vill Makonia Jaspur Udhm Singh Nagar, Uttarakhand, declare that my minor son name is Jotprakash and surname is Singh.

I, Mukhtiar Singh Dahiya S/o Teja Singh R/o # 3 College Campus Govt College of Education Sector 20-D, Chandigarh, have changed my name to Mukhtiar Singh.

I, Anita W/o Pawan Kumar R/o # 1215 Vikas Nagar Mauli Jagran, Chandigarh have changed my name to Anita Devi.

I, Raj Kamal s/o Ramesh Chand r/o 3479 Sector 35-D Chandigarh have changed my minor daughter name from Naira to Naira Pal.

I, Raj Kamal s/o Ramesh Chand R/o H.No. 5, Block-3, Garhi (139), Tehsil Hansi, Distt. Hisar (Haryana) hereby changed my name from Satbir to SATYABIR SINGH for all future purposes. Neither any court case nor any Bank loan is pending against my old name.

I, M. P. SINGH s/oSh. Balwan Singh R/o VPO Kironi, Tehsil and Distt Hisar (Haryana) hereby changed my name from M. P. Singh to MANJEET for all future purposes. Neither any court case nor any Bank loan is pending against my old name.

I, Hemant S/o Shri Parkash R/o H. No. 1333, Mohan Nagar, Sonipat Due to a clerical error, my name has been recorded as Hemant Kumar and my father's name as Subhash in my 10th class marksheet, whereas my correct name is Hemant and my father's name is Shri Parkash. Please correct it.

I, Gurmit Kaur W/o Nirmal Singh R/O Village Deelwal, Tehsil & Distt. Patiala declare that two names Gurmit Kaur & Gurmeet Kaur are mine and of one & the same person.

I Supriya Dahiya W/o Sh. Davinder Saini R/O House No.1040 Sham Nagar, Sector-16, Karnal have changed my name from Supriya Dahiya to Supriya Rani.

I, Ramesh Chander S/o Sh. Ram Ditta, R/o H.No. 2420, Sector 14, Hisar declare that I have changed my name from Ramesh Chander S/o Sh. Ram Ditta to Ramesh Chander Kamra S/o Shri Ram Ditta Mal for all future purposes.

I, Shyam Lal Garg S/o Ishar Dass R/O House no-149, ward no -8, Huda colony Cheeka, Tehsil Guhla, Katthal have changed my name Shyam Lal.

I Sahil s/o Mukhtiar Singh r/o H.No. 1719, Ward No. 31, Gohana Road, Shastri Colony, Sonipat declare that I have changed my name from Sahil to Sahil Gahlawat for all future purposes.

I, Shweta Chhura W/o Rajesh Kumar R/o H.No. 114, Ranjit Avenue, Kapurthala-144601, Punjab have changed my name from Shweta Chhura to Shweta.

I, Manoj Kumar Roy Father of Army No. 14655529N Rank: Hav/Avto Tech 'B' Veh Name: Dipak Roy Unit: 115 Armd Wksp (601 EME BN) C/o 56 APO, Resident of Baniya Para, Kharija Berubari, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal Pin 735122 have changed my Date of Birth from 01-07-1953 to 01-01-1957 in service records of my son, vide Affidavit No. IN-PB01323292735109X dated 11-12-2025.

I, Bimala Roy Mother of Army No. 14655529N Rank Hav/Avto Tech 'B' Veh Name Dipak Roy Unit: 115 Armd Wksp (601 EME BN) C/o 56 APO, Resident of Baniya Para, Kharija Berubari, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal Pin 735136 have changed my Date of Birth from 01-07-1964 to 01-01-1960 in service records of my son, vide Affidavit No IN-PB01322271547664X dated 11-12-2025.

I, Sandeep Singh S/o Satnam Singh R/o VPO Udho Nangal Tehsil Baba Bakala District Amritsar have declare that Sandeep is my Given name and Singh is my Surname.

I, Maulik Kohli S/o Vinod Kumar R/o Near Lakir Sahib Gurudwara Fatehchak Road Avenue, Tarn Taran have declare that Maulik is my Given name and Kohli is my Surname.

I, Lal Dyal Pal Singh S/O Pradakkan Singh P/O Chor Sidhwan, Village - Warsola Tehsil/Distt-Gurdaspur. Declare That In Class 10th Certificates Of My Son Gurupdesh Singh Dhillon (Uid-6564680) My Name Is Written As Laldiyalpal Singh Dhillon. My Correct Name Is Lal Dyal Pal Singh.

I, Kajal D/O Kant Raj R/O Hno 267/4, Panchi Colony, Gurdaspur Punjab Have Changed My Name From Kajal To Kajal Kaur.

I, No. 2201691A Rank Hav Name Pradeep Kumar resident of Village - Mutfarka, PO - Sujampur, Tehsil and Distt Pathankot (Punjab), have changed name of my son from MANDEEP SURAJ to MANDEEP KUMAR SURAJ vide Affidavit No. IN-PB01578172814488X dated 12-12-2025 before Notary Public Pathankot (Punjab).

I, No 10363525P Rank LNK Name LIYAKAT ALI of 126 Inf Bn (TA) JAK RIF, C/o 56 APO, have changed name of my mother from SHAHBI to SAMBI vide Affidavit No. IN-PB01834661282918X Dated 12-12-2025 before Notary Public Pathankot (Punjab).

I, No. 13768792W Ex Nk (TS) Bimal Singh resident of Village - Bhanguri, PO - Bhanguri, Tehsil Dhar Kalan Distt Pathankot (Punjab), have changed name of my mother from RADHA RANI to RADHA DEVI vide Affidavit No. IN-PB01592817557510X dated 12-12-2025 before Executive Magistrate Pathankot.

I, Rajesh Kumar S/O Baljinder Pal R/O Talwandi Bhai Distt. Ferozepur Have Changed My Minor Son's Name Tiyyush Sharma To Tiyyush (Given Name) Sharma (Surname).

I, Rajesh Kumar Sharma S/O Baljinder Pal R/O Talwandi Bhai Distt. Ferozepur Have Changed My Name To Rajesh Kumar.

I, Rajesh Kumar S/O Baljinder Pal R/O Talwandi Bhai Distt. Ferozepur Have Changed My Name To Rajesh Kumar.

I, Rajwinder Singh Urf Bachittar Singh S/O Sawinder Singh R/O Vpo. Chicha (Amritsar) Declare That I Am Known By Above Both Names.

I, Karamjit Kaur W/O Bhupinder Pal Singh Khaira R/O H.No.B-VIII/214 Kacha Malak Road Jagraon District Ludhiana Have Changed My Name To Karamjeet Kaur Khaira.

I, Balker Singh S/O Manohar Singh R/O Vpo. Gera, District Hoshiarpur Punjab Declared That My Given Name As Balker And Surname As Singh.

I Manjit Kaur W/O Gurmial Singh R/O Village Daudhar Garbi District Moga 142053 (Punjab) Have Changed My Name To Manjeet Kaur.

I, Ajaydeep Singh S/o Surinder Singh R/o Vpo. Rayya Teh-Baba Bakala Distt. Amritsar have changed my name from Ajaydeep Singh to Ajaydeep is my given name and Singh is my surname.

I Manjeet Singh S/o Balwinder Singh R/O Vill Loharanwala Po Lohgarh Tehsil Baba Bakala Distt Amritsar Have Declared That Manjeet Is My Given Name And Singh Is My Surname.

I, Preet W/o Bhupinder Singh R/o Mohalla Gogoani Zira (Ferozepur) have changed my name as Harpreet Kaur.

I, Balvir Singh S/o Sarban Singh R/O Vpo. Talwandi Rai Teh-Raikot Distt Ludhiana have change my name to Balvir Singh Dhalwal. Plz Note.

I, Lovepreet Singh S/o Balwinder Singh, Vill Himmatpur, Po Dhanoa, Tehsil Dasuya Dist. Hoshiarpur, Pin Code 144214 Changed My Name From Lovepreet Singh to Singh Lovepreet.

I Gurpreem Singh Soni S/o Baldev Singh Soni R/O W.No.11 Sardulgarh Distt. Mansa I Have Changed My Name Gurpreem Singh.

I, Kiranveer Kaur W/o Akashdeep Singh Randhawa R/o Vpo. Chak Bhai Ka Teh-Raikot Distt. Ludhiana have changed my name from Kiranveer Kaur to Kiranveer Kaur Randhawa.

I, Jasbir Kaur Mother of No. 13777481K Rank-LNK name Amrik Singh R/o Vpo. Shutrana Teh-Patran Distt. Patiala declare that I have changed my name from Jasbir Kaur to Jasvir Kaur.

I, No. 14468495A, Havildar, Balker Singh (Retd.) S/o Late Sh. Basant Singh Ghotra, Resident Of House No. #36, Village Ahmadpur (303) Po Akbarpur, Tehsil Naraingarh, District Ambala, Haryana, Pin Code: 134203, Declare That I Want To Correct My Spouse (Wife) Name As Sukhwinder Kaur Ghotra In my Sparsh/PPO As Per Her Aadhar Card & Passport Which Is Wrongly Written As Sukhwinder Kaur In my Sparsh/PPO And I Want To Endorse The Date Of Birth Of My Spouse (Wife) Named Sukhwinder Kaur Ghotra As 11 March, 1967 In My Saparsh/Ppo As Per Her Aadhar Card & Passport.

I, SWATI am legally Wedded Spouse of Army No: JC 463085K Rank-NB/Sub Name- Autkar Nilesh Prakash Permanent Address: At Pokhari, Post: Sav, Near Marathi Primary School, Dist: Pokhari, Buldhana, Maharashtra - 443001 declare that I have changed My Name from SWATI to SWATI NILESH AUTKAR. Vide Affidavit No: 11AA 219208, Dated: 12/12/2025

I, NO. IC29558X, LIEUTENANT COLONEL, Joginder Singh Atwal(Retd.), S/O Sh. Pakhar Singh Atwal, Permanent Resident Of House No. 1122 Sector-70, Sas Nagar (Mohali), Punjab Pin Code: 160071 At Present Residing At House No.199, Sector-A, Joshi Enclave, Chandimandir Cantt. Panchkula (Haryana) Declare That I Want To Correct My Spouse (Wife) Name As Jitinder Kaur Atwal In My Sparsh/Ppo as per her Wadhaar Card & Pan Card, which is wrongly written as JATINDER ATWAL my SPARSH/PPO Number.

I, Ajaib Singh S/o Harbans Singh R/O Village Bijapur Kothe PO Isru Tehsil Khanna (Ludhiana) changed my name to Ajaib Singh Uppal.

I, Jagjit Singh S/o Narinder Singh R/O Village Khatra, Tehsil Khanna (Ludhiana) Declare That My Name Be Read As Given Name Jagjit And Surname Singh.

I, Sandeep Kaur W/o Narinder Singh R/O Vpo Manupur, Tehsil Samrala (Ludhiana) Declare That My Name Be Read As Given Name Sandeep And Surname Kaur.

I, Gurbaksh Singh S/o Mohan Singh R/O Village Jalanpur, Tehsil Samrala (Ludhiana) Declare That My Name Be Read As Given Name Gurbaksh And Surname Singh.

I, Mewa Singh Gill S/o Bant Singh R/O Vpo Sehaura, Tehsil Payal (Ludhiana) Have Changed My Name To Mewa Singh.

I, Sukhwinder Singh Chohan S/o Balwinder Singh R/O Village Wander Jatana (Faridkot) have Changed my name to Sukhwinder Singh.

I Suman W/o Dilbagh Singh Rehalla R/o VPO- Sunder Chak, Dist-Tehsil Pathankot, Punjab - 145025, have changed my name to Suman Rehalla.

I, hitherto known as Shadi Kaur W/o Jaswant Singh R/o H.No. 192, Patti Sodhi, Jagraon, Hathur, District Ludhiana, Punjab-142031 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Chhinder Kaur.

I, hitherto known as Jaswant S/o Bachan Singh R/o H.No. 192, Patti Sodhian, Jagraon, Hathur, PO: Hathur, District Ludhiana, Punjab-142031 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Jaswant Singh.

I, Meenu Devi wife of No 15340664F, Rank - Hav Name Rajendra Singh resident of Village - Madhawal, Tehsil - Doiwala, District - Dehradun, State - Uttarakhand, PIN Code 248140, have changed my name from MEENU DEVI (Incorrect Name) and MEENU (Correct Name) vide affidavit dated 12 Dec 2025 before notary public Pathankot

I, Shanti Bai Mother of No.17000556H NK (Auto Tech B Veh Elect) Mukesh Kumar resident of Rajiv Colony, Gali No.2 Nagada, District- Ujjain, State- Madhya Pradesh, Pin-456335, have changed my name from Shanti Bai to Shanti Bai Vide affidavit No.IN-PB01077240025469X dated 10 Dec 2025 before notary public Pathankot

I, Shanti Bai Mother of No.17000556H NK (Auto Tech B Veh Elect) Mukesh Kumar resident of Rajiv Colony, Gali No.2 Nagada, District- Ujjain, State- Madhya Pradesh, Pin-456335, have changed my name from Shanti Bai to Shanti Bai Vide affidavit No.IN-AS04365361583224X dated 11 Dec 2025 before notary public Pathankot

I, No. JC-784275H NB/Sub (M/ Tech (SA) Sinh Nirajkumar Mahendra Pratap resident of Plot No. 42, Amrut Park, Opposite Maruti School, District-Valsad, State- Gujarat, Pin-396002, have changed my daughter name from Sinh Divyanshi Niraj Kumar to Divyanshi Niraj Kumar Sinh Vide affidavit No.IN-AS04162276791916X before Guwahati Kamrup (M) (Assam)

I, Onkar Singh father of No.17000556H NK (Auto Tech B Veh Elect) Mukesh Kumar resident of Rajiv Colony, Gali No.2 Nagada, District- Ujjain, State- Madhya Pradesh, Pin-456335, have changed my name from Onkar Singh to Onkar Singh Vide affidavit No.IN-AS04367551757856X dated 11 Dec 2025 before Guwahati Kamrup (M) (Assam)

I, Asha Pandey Mother of Bhaskara Pandey resident of Village- Greenvelly Enclave Bothoria No.2, Tehsil- Haldwani, District-Nainital, State- Uttarakhand, Pin-263139, have changed my name from Asha Pandey to Asha Vide affidavit No.IN-PB01807611292506X dated 12 Dec 2025 before notary public Pathankot

I, Beenu spouse of Sushil Kumar resident of Village- Bikram Katuka, Tehsil- Chapra, District- Chapra, State- Bihar, Pin-841460, have changed my name from Beenu to Binnu Kumari Vide affidavit No.IN-PB01813047900329X dated 12 Dec 2025 before notary public Pathankot

I, Aasha Pandey Mother of Bhaskara Pandey resident of Village- Greenvelly Enclave Bothoria No.2, Tehsil- Haldwani, District-Nainital, State- Uttarakhand, Pin-263139, have changed my name from Aasha Pandey to Aasha Vide affidavit No.IN-PB01807611292506X dated 12 Dec 2025 before notary public Pathankot

I, Ratan Singh Bharara Father of Lalan Singh resident of Village- Simar, Post- Gagrigol, Tehsil- Garur, District- Bageshwar, State- Uttarakhand, Pin-263645, have changed my name from Ratan Singh Bharara to Ratan Singh Vide affidavit No.IN-PB01807611292506X dated 12 Dec 2025 before notary public Pathankot

I, Beenu spouse of Sushil Kumar resident of Village- Bikram Katuka, Tehsil- Chapra, District- Chapra, State- Bihar, Pin-841460, have changed my name from Beenu to Binnu Kumari Vide affidavit No.IN-PB01813047900329X dated 12 Dec 2025 before notary public Pathankot

I, Aasha Pandey Mother of Bhaskara Pandey resident of Village- Greenvelly Enclave Bothoria No.2, Tehsil- Haldwani, District-Nainital, State- Uttarakhand, Pin-263139, have changed my name from Aasha Pandey to Aasha Vide affidavit No.IN-PB01807611292506X dated 12 Dec 2025 before notary public Pathankot

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■ States Focus ■



DISRUPT TERROR FINANCING IN J&K: LG TO POLICE

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday directed police to disrupt terror financing pipeline in the Union territory, and effectively counter radicalisation attempts by separatist elements. The Lieutenant Governor (L-G) met the families of those killed in last month's accidental blast in Nowgam police station and handed over appointment letters on compassionate grounds, an official spokesman said. Referring to the busting of the "white collar" terror module involving doctors last month, Sinha said the whole country is proud of Jammu and Kashmir Police for stopping terror in its tracks by unearthing and dismantling the network. The spokesman said Sinha appreciated the police's meticulous investigation and multi-faceted effort to detect, disrupt and prevent terrorist acts. The L-G also directed senior officials to identify and disrupt terror financing and counter radicalisation attempts by separatist forces, the spokesman added.



SHAH TO UNVEIL VAJPAYEE'S STATUE: CM NAYAB SINGH SAINI

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Friday said Union Home Minister Amit Shah will unveil former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's statue at Atal Park in Panchkula on December 24. Saini said this after inspecting the arrangements for the event at Atal Park in Panchkula, according to an official release. He said that after unveiling the 41-foot-tall metal statue of the former prime minister, Shah will inaugurate a mega blood donation camp at Atal Park. He will also inspect an exhibition set up at the state BJP office, 'Panchkamal.' The Chief Minister said the Union home minister will then take the salute at the passing-out parade of about 5,000 police personnel at the Tau Devi Lal Sports Stadium, Sector 3. Shah will also attend the "Veer Bal Diwas" programme to be held the same day as the chief guest.

Jeevika Didis playing major role in overall Bihar development: CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Patna

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Friday praised the efforts of Jeevika Didis saying their "hard work is playing a major role in the overall development of the State". 'Jeevika Didis' are women associated with self-help groups under the Bihar Rural Livelihoods Project.

The CM, during a visit to Haridih panchayat in Rajauli block of Nawada district, interacted with students and 'Jeevika Didis', and distributed cheques to beneficiaries of various Government schemes.

According to a statement by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), "interacting with Jeevika Didis, the CM praised their work and said it is because of their efforts the economic condition of people living in rural areas is improving rapidly. Your hard work is playing a major role in the overall development of the state".

The CM added that the Government is providing all possible assistance to Jeevika Didis so that every household can progress. "Earlier, women had to depend on their families for



money, which used to cause stress at home. But now, due to various Government schemes, people, especially Jeevika Didis, are earning and contributing to their households," he said.

Launched in 2006, the Bihar Rural Livelihoods Project, popularly known as Jeevika, aimed to reach 4,000 villages across 42 blocks in Gaya, Khagaria, Madhubani, Muzaffarpur, Nalanda, and Purnia districts, benefiting 5.9 lakh households.

The main objective was to enhance the social and economic empowerment of the rural poor in Bihar. Now, Jeevika Didis have spread across the State and through their initiatives with the help of the State

Government, lakhs of women are gaining financial literacy, starting enterprises, and transforming their communities in the State.

Kumar also interacted with schoolgirls undergoing self-defence training. "Study with full dedication. You all are the future of India. Whatever support you need, the Government will provide," he said. The CM inspected the Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal scheme, ensuring supply of safe drinking water to every household.

"Earlier, people had to fetch water from far-away wells or hand-pumps. Due to safe drinking water supply, water-borne diseases have reduced substantially," the CMO statement said.

organised crime were intensified, while a zero-tolerance framework was adopted for crimes against women and children.

Urban policing, digital surveillance and coordinated enforcement have been strengthened to enhance safety across cities. Parallel to this, municipalities initiated major urban-improvement campaigns — beautification of public spaces, solid-waste modernisation and Smart Road projects in key urban centres.

Youth empowerment has been positioned as a cornerstone of the Government's agenda. More than 5.28 lakh young beneficiaries were supported through employment-linked schemes, while the state scaled up skill training and industrial placements.



Officials said Madhya Pradesh continues to register one of the highest industrial growth rates in the country, supported by new industrial corridors, MSME incentives and growing investor interest.

Tourism and cultural development also recorded substantial progress. Projects around Mahakal Lok, Omkareshwar and other religious destinations have been executed to strengthen the state's position as a spiritual tourism hub. Preparations for Simhashta 2028 have begun, with large-scale infrastructure upgrades under way — including bridge construction, road expansion and telecom-network augmentation.

The Government report highlights extensive gains in irrigation, agriculture and water manage-

ment. Under the Jal Ganga Abhiyan and multiple large irrigation projects, efforts to double the state's irrigated area have accelerated. The administration stressed that major schemes in groundwater recharge, micro-irrigation and canal modernisation are now providing long-term support to farmers.

Welfare programmes have seen notable expansion over the past two years. Support under PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, Ladli Behna Yojana, housing schemes and tribal-welfare initiatives formed a substantial part of the State's social safety net.

Healthcare infrastructure has undergone parallel strengthening, with 52 Maternal and Child Health wings completed and upgrades in 935 PHCs and CHCs,

alongside expansion of ambulance and emergency services.

Infrastructure development remained one of the most visible areas of progress. The State added or upgraded more than 3,200 km of roads, expanded rural connectivity under PMGSY, and pushed forward energy reforms including the addition of 8,800 MW in solar capacity. Airport upgrades, mobility improvements and new logistics infrastructure are also under implementation.

The Chief Minister said the Government will continue to prioritise transparent governance, rapid development and citizen-focused delivery, adding that Madhya Pradesh is positioned to build on these gains in the coming years.

Congress stalwart Shivraj Patil passes away at 90

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

Veteran Congressman Shivraj Patil, who served as the Lok Sabha Speaker and also served as Union Home Minister, passed away at his hometown Latur in Maharashtra on Friday morning. Patil, 90, passed away at his residence 'Devghar' after a brief illness, as per family members, adding his funeral will be held on Saturday.

He is survived by his son Shailesh Patil, daughter-in-law Archana, who unsuccessfully contested the assembly polls last year on a BJP ticket against Congress' Amit Deshmukh from Latur city, and two granddaughters.

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi and many others offered condolences and paid tributes to Patil.

Patil remained a Congress and Nehru-Gandhi family loyalist till his last days and held several key constitutional and ministerial posts during a public life spanning more than five decades. The veteran politician faced severe public and media backlash as Union Home Minister in 2008 when he was seen in three different sets of clothes on the night of November 26 when Mumbai was facing unprecedented attacks from ten heavily-armed Pakistan-trained terrorists.

Defending himself over the criticism, he had said people should criticise policy, not clothes. The sheer scale of the Mumbai attacks weighed heavily on Patil's political career and made his position in the Union Cabinet virtually untenable, leading to his resignation on November 30, 2008.

Born on October 12, 1935, Patil began his political journey as the president of Latur municipality between 1966 and 1970 and was subsequently elected as an MLA for two terms. He held key



posts in the Maharashtra assembly, including Deputy Speaker and Speaker, between 1977 and 1979. He then went on to win the Latur Lok Sabha seat seven times and was the 10th Speaker of the Lok Sabha from 1991 to 1996. He lost to BJP's Rupatai Patil Nilangekar in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections.

He was also a Rajya Sabha member. The Congress leader held several key portfolios in the Union Cabinet, including Home, Defence, Commerce, and Science and Technology. Patil was the Governor of Punjab and also served as Administrator of the Union Territory of Chandigarh from 2010 to 2015.

In 2022, speaking at a book launch, he courted controversy for claiming that the concept of "jihad" was present not just in Islam but also in the Bhagavad Gita and Christianity. In March 2025, he had met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi with his family. Calling Patil a distinguished parliamentarian and statesman,

Fadnavis said his demise was deeply saddening.

As Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Patil initiated and supported several innovative parliamentary practices, earning respect across the political spectrum. Sharad Pawar said Patil played a significant role in the politics of both Maharashtra and the nation, harmoniously blending the Congress ideology with his unwavering commitment to resolving people's issues.

"In every position he held, his work consistently reflected justice for the common man," said the NCP (SP) chief. Pawar said he pushed for modernisation and computerisation of the House. "The Outstanding Parliamentarian Award was also started during his tenure," said Pawar in a statement.

Patil was also known for his vast reading, meticulous study, and articulate presentation. His command over Marathi, English, and Hindi, along with his exceptional grasp of constitutional matters, made him a much-respected parliamentarian of his time.

Bengal SIR: 58 lakh names marked for deletion

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

About 58 lakh names of voters have been marked for deletion after Thursday, the last date of completion of Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bengal, sources in the office of the State Chief Electoral Officer said.

This number is apart from about 29,000 forms, which were not returned by the voters. This is also apart from those names which are likely to be summoned for hearing in days to come, sources said, adding a preliminary impression shows that there is a huge discrepancy in the forms that have been submitted.

"This could be tens of lakhs... that is, such a large number of people is likely to be summoned for hearing," an official said, adding the exact number of names likely to be deleted after the digitisation of forms completed and uploaded on December 11 is 58.08 lakhs. Considering the fact that this figure was obtained at about 12 pm on Thursday, the total number of deletions could further go up beyond 60 lakh, sources said.

The breakdown of the numbers till Wednesday was: 24.25 lakh deceased voters, 12.05 lakh voters who could not be traced, 19.93 lakh voters marked as 'shifted', 1.38 lakh identified as bogus, and 57 lakh categorised under 'others'.



Sources in the Election Commission said that "a good number of names may fail the hearing session as there are a large number of people who have the same numbers or same parental names or addresses... the discrepancy is considerable," adding one would not be surprised if the

Rohingyas in Bengal and they have been voting for the Trinamool Congress... these names have to be deleted," he said on Thursday adding, "several lakh of them have still managed to creep into the voters' lists with the help of the BDOs and booth level officers... we ask the ECI to catch these people and deport them to Bangladesh."

Adhikari's statement came hours after Bengal Chief Minister asked the "mothers and sisters of Bengal" to "remain prepared with your kitchen tools to resist the deletion of names from voters' lists... because if a single name is deleted I will descend on the street and hold a dharna with the help of the people."

Six months of AI crash: UK dreams shattered following loss of loved ones

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ahmedabad

The tragic crash of Air India flight AI 171 in June has compelled some of the victims' kin to abandon their dreams of a life in the United Kingdom.

Surat-resident Hiren Dayani's mother Kailashben was one of the 260 persons who were killed when the Boeing 787-8 aircraft on its way to London crashed into a medical hostel complex shortly after it took off from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport here on June 12.

After her mother's death, Dayani, who lost his father to cardiac arrest some time ago, left his high-paying job in London and permanently shifted to Surat with his wife Namrata to start a new life. In London, he was working as a clinical research scientist, while his wife worked as a dental therapist.

"I went to London in 2020 after finishing my M Pharm, and had planned to acquire a PR (permanent residency) so that my wife and I can easily travel between two countries and stay for a longer period in India with my mother. She was travelling to London alone when the tragedy struck," said Dayani.

After his father's death, Kailashben was the sole caretaker of Dayani's intellectually disabled younger sister.

"Now, since there is no one back here to look after my sister, I have decided to come back to Surat and start from scratch. My wife and I were offered some jobs, but the salaries were too low compared to what we used to get in the UK," he said. "So my wife has opened a dental clinic, and I am in the process of starting my own pharmacy," he added.

Harish Godhaniya from Bhanvad town in Devbhumi Dwarka district lost his wife Riddhi and three-year-old son in the crash as they were returning to London following her dental surgery. Godhaniya, who now lives in Jamnagar with his parents, said he is not going back to the UK where he was working as a data analyst for the last three years.

"I am not going back. I had planned to settle in the UK to have a better future for my son. But now, it has no meaning because my wife and son are no more," he said.

"My wife and I were doing jobs in London and we had planned to settle there. But everything is over. I have not planned anything yet because I am yet to get over the loss," he added.



Shekhar Jyoti Goswami and Amritprava Mahanta.

Garg's cousin and suspended Assam Police officer Sandipan Garg has been charged with culpable homicide not amounting to murder, while two of the singer's personal security officers (PSOs) — Nandeswar Bora and Paresh Baishya — have been charged with criminal breach of trust.

Barring the two PSOs, the five accused had accompanied Garg to Singapore where he died under mysterious circumstances while swimming in the sea on September 19.

"We all know that the

court is impartial. Now, the entire responsibility lies with the court of law. We must all respect the process of the law," Sarma said.

On the issue of hearing the case in a fast-track court, the CM said the Government will have to talk with the chief justice in this matter.

"There is a procedure to be followed. The case will go from the CJM's court to that of the sessions judge, and only after that, the issue of fast-track court and special prosecutor will come up," he said.

Sarma had said earlier that the state government will request the Gauhati High

Court to set up a fast-track court for hearing Garg's death case.

The Assam cabinet had also decided to appoint a special public prosecutor on the recommendation of the advocate general, who will be engaged exclusively for the hearing of the case from the filing of the charge sheet to the delivery of justice.

He further said that now that the SIT had already submitted the charge sheet on the case related to Garg, "we will now move on to the case of Gaurav Gogoi".

The Assam Government had constituted an SIT to probe into the alleged Pakistani links of state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi and his British wife Elizabeth Colburn.

The SIT had submitted the report on September 10 to the Chief Minister, who claimed that the investigating agency had "unearthed startling facts which point towards a larger conspiracy aimed at undermining the sovereignty of our nation".

Sarma has been attacking Gogoi and his wife over the last few months, alleging that they have a connection with the Pakistani intelligence agency ISI.

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Indigo moves Delhi High Court for refund of ₹900 crore customs duty



IndiGo has moved the Delhi High Court seeking a refund of over ₹900 crore paid as customs duty on aircraft engines and parts re-imported into India after overseas repairs. The petition argued that the levy of customs duty on such re-imports was unconstitutional and amounted to double levy on the same transaction.

The matter was heard on Friday by a Division Bench of Justices Prathiba M Singh and Shail Jain. However, Justice Shail Jain recused from hearing the matter as her son is a pilot with IndiGo. The case will now come up before another Bench subject to the order of the Chief Justice.

The petition said that customs authorities compelled IndiGo to pay the duty to secure clearance of aircraft engines and other critical components. The airline submitted that unlike GST, which is self-assessed, customs clearance depends on the approval of officers and aircraft could not be grounded indefinitely. As a result, it paid the duty under protest across more than 4,000 bills of entry, amounting to over ₹900 crore, said the petition.

When IndiGo later filed refund claims, customs authorities refused on the ground that the airline must first seek reassessment of each bill of entry. IndiGo argued that it had paid duty under protest in every case and that speaking orders had already been passed on the protested assessments, against which appeals were filed.

Six people convicted in 2017 actress assault case get 20 years imprisonment

A court on Friday sentenced six people convicted in the 2017 actress assault case to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment. Ernakulam District and Principal Sessions Court Judge Honey M Varghese sentenced Sunil NS, also known as Pulsar Suni, Martin Antony, Manikandan B, Vijesh VP, Salim H, and Pradeep to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment for the offence of gang rape.

The court also ordered imprisonment for other offences, but they will run concurrently. The court also ordered the victim to be paid a compensation of ₹ five lakhs, and the pen drive containing the sexual assault visuals should be maintained in the custody of the investigation officer. On December 8, the court acquitted four accused, including actor Dileep.

The assault on the multilingual actress, after the accused allegedly forced their way into her car and held it under their control for two hours on February 17, 2017, had shocked Kerala.

Prime accused Pulsar Suni sexually assaulted the actress and recorded the act on video with the help of the other convicted persons in the moving car. Actor Dileep, who was accused of conspiring in the crime, was arrested during the investigation. However, after a nearly six-year trial, the court found him not guilty.



Ex-judges slam impeachment move against Justice Swaminathan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Fifty-six former judges on Friday issued a statement denouncing the attempt by the DMK to impeach Madras High Court judge Justice GR Swaminathan, saying it was a "brazen attempt to browbeat judges". On December 1, Justice Swaminathan held that the Arulmighu Subramania Swamy Temple was duty-bound to light the lamp at the Deepathoon, in addition to the customary lighting near the Uchi Pillaiyar Mandapam.

The single judge bench said that doing so would not encroach upon the rights of the adjacent dargah or the Muslim community. The order sparked a row, and on

December 9, several opposition MPs, led by the DMK, submitted a notice to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to move a motion for the removal of the judge.

The statement said, "This is a brazen attempt to browbeat judges who do not fall in line with the ideological and political expectations of a particular section of society. If such an attempt is permitted to proceed, it would cut at the very roots of our democracy and the independence of the judiciary."

It said even if the reasons mentioned by the signatory MPs were taken at face value, these were inadequate to justify resorting to such a rare, exceptional and serious constitutional measure of impeachment.



Justice GR Swaminathan

"The present move is not an isolated aberration. It fits into a clear and deeply trou-

bling pattern in our recent constitutional history, where sections of the political class

have sought to discredit and intimidate the higher judiciary whenever outcomes do not align with their interests," said the statement signed by two former Supreme Court judges, five former Chief Justices of High Courts and 49 retired High Court judges.

It said the attempt was an attempt to weaponise impeachment as an instrument of pressure, which struck at the heart of judicial independence and the basic norms of constitutional democracy.

"The very purpose of the impeachment mechanism is to uphold the integrity of the judiciary, not to convert it into a tool of arm-twisting, signalling and retaliation."

"To wield the threat of removal as a means of com-

pling judges to conform to political expectations is to turn a constitutional safeguard into an instrument of intimidation," the statement said.

It said such an approach was anti-democratic, anti-constitutional and an anathema to the rule of law.

"Today, the target may be one judge; tomorrow, it will be the institution as a whole. We, therefore, call upon all stakeholders, MPs across party lines, members of the bar, civil society and citizens at large to unequivocally denounce this move," the statement said.

It said judges had to remain answerable to their oath and to the Constitution, instead of partisan political pressures or ideological intimidation.

It is completely immune, says SC, flags half baked running commentary on pending cases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Observing that half-baked truth and ill-informed running commentary on sub-judice cases affects public perception, the Supreme Court on Friday asserted that it is "completely immune" from reporting of cases for the sake of publicity or narrative building.

The observations were made when the top court was hearing a case concerning the repatriation of certain individuals deported to Bangladesh on the alleged ground that due process was not followed.

During the proceedings, the court was informed that Sunali Khatun, a pregnant woman, and her eight-year old son have come back to India and presently, she is getting medical attention at her father's residence in Birbhum in West Bengal.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi fixed January 6 to hear the Centre's appeal against a Calcutta High Court judgment that directed the repatriation of certain individuals deported to Bangladesh on the alleged ground that the due process was not followed.

During the proceedings, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, expressed strong disapproval of a news report published in an English newspaper regarding the issue. Terming the reportage as "tabloid-like," the top law officer said, "I do not want to escalate ... but attempts are made to build a particular kind of narratives" in a bid to influence the outcome.

The law officer said he was sure that the bench is not influenced by any such reports, but it does cast doubt about the intention to build a particular kind of narrative.

"My faith was shaken," Mehta said.

"We are completely immune from publicity and pseudo-publicity stunts. Narratives should not affect the lives of individuals," Justice Bagchi said. Advising the



CJI Surya Kant

law officer to "just ignore them", the CJI, however, said, "Ideally, ill-informed running commentary on sub-judice matters should not be made."

"The problem is half-baked distorted facts and ill-informed facts are being reported," he said. "Reporting that a matter is coming up (for hearing) is fine. But if you thrust your opinion, then that is an issue. The issue is with half-baked truth and ill-informed opinion which affects public perception," the CJI added.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the West Bengal Government, referred to the media's role in recent times in countries like the UK and the US, and said immigration issues are part of a "global discourse" and comments and public discourses are held on social media and other platforms.

"People write opinions in the US and England on immigration. As long as you don't attribute motive, it is not sacrilege," Sibal said.

At the outset, senior advocate Sanjay Hegde brought to the court's attention the plight of another deportee, Sweetie Bibi, who remains stuck with her husband and two children.

Hegde offered to provide

documents proving their Indian citizenship. He urged the solicitor general to take up the other case on humanitarian grounds, saying, "that side of the border is very difficult for Indians."

The law officer assured Hegde that he will look into the issue and the verification may take sometime.

The court said once documents are verified, modalities for their return could be considered in a time-bound manner.

The case involves families who had been working as daily wagers in Delhi's Rohini area for two decades.

They were detained by police on June 18 on suspicion of being illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and deported on June 27.

The Calcutta High Court, in its impugned order, had observed that the deportation violated the Union Home Ministry's own protocols, which require an inquiry by the state Government before deportation.

The High Court had noted that the "overenthusiasm" in deporting the detainees disturbed the "judicial climate."

Sibal reiterated this point during the hearing and said, "The Union does not inquire for 30 days before deporting them."

OSA case: SC seeks CBI's reply on former R&AW official's plea seeking documents

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday sought a response from the CBI on a former R&AW official's plea seeking documents relied upon by the probe agency in a trial against him under the Official Secrets Act.

A bench of Justices JK Maheshwari and Vijay Bhishnoi issued the notice to the CBI seeking its reply on a plea by Major General VK Singh (retired).

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for Singh, submitted that the High Court on September 19 modified an order of the trial court and stated that the documents relied upon by the CBI in the case can only be inspected by the counsel for petitioner and not supplied to him owing to their sensitive nature. "It is normal procedure under Section 207 of the CrPC where the accused is supplied the document relied upon by the prosecution. The magistrate allowed supply of documents but the High Court modified it," Bhushan said.

Singh has served in the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) and has written a book in which certain allegations of corruption in procurement of equipment were made but the CBI booked him under the Official Secrets Act (OSA), Bhushan said.

The bench said it is seeking CBI's response on the plea and posted the matter for hearing after four weeks.

The CBI has registered a case against Singh on September 20, 2007, on a complaint that he allegedly revealed secret information by publication of his book titled 'India's External Intelligence — Secrets of Research and Analysis Wing'.

Search warrants were issued against Singh on September 20, 2007, and a compliance report was filed on September 24, 2007, in the court.

On April 7, 2008, the Centre authorised the filing of a complaint under Section 13(3) of the Official Secrets Act and a chargesheet was filed in the case under Sections 3 and 5 of the Official Secrets Act, 1923, and Sections 409 and 120B of the IPC on April 11, 2008, with request to keep the classified documents in sealed cover.

The trial court took cognisance of the chargesheet on January 31, 2009, for the offences under Sections 3 and 5 of the Official Secrets Act, 1923, and under Sections 409, 120B of the IPC.

On December 12, 2009, the chief metropolitan magistrate (CMM) allowed the application filed by the respondents under Section 207 of the CrPC and directed the CBI to supply the documents sought by Singh to them after moving appropriate application for desecration of the documents.

However, considering the sensitive nature of the documents, the CMM clarified that the documents supplied to the respondents would remain in the personal custody of the counsel representing Singh, who were to ensure that the documents are not circulated in any manner.

The Delhi High Court on September 19 noted that the CBI is not opposed to the inspection of the documents but in view of their sensitive nature, it sought that a hard copy of the same be not supplied to him. It said the court deems it expedient to allow the inspection of the documents sought by Singh as opposed to the supply of the copies of the documents to the counsel representing him.

"In view of the above, the present petition is allowed to the extent that the impugned order is modified and the respondents along with their duly authorised counsel are permitted to inspect the documents lying with the trial court as and when required to enable the respondents to effectively defend themselves during the trial," it had ordered.

Aggrieved by the order, Singh approached the top court challenging the High Court order.

On May 31, 2023, the High Court had refused to quash a CBI case registered against Singh and said whether the revelations in the book were likely to affect the sovereignty, integrity and security of the country was a matter of trial and what prejudices national security cannot be decided by courts.

Singh, who was a former joint secretary of India's external spy agency, earlier contended before the High Court that his intention to write the book was to highlight issues of lack of accountability and corruption in R&AW and the allegation of revealing secrets harmful to the country's security and sovereignty were totally baseless and unfounded. Singh retired from service in June 2002 and his book was published in June 2007. The FIR was registered against him in 2008.

SC slaps ₹1 lakh costs on NGO for filing a writ petition against its verdict



Justice R Mahadevan

Justice BV Nagarathna

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday took strong exception to the filing of a writ petition that sought to challenge its earlier ruling which grants exemption to the minority schools from the provisions of Right to Education Act (RTE Act). The bench of BV Nagarathna and Justice R Mahadevan saw it as an attempt to bring down the judiciary of the country. "You cannot do this to Supreme Court. We are enraged."

This is against the entire system of judiciary in this country if you start filing such cases. You don't know the seriousness of your case. We are restraining ourselves to 1 lakh cost. Don't bring down the judiciary in this country by filing such cases," Justice Nagarathna remarked. The Court also questioned how advocates were

advising filing of such petitions against top court's own judgments. "What is happening here? Advocates are giving such kind of advice? We will have to penalise the advocates. You are law knowing citizens, professionals, and you file a writ petition challenging the judgement of this Court under Article 32? Grosset abuse! We are restraining ourselves. We are not issuing contempt," it said.

The Court ordered imposition of ₹1 lakh costs on the petitioner United Voice for Education Forum. "Let this be a message to others. You want to crumble the judiciary of this country," it said. The writ petition sought for a declaration that the exemption granted to minority educational institutions, as upheld in Pramati Educational and Cultural Trust v Union of India is unconstitutional to the extent that it grants blanket immunity to them from RTE obligations.

Court to hear on Dec 18 UP Govt plea to withdraw Akhlaq lynching case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Noida

A fast-track court at Surajpur in Gautam Buddha Nagar has fixed December 18 as the date for hearing the application for withdrawal of the case against the accused in the mob lynching of Mohammad Akhlaq.

According to officials, the withdrawal application was filed by the Assistant District Government Advocate (Criminal) following directives from the Government and the Joint Director of Prosecution.

The plea cites restoration of social harmony as the reason for seeking withdrawal of the case. The 52-year-old Akhlaq, a resident of Bisahda village in Dadri area of Gautam Buddha Nagar, was lynched to death on September 28, 2015 by a mob allegedly over suspicion that he had stored beef in his house.

The matter came up before the court of the Additional District and Sessions Judge, where the prosecution informed that it had moved the withdrawal plea in compliance with an order issued by the State's Justice Section-5 (Criminal), Lucknow, on August 26.

Yusuf Saifi, counsel for the Akhlaq family, told media, "The court has set December 18 as the date for hearing the application for withdrawal of the case against the accused in the mob lynching of Mohammad Akhlaq."

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The lynching case is being heard by a fast-track court here in which the judgment is awaited.

CAPF jawans face eviction, penalties over 2017 policy; plan to move SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Hit by penalties and a near possibility of eviction of their families, hundreds of CAPF personnel — deployed in hard duty areas hit by Naxalism, terrorism and insurgency — have decided to petition the Supreme Court and the Union home ministry for succour, officials said on Friday.

The jawans and officers are worried for their families and finances with regard to an "adverse order" issued against them regarding the general pool residential accommodation (GPRA) houses provided by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) in metro cities of Delhi, Kolkata and Chandigarh to paramilitary forces personnel for keeping their families.

"Till 2017, the personnel were allowed to keep their families and children in these cities under the GPRA scheme for as long as they were deployed in hard areas."

"That year, a new rule was brought by the housing ministry restricting allotment of

these houses to these jawans and officers for only 3 years, jeopardising the education of their children and medical issues of their family members," a senior CAPF officer told PTI.

Ninety-five per cent of these personnel stayed in Delhi, where the MoHUA has said there was "an acute shortage of residential quarters and a long waiting list of eligible officers seeking accommodation."

A second officer said a number of the affected jawans and officers petitioned the Delhi High Court in 2020, and the court initially stayed the MoHUA order.

In July this year, the HC issued its final order and refused the personnel any relief, and they are now being served monetary penalty notices by the ministry for "overstaying" and for "eviction".

"Where do we go? How do we pay such high penalty amounts that are running into lakhs of rupees, and in one case, a jawan has been penalised for over ₹1 crore in the name of damage

charges?" a jawan said on the condition of anonymity.

All this is happening when we are still deployed in hard areas, tackling major internal security challenges that the country is facing. However, the MoHUA, in May this year, strangely granted a one-time exemption from this clause (Rule 43) to CPWD employees serving in border areas, a senior officer said.

The CAPF jawans and officers said this was a "step-motherly" treatment to them as they serve the country in high-risk and hard internal security duty areas.

A senior Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) officer said the MHA was "in cognisance of the issue and has held meetings with the MoHUA."

"A full solution regarding waiver of the penalty and extension of the GPRA scheme, like what was till the year 2017, is in works," he told PTI. The officer said the MHA had written a communication on December 2 to all CAPFs asking them to inform them about all such cases so that a "corrective" action can be taken.

Editor's

TAKE

SAARC: A regional dream needing renewal

At 40, SAARC is not obsolete. It is underutilised. Its future depends not on rewriting its Charter but on renewing its political imagination

Forty years ago, South Asia envisioned a regional alliance that would serve the collective interests of a region home to one-fifth of humanity. Inspired by successful models like ASEAN, leaders believed that shared history and geography could form the foundation for meaningful cooperation. Yet the promise of this vision remained unfulfilled. While other regional blocs prospered, SAARC – the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation – struggled to take off. Despite its lofty ideals and sincere efforts, political fault lines repeatedly overshadowed the organisation's purpose, preventing the region from realising the benefits of true collaboration.

As South Asia marked the 40th anniversary of the SAARC Charter in Kathmandu this week, it is time to reflect on what exactly happened and why the region that needs cooperation could not cooperate. In Kathmandu, the occasion was rich in symbolism and sober in its reminders. Diplomats, policymakers, and representatives from across the region gathered to commemorate a vision conceived in 1985 - one that aspired to bind the subcontinent in cooperation, dialogue, and shared progress. Despite the lip service to it, the big question is where SAARC stands today, and whether it can reclaim the promise it once held or it is time to give it an august requiem. SAARC's journey over four decades can be described in two words – hope and hesitation.

The SAARC Food Bank, the South Asian University, the SAARC Development Fund, and regional agreements on trade and energy cooperation demonstrated a willingness to create shared platforms for collective benefit. These platforms were indeed a step in the right direction, but they still lack on delivery. SAARC's greatest success has arguably been its ability to keep a diverse and often fractious neighbourhood engaged in dialogue. Indeed, SAARC remains a rare forum where South Asian nations can meet as equals, beyond bilateral constraints. In this sense, it has served as a stabilising anchor – a reminder that geography binds the region far more tightly than politics divides it. Yet the challenges have been equally persistent. The organisation has long been hostage to political tensions, especially between India and Pakistan. SAARC's consensus-based model, once seen as a strength, has become its weakness. Summits have been postponed, agreements stalled, and meaningful integration – particularly in trade – remains far below potential. Secretary General Md Golam Sarwar's remarks during the anniversary reception reflected both pride and pragmatism. He acknowledged SAARC's evolution - from institution-building in the first decades to broader global engagement today. But global outreach cannot substitute for intra-regional dynamism. Without political will, even the most well-crafted charters remain aspirational. The road ahead demands realism. Reviving SAARC does not require rewriting its Charter but functional cooperation in areas that transcend political divides, like health, climate adaptation, and cultural exchanges. At 40, SAARC is not obsolete but underutilised; its future lies in realising its strengths.



ASHOK K MEHTA

Pokhara has long been the cradle and nursery of Nepali Gorkha recruitment, a tradition abruptly halted in June 2022 when India dropped the Agniveer “bombshell” on Nepal and its Gorkha community. Until then, approximately 1,200 to 1,600 Nepal Domiciled Gorkhas (NDGs) were inducted into the Indian Army each year. Although there were hints that such a move was coming-given Agniveer's tactical and strategic flaws-virtually no one outside the PMO and NSA Ajit Doval knew the plan would actually be implemented. The scheme has since drawn serious criticism from former service chiefs. Agniveer was conceived to cut manpower costs, especially pensions under OROP, which in 2019 exceeded even the modernisation budget. Yet it was marketed as an effort to “youth-ify” a military that was already among the world's youngest and fittest. Recruitment was initially halted under the pretext of Covid-19, even as far more crowded activities like elections and the Kumbh Mela continued. In reality, the freeze that began in 2020 served to cut salary and pension allocations.

At the Chanakya Dialogue in November 2025, Defence Secretary Rajesh Singh lamented that India's defence spending had dipped below 2 per cent of GDP. With recruitment paused for nearly three years, combined with Agniveer's limited intake and the annual retirement of 60,000 soldiers, fighting units-typically 850 strong-are now short by 120 to 140 soldiers. The worst hit are the 38 Gorkha battalions, the Army's largest regiment, which have not recruited a single Nepali Gorkha in six years. India was fortunate that Operation Sindoor did not escalate beyond visual-range exchanges, given such manpower deficiencies.

From the gate of the Embassy of India Pension Paying Office in Pokhara's Ram Bazaar (formerly Rum Bazaar), one can still see the majestic Machapuchare massif watching over the town. Gold shops have multiplied despite the rising cost of bullion and shrinking remittances from the dwindling Brigade of Gorkhas. Yet ex-servicemen (ESM) are no longer openly lamenting Nepal's ban on sending recruits or Delhi's silence. Before the Gen Z uprising, nearly 60 per cent of Nepal's Parliament comprised Communist MPs who had long opposed foreign military recruitment-even as 2,000 Nepalese youth leave the country daily in search of work.

Today, ESM prefer to stay quiet, just 90 days after the September uprising that produced an interim government. Many are now willing to accept Agniveer terms, even if reluctantly, but the Nepal government continues to oppose



AT THE
CHANAKYA
DIALOGUE IN
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RAJESH SINGH
LAMENTED THAT
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DIPPED BELOW 2
PER CENT OF
GDP

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The Pioneer

them. A future Parliament with a non-Communist majority may soften its stance. For the Gorkha community, the issue is existential: they do not want their legacy of valour to fade. Neither India nor Nepal has taken the initiative for a frank dialogue.

Delhi neither informed Kathmandu nor explained the implications of Agniveer. Nepal, for its part, referenced the 1947 Tripartite Treaty with the UK and India, hinting that the scheme might violate its spirit. Legally, Agniveer is tenable, but the dispute is fundamentally political and strategic, requiring high-level engagement. The dispute began in June 2022, when the Indian Embassy sought routine permission to conduct recruitment rallies. Kathmandu did not respond. Nepal signalled that the truncated terms of service-four years, only 25 per cent retention, and no pension for those discharged-were unacceptable compared to the earlier 15-year minimum service with pension. While the Indian Army has taken the hit, the British Army and Nepal Army have benefited. The British Army has always been the top choice due to better pay, but for combat exposure, discipline, and character building, the Indian Army remains unrivalled. Meanwhile, the Odisha Police and several Indian states, including Bihar, have tapped the gap by recruiting thousands of Nepali Gorkhas.

At the official level, India appears unperturbed by the loss of NDGs, seeing it as shedding colonial baggage. An MEA official even remarked that Nepal “has not come back to us.” The Army hierarchy has shown little concern, though senior commanders continue to swear by their Gorkha battalions. Senior Gorkha offi-

cers, including CDS Gen Anil Chauhan, have maintained silence, accepting the scheme as a “political decision.” Veterans hope matters will somehow resolve, yet no unified “Save the Gorkha” campaign has emerged despite the presence of a former Army Chief and dozens of Army Commanders from the regiment.

Among those advocating for a revival of recruitment is Subedar Khem Jung Gurung, a versatile ESM and member of the Janata Samajwadi Party. He told me in Pokhara that this is a “Gen Z ko sarkar,” and that since youth want to join-even under

Agniveer – the issue must be pursued. For Gorkhas, this is about preserving an identity forged in blood and history.

Only Prime Minister Modi can amend Agniveer to carve out an exception for Nepal, but little attention has been paid to the scheme's impact on India-Nepal relations.

Questions over NDG loyalty have also surfaced. However, Indian officers posted across Nepal-many from Gorkha regiments-affirm that Gorkha ESM remain loyal to India, except on sensitive issues like the Kalapani dispute or the 2015 blockade. They refer to India as “hamro Bharat” and “Daju” (elder brother)-terms of affection, not doubt. For Nepal's remittance-driven economy, Gorkha pensions and salaries-around ₹5,000 crore annually-are vital, especially after the losses from the Gen Z uprising. By 2075, when India hopes to be “Viksit Bharat,” the last Gorkha soldier may retire, his aura long diminished.

This is a collective, avoidable loss: economic for Nepal, emotional for Gorkhas, and strategic for India. Are Modi and Doval listening?

The Pioneer

SINCE 1865

The one true purpose of life: Taking shelter of God



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

2ND OPINION

THE PIONEER

Human life appears complex, yet its true purpose is profoundly simple: to take shelter of God and advance ourselves spiritually. The *Bhagavad Gita* (15.7) states that we are souls, eternal parts of God. If we were merely our bodies, then why are these bodies discarded after death-burned or buried without hesitation, even by those dearest to us? The answer is clear: the body is not our true identity. We are souls, and souls do not die. However, merely recognising this truth is not enough.

As eternal souls, we continue to wander through different bodies and species according to the Karmaphala Principle – “as you sow, so shall you reap.” Throughout this journey, we face sickness, old age, and death. We

move helplessly under the influence of the three modes of nature-goodness, passion, and darkness. The Gita describes how goodness binds us with happiness, passion binds us with desires and restless activity, and darkness binds with ignorance, laziness, and delusion.

These modes form not only our bodies but shape our tendencies, choices, and life outcomes. Is our situation hopeless? Not at all. God's grace is available, but we must consciously take shelter in Him. The first step is strengthening the mode of goodness within ourselves. As Krishna explains, whatever we place our faith in, we eventually become (17.3). When we cultivate goodness, it becomes our nature and leads us to live by *maryada* – social and moral discipline. From *maryada* arises *dharma*, the foundation of fairness and order in creation. Dharma pleases God, who incarnates whenever it declines (4.7).

Once established in goodness, we naturally move towards seva-selfless service. Souls are meant to serve; creation cannot function if everyone seeks only enjoyment. Wealth or privilege can produce the illusion that others exist to serve us, but life quickly reminds us how dependent and helpless humans truly are. The wise choose service until their last breath, remaining useful and respected. Those who serve cultivate humility, which is essential for taking shelter of God.

As we obey God's instructions and serve others, a deeper connection forms-God begins to guide and shape His devotee's life personally.

God's guidance is invaluable. Who can guide us better than the Omniscient? When we pray sincerely, God gives direction, strength, and protection. Krishna promises, “For those who worship Me with undivided devotion, I provide what they lack and preserve what they have” (9.22). True peace comes only from God's mercy; without it, happiness remains distant, and people settle for fleeting sense pleasures that ultimately drain them.

Yet, in daily life, what do we usually do? We study, work, earn, struggle, age, and eventually face death with uncertainty. No amount of wealth, power, fame, or knowledge brings lasting peace or security. The cycle of birth continues, life after life, with little spiritual progress.

The conclusion is clear: we must actively take shelter of God-now. Delay only prolongs our suffering. The wise reject this endless cycle, strive for liberation while living (jeevan mukti), and ultimately gain entry into Vaikuntha, our eternal home.

The writer is a spiritual teacher

RAJINIKANTH AT SEVENTY-FIVE: A TIMELESS CINEMATIC PHENOMENON

A living legend whose journey from bus conductor to global icon continues to inspire millions, Rajinikanth's legacy is not just about superstardom - it is about humility, discipline, and an energy that remains unmatched in Indian cinema. His style, his screen presence, and his larger-than-life aura are phenomena that generations have celebrated and will continue to celebrate. Here's to the Thalaivaa, whose magic only grows stronger with time.

Rajinikanth's rise in the Indian film industry – known for its glamour, family networks, and rigid hierarchies – remains one of the most astounding success stories. His five decades in cinema stand as proof of authenticity, reinvention, and an unequalled charisma. As he turns 75, it is worth revisiting a

journey that has created a legacy stretching across languages, generations, and borders.

Superstar Rajinikanth recently shared an interesting behind-the-scenes moment from Padayappa. Aishwarya Rai Bachchan was his first choice for the iconic role of Neelambari, and the team reportedly spent months trying to secure her dates, even willing to wait years if required. However, Aishwarya was not interested, and Ramya Krishnan eventually took on the role – delivering a powerful performance that became legendary and left an indelible mark on Tamil cinema.

Rajinikanth continues to evolve with grace as the years pass. At seventy-five, he still shows India what true greatness feels like.

CK SUBRAMANIAM | MUMBAI

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

End violence against children now

Physical punishment by parents remains widespread in India, despite its serious social impact. In many homes, hitting children is still seen as acceptable discipline. Minor mistakes – a broken object, poor marks, or disobedience - often lead to slapping or beating, justified with remarks like “This is how children learn” or “We were beaten too.” Such beliefs, rooted in habit rather than evidence, normalise violence in the home.

Research shows corporal punishment does not improve behaviour. Instead, it creates fear, trauma, anxiety, aggression, and low self-esteem. Children may obey out of fear, not understanding, and those raised with violence often struggle emotionally as adults, sometimes repeating the cycle. The silence around the issue worsens it. While school violence faces criticism, violence inside homes remains largely invisible. Children are discouraged from speaking up, and society often defends parents without questioning harmful methods. Awareness and community action are urgently needed. Parenting workshops, counselling, sensitisation campaigns, and school outreach can promote non-violent, emotionally intelligent discipline. Fear may force obedience, but it cannot build trust or confidence. A child who is loved should not have to learn through pain.

BLOOM

India's digital dilemma for children

This refers to the editorial “Should India ban social media for kids?” (December 12, 2025). The argument that tech addiction now mirrors earlier public-health crises is hard to dispute, especially as children spend more time online than in real-world interactions. The editorial rightly notes that a blanket ban, though emotionally appealing, may neither be practical nor effective in a country as large and unequal as India.

What we are witnessing is not merely overuse of devices but a deeper shift in how young minds process information, communicate, and cope with stress. Reports of anxiety, aggression, and declining attention spans underline how urgent the problem has become.

India needs layered solutions that combine digital literacy, parental involvement, psychological support, and curriculum redesign. Some encouraging signs are visible in community-driven initiatives where parents and educators are trying to rebuild healthy digital habits. The real challenge is ensuring these efforts scale beyond urban pockets and reach families with limited awareness or access to support.

A national framework that guides schools, equips parents, and sets age-appropriate online norms would be a more sustainable step forward.

K SAKUNTHALA | COIMBATORE

Australia's bold social media ban

The recent decision to ban the use of social media by children and teenagers marks a landmark moment in online safety. The Australian Government passed a new law, the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024, on November 28, 2024. This legislation introduces a mandatory minimum age of 16 for accounts on designated social media platforms. It came into effect on 10 December 2025, and parents cannot give consent for under-16s to access these platforms.

The ban currently applies to YouTube, X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Reddit, Twitch, Threads, and Kick. Technology companies that own these platforms could face fines of up to \$50 million if they fail to take reasonable steps to prevent under-16s from creating or maintaining accounts. Apps designed specifically for younger users, such as Messenger Kids, WhatsApp, Kids Helpline, Google Classroom, and YouTube Kids, are expected to remain exempt from the ban. Critics have expressed concern about the large-scale data collection required to verify users' ages, and the associated risks of data theft and breaches of privacy. Nonetheless, supporters view this decision as a necessary step towards improving digital well-being and protecting children from online harm.

DIMPLE WADHAWAN | KANPUR NAGAR

Goa nightclub inferno exposes India’s fire safety crisis

As the nation mourns those who lost their lives in the Birch nightclub blaze, the incident stands as a grim reminder that India’s fire safety apparatus is dangerously out of sync with its rapid urban growth and booming entertainment culture



SATENDRA SINGH

On the night of December 6, 2025, Birch — a trendy nightclub tucked near one of Goa’s busiest beaches — was buzzing with pulsating lights, music, and more than a hundred partygoers revelling at a “Bollywood Banger Night.” But at around 11:45 pm, the festive mood turned into pure terror. A sudden blast-believed to have been caused by indoor electrical firecrackers-triggered a chain reaction. Within seconds, flames shot across the club’s interior, igniting decorative materials and plunging the venue into chaos. Panic seized the crowd as thick smoke consumed the space. Patrons rushed towards a single, narrow exit-quickly turning it into a death trap. Flammable ornaments became towering torches. Those in the basement reportedly suffocated as smoke filled the air, while others were crushed in the desperate stampede.

After nearly two painstaking hours, fire-fighters finally managed to control the blaze. By then, 25 people-including young workers from various states and several tourists-had lost their lives. Over 50 were injured. Investigations soon confirmed the worst: the nightclub lacked basic fire safety clearances, had received demolition notices earlier, and had no functional fire exits. The tragedy was not a freak accident-it was a predictable catastrophe waiting to happen.

The Goa incident mirrors a long, troubling history of deadly fires across India. In recent years alone, a series of fatal incidents has shaken the nation: in Hyderabad, 17 people died when a three-storey commercial building caught fire. A month earlier, a hotel blaze in north Kolkata killed 14 guests. In 2024, an amusement arcade fire in Gujarat claimed 24 lives-mostly children.

And these incidents echo older tragedies that continue to haunt public memory: the Uphar Cinema fire (1997), the Kumbakonam school blaze (2004), the AMRI Hospital catastrophe (2011), and the Puttingal Temple explosion (2016). Despite their varied settings-schools, hospitals, cinemas, hotels, nightclubs-the causes remain alarmingly similar: illegal structures, overcrowding, flammable interiors, blocked exits, and blatant flouting of safety norms. India’s fire



THE GOA TRAGEDY MUST SERVE AS A TURNING POINT. IF INDIA EMBRACES THE PRINCIPLES OF RISK RECOGNITION, STRONG GOVERNANCE, SAFETY INVESTMENT, AND PREPAREDNESS, COUNTLESS LIVES CAN BE SAVED

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disasters follow a familiar, deadly pattern: an ignition source, rapid flame spread, locked or obstructed exits, dysfunctional alarms, absence of trained personnel, and slow emergency response. The Goa tragedy fits this template all too closely.

India has fire safety laws, standards, and building codes-but their implementation is inconsistent and often compromised. Many establishments operate without valid fire safety certificates. Approvals are sometimes obtained through opaque processes, while others brazenly skip them altogether.

Common violations include:

- Non-functional alarms and sprinklers
- Out-of-date or inaccessible fire extinguishers
- Blocked exits used for storage
- Combustible interiors and illegal building extensions
- Untrained staff lacking basic emergency preparedness

Urban design issues worsen the problem. Narrow lanes, clogged streets, and the absence of hydrants frequently delay firefighting operations. In Goa, fire trucks reportedly had to stop 400 metres away due to the nightclub’s isolated layout, slowing rescue efforts at the most critical moment. Compounding this is public complacency. Rarely do people check for emergency exits, functioning

alarms, or building certifications. Safety is often assumed-until tragedy exposes the truth.

Fire Safety Norms: Strong on Paper, Weak in Practice

India’s National Building Code and state fire laws prescribe detailed standards-multiple exits, smoke detectors, fire-resistant materials, routine audits, trained staff, and emergency ventilation systems. Such requirements are mandatory for public venues, especially enclosed spaces like malls, clubs, hotels, and auditoriums.

Yet many establishments treat these norms as optional. The Goa nightclub’s complete lack of permissions and use of combustible décor reflects a deeper national problem: the gap between what is mandated and what is practised. And that gap is often fatal.

A Growing Threat in a Rapidly Urbanising India

As India’s urban centres expand and nightlife, tourism, and hospitality industries boom, millions flock to indoor entertainment spaces daily. But regulation and infrastructure have not kept pace with this surge. The mismatch between expanding demand and stagnant safety standards has made such spaces increasingly vulnerable. If India aspires to be a

global tourism hub and a modern economy, recurring fire disasters are an unacceptable stain on that ambition. They send a strong message-that human life is undervalued, and safety is negotiable.

What India Can Learn from Global Disaster Frameworks

India must shift from reacting to fires to preventing them. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction-a global blueprint for minimising disaster losses-offers a useful model. Its core principles can help India revamp its fire safety ecosystem.

- Understanding Risks Before They Turn Deadly

Authorities must identify vulnerable buildings, illegal constructions, and high-risk zones. AI-enabled monitoring systems, heat sensors, and real-time smoke detection tools can help pre-empt fires. Public awareness must grow: people should know where exits are, learn basic firefighting skills, and report unsafe establishments. Regular fire drills in schools, offices, and public buildings must become routine.

- Strengthening Governance and Accountability

Fire departments require better staffing, equipment, and legal powers. Audits

should be transparent and accessible to the public. Violators-owners, contractors, and officials-must face strict penalties. Political or commercial influence should never override safety requirements.

- Investing in Safer Infrastructure and Cities

Buildings should adopt modern sprinklers, alarms, fire-resistant materials, and safe architectural designs. Cities need wider access roads, hydrants, and clearly planned emergency lanes. Tourist hotspots with heavy footfall can benefit from dedicated safety monitoring units. Incentives such as insurance rebates can encourage compliance.

- Preparing for Emergencies and Rebuilding Better

Emergency training for staff of public venues must be compulsory. Panic buttons, digital alert systems, and faster communication channels can drastically reduce response time. After any disaster, reconstruction must follow the “Build Back Better” principle-ensuring that the rebuilt structure eliminates previous weaknesses.

A Call for Urgency, Accountability, and Change

The Goa nightclub blaze is not just a tragic accident-it is a moral indictment of systemic negligence. Twenty-five lives, including young workers and an entire family of tourists from Delhi, were lost in a matter of minutes. Their deaths must stir the nation’s conscience and compel immediate reform. Fire disasters are not acts of fate. They are the consequences of choices-by business owners who ignore safety rules, by officials who fail to enforce them, and by a society that overlooks risks until it is too late.

As India moves towards a future of rapid development, its safety systems must evolve too. No nightclub, hotel, banquet hall, or public venue should ever become a site of avoidable

carriage.

The Goa tragedy must serve as a turning point. If India embraces the principles of risk recognition, strong governance, safety investment, and preparedness, countless lives can be saved. The country must act now-because every day lost increases the chance of the next headline of preventable deaths and needless grief.

Fire safety should not be treated as an afterthought. It should be a national priority. Lives depend on it.

The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

The collective ego: GDP over wisdom



ACHARYA PRASHANT

The stock ticker scrolls across the bottom of the screen, numbers, numbers, numbers, and a man watches it as if it is scripture. His coffee grows cold, his child calls from the other room, and he barely hears. The numbers have become more real to him than life. He has a rich library in the same room: Nagarjuna and Nietzsche, Upanishads and Ulysses. He does not remember when he last touched it.

Nations were supposed to emerge from the distilled wisdom of a people, yet they end up mirroring the collective ego. What the individual does with net worth, the nation does with GDP, treating what can be counted and compared as proof of worth. We call this sanity, then wonder why both person and country feel perpetually cornered, as if resting were forbidden.

Individuals need a bank balance to feel rich, and nations need a surplus to feel powerful. Yet we rarely name this as fear. We rename it ambition, practicality, and maturity. Even our vocabulary has learned to flatter the disease.

Underneath all the spreadsheets runs one primitive panic: if we stop worshipping wealth, we will collapse. We will be overtaken, and the hungrier neighbour will devour us. So we keep running, consuming, extracting, destroying, and we name it progress.

Ahead of what? Toward what?

Look at the man who buys a bigger car, then a bigger house, then a bigger portfolio, each purchase whispering a familiar promise: this time I will feel complete. But the promise never matures because the hunger is not in the garage; it is in the mind.

Now look at the country with a huge GDP, an unsurpassable military budget, a lion’s share of global trade, a higher ranking, and a louder voice in international fora. The pattern is identical, only scaled up and decorated with flags. The individual ego and the collective ego run on the same fuel, acquiring more to become more, because being seen as small feels like death.

This is not economics in the innocent sense. It is insecurity pretending to be policy, the ego turning into administration.

GDP looks objective, so it becomes the perfect idol. It counts activity, not sanity. A flood raises GDP through repairs, a war through weapons, a forest when it is cut and sold, and air pollution through the sale of air purifiers. Even exhaustion passes as prosperity if enough people work long enough hours. The number rises, and we call it progress, without asking what kind of life is being purchased or what is being destroyed to fund it.

At the core of the concept lies valuation: anything that a people find materially valuable will

add to their GDP. But what if the people, i.e., the individual, have not learnt what to value? What if they value ornaments over knowledge, and weapons over wisdom?

You ask whether a nation without material strength will be conquered. The question sounds reasonable, but it is usually asked with a trembling hand, because fear is doing the thinking. Fear recognises only crude strength and refuses to acknowledge the deeper strength of a society that is inwardly stable and educated, and therefore harder to stampede. Fear then distorts the question into the false either — or dilemma, as if wisdom means starvation and subjugation.

When a society changes what it respects, the economy changes what it produces, because output is only the shadow of values. If status comes from owning, life becomes a showroom, politics becomes the management of craving, and relationships become transactions. If status comes from understanding and contribution, people step out of the consumptive spell, not through forced austerity but because they stop trying to buy an identity.

Can our talent not flow differently? Must our brightest spend their best years manufacturing addictions and monetising attention? They could build schools, labs, public systems, and art that refines perception. Business would change character as well, for it merely follows society’s definition of success.

This is why the fear of collapse is usually exaggerated. Economies do not die when values elevate. They reorganise, sometimes painfully, sometimes slowly, but always for the better.

So why does the GDP obsession remain so stubborn, even when it is clearly burning the planet and hollowing out the human being? Because it is not mainly economic. It is psychological.

GDP obsession is ego hunger dressed in spreadsheets, a craving for proof that can be displayed. A skyline, a portfolio, a surplus, a headline, a chart, something that looks clean and therefore feels holy. Wisdom, contentment, and inner clarity cannot be flaunted at parties or parliaments or global summits, nor can they be used to bulldoze one’s desires or ideologies on the other. And that is precisely why the ego calls them useless.

We see why GDP worship is so convenient for power. It lets you point to graphs instead of graves, to celebrate exports while ignoring extinctions, to announce growth while the inner quality of human life quietly decays. It keeps the gaze outward, toward competitors and rankings and trophies, and away from the one place where real change begins: the self, the individual that is forever trying to escape its own emptiness by adding more.

The ego knows itself as hollow, so it keeps demanding external certification: tell me I matter, tell me I am bigger than the other. The individual does it through possessions and applause, the country does it through rankings, parades, and slogans about being the largest and the fastest, the same hunger with a grander microphone. That is why the story of Nachiketa still burns. Death offers him everything that looks

impressive: kingdoms, gold, pleasures, long life, and Nachiketa refuses because he sees the expiry date. He asks for what does not perish, and the story becomes a mirror: which currency do you trust, the one that lasts till tomorrow, or the one that survives the fall of all tomorrows?

Nations face the same choice.

This is not mushy fantasy. Yes, contemplation does not automatically protect borders, and refinement can degenerate into negligence if clarity is missing. When inwardness becomes laziness, and vigilance is mocked as worldly, the neighbour with fewer poems and more missiles rampages in, and history has shown that enough times.

This is not wisdom instead of strength. It is wisdom directing strength: preparedness without aggression, capability without obsession, defence without vanity.

What would a nation rooted in wisdom look like? Not primitive, not anti-technology, not allergic to comfort, because infrastructure, science, and medicine are not sins. The change would be in the guiding question, shifting from “What’s the quantity of goods we are producing?” to “What’s the quality of human beings we are producing?”

In such a society, education is not only for employment but for self-knowledge and freedom from inner slavery. Art is not merely entertainment; it is training in sensitivity, honesty, and depth. Industries that profit from dissatisfaction are called out, because much of advertising is not communication but a manufacture of inner lack. The cleanest economy is not merely the one with transparent accounting. It is the one where people do not consume their way out of inner emptiness. When joy is found within, compulsive extraction reduces-extraction of the Earth, of others, and of one’s own body and mind. A nation of such people does not withdraw from the world; it trades, builds, collaborates, defends itself, and innovates, yet is not enslaved by the need for more. It does not treat the economy as a god and the human being as fuel. It knows what to value, because value arises from the valuer. When the valuer has self-knowledge, she knows who she is and therefore what she needs. What is truly needed gains value; the rest stands devalued. That is the economy we need.

The real question is not whether economies can reorganise; they can and always have. The question is whether we can see the ego’s terror of a world where it cannot prove its worth through ownership. Those numbers scrolling across the screen reveal nothing; they only save you from having to face yourself. Dissolve that fear, and a different civilisation becomes possible, not poorer, not weaker, simply no longer terrified of its own depth.

The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

“What’s the quality of human beings we are producing?”

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Resurgence of Ashwagandha



VAIDYA RAJESH KOTECHA

As the world confronts new stresses on health, society and the environment, a universal realisation is taking shape: restoring balance is no longer a philosophical idea but an urgent global priority. This sense of urgency lies at the heart of the Second WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine, which India is proud to co-host with the World Health Organisation from 17–19 December 2025 in New Delhi. Guided by the newly adopted WHO Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034, the Summit marks a decisive step in elevating traditional knowledge through evidence, innovation and global cooperation.

Traditional Medicine is increasingly recognised as a living, evolving science that can complement conventional healthcare systems and advance Universal Health Coverage. For India, this acknowledgement resonates deeply. Our civilisation has long held a holistic view of well-being — one that sees the individual in harmony with community, nature and the wider universe. Today, that wisdom is finding new relevance through rigorous scientific validation and responsible integration into global health frameworks.

Among India’s vast repository of medicinal plants, Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera) has emerged as a symbol of this convergence between tradition and conventional science. Once known primarily as a Rasayana in Ayurveda and widely used in Ayush systems for enhancing vitality and resilience, it is now studied across the world for its adaptogenic, neuroprotective and immunomodulatory potential. In Ayush systems, Ashwagandha’s roots are used for its health and therapeutic benefits. Rarely has a medicinal plant drawn such simultaneous attention from researchers, clinicians, regulators and global industry leaders.

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Recognising this moment, the upcoming Summit will host a dedicated session titled “Ashwagandha: From Traditional Wisdom to Global Impact – Perspectives from Leading Global Experts.” This side event represents more than a technical discussion; it reflects a turning point in how the world views botanicals and their role in the future of healthcare. Over two hours, international experts will explore the growing body of clinical and pre-clinical evidence on Ashwagandha, discuss its safety profiles and pharmacovigilance systems, and place traditional knowledge in dialogue with conventional scientific methodologies.

They will also address one of the most critical issues for global acceptance: the standardization of extracts and formulations, so that efficacy and safety remain consistent regardless of where the product is manufactured or consumed.

Such discussions are essential because global trust cannot be built on tradition alone; it must be anchored in evidence. India has undertaken extensive scientific work to establish Ashwagandha’s therapeutic value, but wider international collaboration is crucial for harmonised standards, regulatory convergence and transparent data sharing. This is precisely what the WHO’s Summit framework enables. By inviting scientists, policymakers and knowledge-keepers to a common platform, it helps create pathways that respect cultural heritage while meeting the stringent expectations of conventional health systems.

The significance of Ashwagandha’s journey cannot be separated from the broader themes of the Summit. Traditional medicine is not only about healing individuals; it is deeply tied to biodiversity, sustainability and community livelihoods. The medicinal plants we celebrate today — from Ashwagandha to countless others — are nurtured by ecosystems that must be protected. A holistic approach to health therefore demands ethical sourcing, sustainable cultivation and fair value distribution to farmers and indigenous communities. The Summit’s wider discussions on intellectual property rights, biodiversity preservation and cross-sector innovation reflect this integrated vision.

As global leaders, scientists and practitioners gather in New Delhi, India’s message is simple yet forward-looking: traditional medicine stands as a strong ally in building resilient, affordable and balanced health systems. It offers approaches that are preventive rather than reactive, personalised rather than generic, and rooted in a profound understanding of the interconnectedness of life.

Ashwagandha stands at the forefront of this evolution. It represents how a herb nurtured in India’s soil for millennia can now serve humanity across continents—not by abandoning its heritage, but by embracing scientific validation and global partnerships. Its story reflects the larger journey of Traditional Medicine itself: grounded in ancient wisdom, shaped by conventional science and propelled by a shared commitment to human well-being.

As India welcomes the world to the Second WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine, we reaffirm our dedication to advancing scientific rigour, fostering international cooperation and ensuring that the wisdom of our ancestors continues to illuminate the path to a healthier, more harmonious future.

The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

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NAME GAME



Most governments, both central and states, generally indulge in name changes. The name of the existing welfare projects are changed, roads and streets are renamed, and new schemes are named as per the wishes of the regimes, and not as per historical practices. The reasons can be many. Officials may want to highlight the names of the new political leaders, prime ministers, and chief ministers. They may wish to remove the names of the old ones who belonged to the opposing and competing political parties. Legacies need to be removed, new names added that may become the future ones. The naming and renaming exercises go on over decades in the new nations, and over the centuries in the older states. The efforts to determine which names will remain, and which vanish never ends. Hence, it is not surprising that the name of the popular scheme under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) is now Puiya Babu Gramin Rozgar Yojana (PBGRY).

In this specific case, there are several specific reasons to change the name. One of them is that this central regime does not believe in popularising the names of personalities, and political families. Indeed, one of the reasons for its three consecutive victories is because of the precise, crisp, and regular attacks on specific families within the Congress Party. Although several leaders across the political spectrum still follow the earlier generations' profession, there is at least a public impression created to disassociate from the continuing practice. This is evident from the fact that most of the schemes in the past 11 years are named after a more general Pradhan Mantri (Prime Minister), rather than a specific personality, or personalities. In addition, the names used earlier were removed. The personality cult is enhanced through other means such as massive national advertising, which has large displayed images. In most cases, the photographs of the prime minister are visibly larger than those of the chief ministers, and central ministers.

Another major reason for the changes is to remove past, and historical legacies. For example, in the recent past, the names of some of the colonial laws were changed to give them distinct Indian identities. This provides a nationalist fervour to the entire exercises. Indeed, the ruling leaders confidently espouse that their attempts are to establish India, and Bharat as entities with their own culture, traditions, beliefs, civilisation, and ancient past. De-linking the nation with the Mughals, British, and other past rulers is crucial for the citizens to feel themselves as a part of a separate nation. This logic includes disconnecting the past, present, and future with the main Congress Party that emerged as the frontrunner in the freedom movement, and ruled the country for six decades in the next 78 years. The idea was to disconnect some of the prominent prime ministers, who deliberately gave names to the national welfare schemes, and other programmes, and associated others who were popular leaders.

Apart from politics, nationalism, and identity, symbolism is clearly an embedded objective. Renaming public spaces and national projects allows the governments to "shape national narratives," and enhance specific debates and discussions. They may not have a direct impact over electoral equations, immediate identities, and instant political gains, but slowly and steadily allow the narratives to sink into the hearts and minds of sections of the population, who hear and talk about the new names. In an insidious manner, the citizens, or part of them, slowly distance themselves from the old personalities, and political and societal legacies. Thus, new ones are born, and symbolism, whether one likes it or not, contributes to this change. This enables the ruling regimes to claim credit for the old programmes, which were initiated by the previous rulers. Instead of personalities, the focus shifts to institutions, which are long-lasting, and enable political parties to claim the schemes as their own.

Thus, the change of MNREGA to PBRY is a continuation of the old practices that the ruling regimes have accepted in the recent past. The change of name from Mahatma Gandhi to Puiya Babu is obviously linked to the personality cult. Although the political regimes cannot wean away from the name of the Mahatma, who is still revered throughout the country, it is smart to introduce him as 'Puiya Babu,' rather than a name. This is akin to the practice of using Pradhan Mantri, or Prime Minister, as an institution, rather than a personality. The usage of Babu, which is an identity like Mahatma, gets rid of the association with the Congress Party, which considers the Mahatma as its leader, apart from his national identity. Babu constitutes an effort to give it a nationalist twist, rather than a specific political one. Suddenly, Mahatma Gandhi emerges as Puiya Babu, which changes the national narrative in meaningful ways.

Obviously, the name change comes with changes in the rural unemployment scheme, which was launched two decades ago by a Congress regime. Instead of 100 days, the new norms offer guaranteed employment in rural areas for 125 days in a year. The minimum wages offered to an individual is revised to a higher ₹240 per day. Recently, the Government introduced the rules to four new labour codes that aim to revolutionise the laws. The changed name of a rural labour scheme is a step in this direction.

The Pioneer

CHANDIGARH | SATURDAY | DECEMBER 13, 2025



BUSINESS10

Nearly 4x hike in MF investment

Assets under management to exceed Rs 300 lakh crore by 2035

Mutual funds may emerge, and are emerging, as the most preferred investment choice for Indians. Most money is, and will be, pumped into equity funds. These are the major trends in the segment over the past decade, which will continue over the next one. According to the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI), the mutual funds' assets under management (AUM) grew six-fold to over ₹80 lakh crore between November 2015 and November 2025. A new report, 'How India Invests,' by Bain & Company in partnership with Groww, projects it to exceed nearly four-fold to ₹300 lakh crore by 2035. By then, direct equity holdings will climb to a lower ₹250 lakh crore.

More households are opting for mutual funds as a route to invest in equity and debt instruments. The Bain-Groww report notes that the penetration level is likely to double from 10 per cent to 20 per cent over the next decade. This will be driven by sustained investor trust, digital access, and broader financial awareness. Saurabh Trehan, Partner & Head of Financial Services at Bain & Company India, highlights the shift in behaviour. "Indian households are steadily shifting from a traditional savings mindset to a more investment-oriented approach. We are seeing the emergence of a deeper and more resilient domestic investor base," he explains.

Three trends are evident over the past few years. The first is that mutual funds have reached higher acceptance levels in the smaller cities and towns. According to a Bain-Groww report, 55-60 per cent of new SIP (Systematic Investment Plan) registrations now originate from B30 cities, and those beyond the top 100 ones contribute almost a fifth of AUM, a figure which is up from a tenth six years ago. According to its press release, "The next phase of industry growth will come primarily from mass and mass-affluent households beyond the top 30 cities. Increased adoption among affluent investors across the next 70 cities will further accelerate

this expansion."

AMFI's data and claims support these contentions. The association states that with large scale advertising and messaging, like the 'Mutual Fund Sahi Hai' campaign that reached 350 million, mutual funds have become a mainstream investment option, and are accessible to first-time and young Indians. The industry conducted 14,500 educational programmes for a million people in FY2024, and there were attempts to integrate financial literacy with school curricula. Over the past decade, AMFI's senior management focused on expansion to the smaller cities, and inclusion of more households. Over the next decade, AMFI hopes to enhance retail penetration, and increase the number of retail investors by five times to 250 million.

The second noticeable trend is the higher discipline among the retail investors. This is evident, according to Bain-Groww, from the more than doubling of investors who held the mutual funds for more than five years, from seven per cent to 16 per cent over the past few years. In addition, long-term SIP holdings increased from 12 per cent to 21 per cent over the recent past, which signals stronger investor discipline and confidence. Despite the regular discontinuance of SIPs, which invariably happens during downturns, the higher overall acceptance, and growth of SIPs indicates a shift among the investors towards goal-based, and target-based investing.

Finally, it is about the changing demographics. Youngsters, first-timers, and newcomers have adopted mutual funds, and are "likely to contribute to the market growth" over the next decade. The Bain-Groww report highlights that the average monthly SIP inflows rose by a compounded annual growth rate of 25 per cent, "driven largely by 18 to 34-year-olds, a demographic which is increasingly shaping the direction of domestic capital markets." In addition, younger investors

under 30 represent 40 per cent of the NSE-registered investors, which is up from 23 per cent six years ago. Women's share grew from 20 per cent to 25 per cent in the same period.

While the mutual funds folios grew 2.5x in the past five years, individual gross flows went up by a mere seven per cent. For some experts, this may be a matter of concern. For Bain-Groww, this underscores the "entry of a large cohort of new investors with smaller ticket sizes." Investments in smaller amounts indicate that there is more acceptance of SIPs, and the entry of a huge number of first-timers and youngsters, whose salary bases may be low but they are still interested in disciplined and long-term investing. Women may be generally keen to start with low amounts, and gradually shift to higher ones once they gain confidence and experience.

Digital investment platforms play, and will continue to play a catalytic role in accelerating equity and mutual fund participation. At present, nearly 80 per cent of equity investors, and more than a third of mutual fund investors are onboarded digitally, and the smaller Tier-2+ cities account for almost half of the users. "Gen Z now makes up approximately 45 per cent of the investor base, and continues to grow," states the Bain-Groww press release. Harsh Jain, Co-founder and COO of Groww, says, "We are witnessing a definitive structural shift. The Government's push on digital infrastructure, combined with progressive regulatory measures, has democratised access and fostered deep trust in the ecosystem."

This tech-led expansion is expected to bring in nearly 90 million new retail investors, largely millennials and Gen Z, which will propel India toward a deeper, more stable domestic capital formation. Younger demographics, and a diverse and more resilient investor base will strengthen the capital markets. Such changes will be both expansive, and inclusive, as a larger number of households shift from savings to investing. The broad reach of the digital investment channels, and the Government's efforts to inculcate digital payment modes will aid and enhance the investment process.

Retail investing, say experts, will play a pivotal role in India becoming a \$10-trillion-plus economy. It will prove to be a crucial turning point in how India builds long-term wealth, and capital market strength over the next decade, and onwards till 2047. "India is entering a new era of retail investing, one that is poised to play a pivotal role in the country's economic development. By expanding access to capital, broadening wealth creation, unlocking new job opportunities, and strengthening the resilience of India's capital markets, retail investors are reshaping the flow of capital in meaningful ways. Just as importantly, steady domestic inflows are giving India's capital markets a level of resilience we have not seen before, helping them to absorb volatility, and recover faster," explains Rakesh Pozhath, Partner and a leading member, Bain & Company.

Business and Culture

Chai-nation to coffee culture

Premium coffee is entering Indian homes, slowly but surely

is one of the company's fastest-growing coffee markets. Nespresso's global chief executive, Guillaume Le Cunff, described the Indian entry as an effort to bring its signature coffee experience to local homes, and to deepen the appreciation for quality coffee. Even at the market outlets, Indians experiment with coffee flavours from abroad.

The economics of the premium and quality segment are simple and straightforward, but challenging. The price of a single Nespresso cup works out to Rs 95, placing it below a café latte at a decent outlet but more expensive than a pack of instant coffee. This positions the capsules as affordable, but still a luxury that is acceptable to affluent urban consumers. The brand's razor-and-blades model depends on steady capsule sales once a household invests in a machine. If Nespresso can capture 10-20 per cent of the pods market, it can generate \$100-200 million

in annual revenues within a few years.

Add to these revenues the sales of machine, and B2B placements in the hotels and offices. The opportunity becomes meaningful for a category that barely existed a few years ago. To accelerate adoption, Nespresso has partnered with Thakral Innovations for distribution across retail and professional channels. The Delhi boutique functions as both a store, and a sensory space where customers can sample blends and receive guidance. Industry

watchers expect the next boutiques to appear in Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad over the next two years, following a metro-first approach. The larger task will be to ensure consistent service, and build the infrastructure for capsule collection and recycling, which remains limited in India. For the industry segment, Nespresso's arrival has had a ripple effect. Starbucks, which has nearly 500 stores

in the country, has witnessed fluctuating foot-falls as consumers weigh in, and adopt, at-home alternatives. Local but large players like Blue Tokai, Third Wave Coffee Roasters, and Sleepy Owl are expanding furiously, and educating a new generation of coffee drinkers about drinking, flavours, brewing and taste profiles.

The success among retail outlets has created a customer base that appreciates quality, and may eventually upgrade to the home machines. This is a win-win for both the suppliers of the machines and coffee, and outlets that serve the beverage. Although both categories will initially compete for market shares, over the years, they will gain in revenues, and grow. Some of the smaller, and mid-size retail outlets may lose out, but this is the nature of competition. The tea-focused retail outlet brands like Chaayos and Chai Point will continue to dominate the mass beverage market, even as coffee's growth is limited to the largely premium and urban segment. However, there are several risks on the horizon. Import duties and exchange rate fluctuations can make the foreign coffee capsules costlier. Competing products such as compatible pods or premium Indian roasts can erode loyalty, and market shares of the foreigners. A slowdown in the economy may limit discretionary spending on luxury beverages. Yet, the present underlying consumer trends appear durable. Coffee in India is evolving from an occasional café outing into a ritual that reflects lifestyle, convenience, and status.

India may still be a tea-drinking nation in volume terms. It may still be common, even in large offices, to consume chai with snacks like samosa and bread pakoda. But recent trends indicate a change in attitude and mindset towards a premium coffee nation. It is hip and cool for the youngsters to meet at cafes over coffee and cookies. This segment will increase as more retail outlets begin to compete with Starbucks, and Blue Tokai. In time, it will become convenient to invite guests and friends at home for a coffee. As more homes invest in machines, and more consumers choose to brew instead of buy, the sound of coffee grinding early in the morning, or late in the evening may soon become as familiar as the whistling of a pressure cooker.

The Pioneer

SINCE 1865

Cabinet nod to hike FDI in insurance sector to 100 pc

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

The Union Cabinet on Friday approved a bill to raise foreign direct investment in the insurance sector to 100 per cent, according to sources.

The bill may be introduced in the ongoing Winter session of Parliament, which is slated to conclude on December 19.

According to a Lok Sabha bulletin, the Insurance Laws (Amendment) Bill 2025, which seeks to deepen penetration, accelerate growth and development of the insurance sector and enhance ease of doing business, is part of the 13 legislations listed for the upcoming session of Parliament.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in this year's Budget speech, proposed to raise the foreign investment limit to 100 per cent from the existing 74 per cent in the



insurance sector as part of new-generation financial sector reforms.

So far, the insurance sector has attracted ₹82,000 crore through foreign direct investment (FDI).

The finance ministry has proposed amending various provisions of the Insurance Act, 1938, including raising FDI in the insurance sector to 100 per cent, reducing paid-

up capital, and introducing a composite licence.

As part of a comprehensive legislative exercise, the Life Insurance Corporation Act 1956 and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act 1999 will be amended, alongside the Insurance Act 1938.

The amendments to the LIC Act propose empowering its board to take operational

decisions, such as branch expansion and recruitment.

The proposed amendment primarily focuses on promoting policyholders' interests, enhancing their financial security, and facilitating the entry of additional players into the insurance market, thereby driving economic growth and employment generation.

Such changes will help enhance the efficiency of the insurance industry, enable ease of doing business, and enhance insurance penetration to achieve the goal of 'Insurance for All by 2047'.

The Insurance Act of 1938 serves as the principal Act to provide the legislative framework for insurance in India. It provides the framework for the functioning of insurance businesses and regulates the relationships among insurers, their policyholders, shareholders, and the regulator, Irdai.

Retail inflation rises to 0.71 pc in Nov on higher food prices

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Retail inflation inched up to 0.71 per cent in November, from a record low of 0.25 per cent in the previous month, on rising prices of food items, government data showed on Friday.

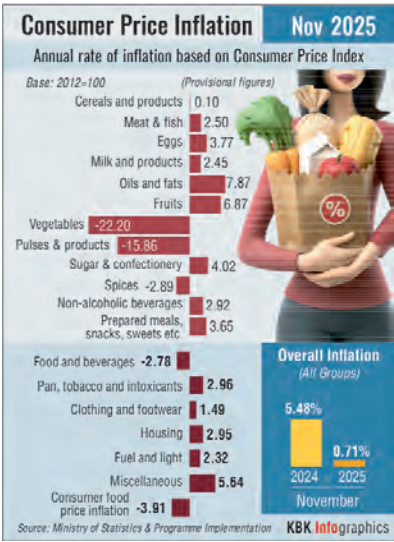
Consumer Price Index-based retail inflation remained below the RBI's 4 per cent inflation target for the 10th month in a row. Also, November is the second month when retail inflation has remained below 1 per cent level in the current CPI series which has data from 2014.

According to data released by the National Statistics Office (NSO), deflation in food items was 3.91 per cent in November against 5.02 per cent in October.

The rise in headline and food inflation during November 2025 is mainly attributed to an increase in inflation of vegetables, eggs, meat and fish, spices, fuel and light, the NSO said.

Fuel and light inflation for November was 2.32 per cent against 1.98 per cent in October 2025.

ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said a continued base-normalisation



and the hardening in prices of some vegetables could make the headline CPI inflation cross 1.5 per cent in the next print, which will be the last before the next MPC.

"The evolving inflation-growth outlook, as well as the fiscal policy measures unveiled by the next Union Budget, will guide the MPC's next decision. Our

base case suggests a pause in the MPC's February 2026 policy," Nayar said.

PHDCCI CEO & Secretary General Ranjeet Mehta said, "Over the next two quarters, we anticipate that India's inflation will stay within a manageable range on the back of benign food prices, GST rates rationalisation, reasonable energy prices, and Reserve Bank of India's strategic monetary management."

Kotak Mahindra Bank Chief Economist Upasna Bhardwaj said, "While the inflation trajectory is expected to move upward from here on, we see the trajectory fairly benign until 1HFY27."

"Going ahead, with RBI having kept additional actions data-dependent, we see some room for a 25 bps repo rate cut. However, the rate-cutting cycle is clearly nearing the end, followed by a prolonged pause," Bhardwaj added.

Low inflation in the current fiscal year has given room to the RBI to cut policy interest rates by 1.25 percentage points. The Reserve Bank, earlier this month, significantly lowered the inflation projection for the current fiscal to 2 per cent from 2.6 per cent estimated earlier, as the economy continues to witness rapid disinflation.

India-Oman trade pact may be signed during PM's Oman visit on Dec 17-18

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

The Union Cabinet on Friday approved a free trade agreement between India and Oman, which is expected to be signed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Oman on December 17-18, sources said.

Talks for the free trade agreement, officially termed as CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement), formally began in November 2023 and the negotiations concluded this year.

Prime Minister Modi will

embark on a four-day visit to Jordan, Ethiopia and Oman from December 15, according to an official statement. In the third and final leg of his visit, Modi will visit Oman on December 17-18 at the invitation of Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal is also expected to visit Oman for the signing of the pact.

In free trade agreements, the two trading partners either significantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on a maximum number of goods traded between them. They also ease norms to

promote trade in services and attract investments.

Oman is the third-largest export destination for India among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. India already has a similar agreement with another GCC member, the UAE, which came into effect in May 2022.

The Shura Council or Majlis A'Shura of Oman on Wednesday concluded its deliberations on the draft CEPA. At the conclusion of the deliberations, the Council approved the agreement.

India-Oman bilateral trade was about USD 10.5 billion

(exports USD 4 billion and imports USD 6.54 billion) in 2024-25. India's key imports are petroleum products and urea. These account for over 70 per cent of imports. Other key products are propylene and ethylene polymers, pet coke, gypsum, chemicals, iron and steel, and unwrought aluminium.

The main items of India's exports to Oman include mineral fuels, chemicals, precious metals, iron and steel, cereals, ships, boats and floating structures, electrical machinery, boilers, tea, coffee, spices, apparel, and food items.

Finmin initiates ranking for banks, insurance firms based on grievance redressal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

In order to improve the grievance redressal framework, the finance ministry has initiated the ranking of public sector banks, private sector banks and public sector insurance companies, based on quality and timely redressal of grievances. The initiative started in June this year has significantly improved performance of these entities, the finance ministry said in a statement.

Besides, the ranking of private sector insurers is also in the pipeline.

This has strengthened the grievance redressal mechanism by increased focus on

faster turnaround time (TAT) by banks and insurance companies, transparent communication between customer and the respective organisations, and an increase in customer service training in the organisations, it said.

Furthermore, the Department of Financial Services (DFS) has also initiated the 'Financial Institutions Interaction Program' from December 2025, wherein meetings are held with selected organisations based on grievances received on the CPGRAM Portal.

"As a first step, Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) are selected for this exercise. DFS remains committed to

further improving the grievance redressal framework in the financial services sector," it said. The DFS under the finance ministry has been undertaking several key initiatives aimed at streamlining the process of the grievance redressal mechanism in the banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) sector.

DFS Secretary has been personally reviewing twenty grievances selected on a random basis every month, wherein citizens are given an opportunity to raise their concerns against the BFSI sector in the presence of the chairman/MD & CEOs/senior managements of the organisations concerned, it said.

Such an exercise had a salutary impact and helped in building greater customer trust in the financial services sector, it said. To date, fifteen such meetings have been held, and 300 grievances have been analysed to ensure the quality of the resolution, it said.

"Similar meetings are also held by Joint Secretaries of the department. Drawing from the experience, the Chairman/MD&CEO of financial institutions are also conducting a similar exercise at their level for their organisations. Objective is to assess the efficacy of grievance resolution through a 'dip-stick survey' at the top-most level in the Department," it said.

Sensex jumps nearly 450 pts on positive global trends

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mumbai

Benchmark stock index Sensex rallied nearly 450 points while broader Nifty closed above the 26,000 level on Friday following buying in metal shares and positive global trends.

Rising for the second day, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 449.53 points or 0.53 per cent to settle at 85,267.66. During the day, it jumped 502.69 points or 0.59 per cent to 85,320.82.

Rebounding from the month's low level, the 50-share NSE Nifty surged 148.40 points or 0.57 per cent to settle at 26,046.95.

Among Sensex firms, Tata Steel, Eternal, UltraTech Cement, Larsen & Toubro, Maruti and Bharti Airtel were the major gainers.

However, Hindustan Unilever, Sun Pharma, ITC

and Asian Paints were among the laggards.

"Global risk appetite improved after the US Fed rate cut, boosting liquidity optimism and lifting domestic equities despite the rupee hitting record lows and continued FII outflows. Broader indices are showing buying interest, bouncing back post recent consolidation," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.14 per cent and smallcap index climbed 0.65 per cent. Among sectoral indices, metal surged 2.58 per cent, commodities (1.84 per cent), realty (1.47 per cent), services (1.34 per cent), telecommunication (1.27 per cent), oil & gas (1.21 per cent) and industrials (1 per cent).

BSE FMCG emerged as the only laggard.

A total of 2,593 stocks advanced while 1,593

declined and 170 remained unchanged on the BSE.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index settled in positive territory.

European markets were quoting higher. US markets ended mostly higher on Thursday.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, dipped 0.05 per cent to USD 61.25 per barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹2,020.94 crore on Thursday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth ₹3,796.07 crore, according to exchange data.

On Thursday, the Sensex climbed 426.86 points or 0.51 per cent to settle at 84,818.13. The Nifty went up by 140.55 points or 0.55 per cent to 25,898.55.

Mexico's tariffs to hit India's auto, electronics exports: Experts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

A decision of Mexico to increase tariffs will severely hit India's exports of automobiles, auto components, electronics, metals and chemicals to the South American country, experts say.

For India, the measures affect nearly three-quarters of its USD 5.75 billion exports to Mexico in FY 2025, fundamentally altering the commercial logic of accessing the Mexican market, they said.

Mexico's Senate approved the new tariff measure on December 11, 2025, and it has since been cleared by both chambers of Congress.

The higher duties will take effect on January 1, 2026. Under the decision, Mexico will impose steep import tariffs - ranging from about 5 per cent to as high as 50 per cent on a wide range of goods from countries that do not have free trade agreements with Mexico, including India, China, South Korea,

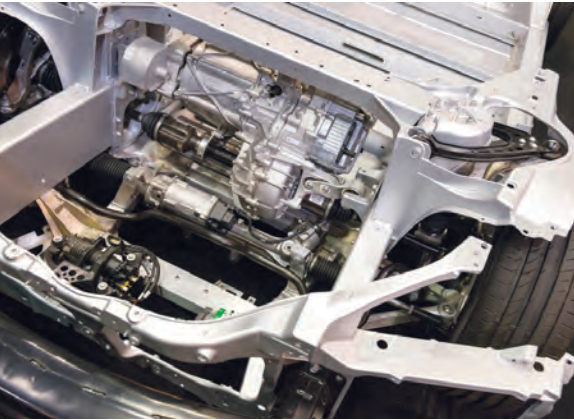
Thailand and Indonesia.

"Automobiles and auto components, India's largest export segment to Mexico, will be among the worst affected," think tank GTRI said.

Passenger vehicles, with exports of USD 938.35 million in FY2025, face a tariff increase from 20 per cent to 35 per cent, sharply eroding price competitiveness in a market increasingly shaped by USMCA (US-Mexico-Canada Agreement) sourcing rules, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said.

It added that the impact is even more severe for auto components, which accounted for USD 507.26 million in exports.

"Tariffs rise steeply from 10-15 per cent to 35 per cent, disrupting India's deep integration into Mexico-based automotive supply chains that serve the US market. Motorcycles, another Indian stronghold with exports of USD 390.25 million, see



duties increase from 20 per cent to 35 per cent, threatening volumes, margins and brand presence for Indian manufacturers," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

Sharing similar views, Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) Director General Ajay Sahai said Mexico's decision to impose tariffs of up to 50 per cent on imports from India is a matter of concern, particularly for sectors like automobiles and auto components,

machinery, electrical and electronics, organic chemicals, pharmaceuticals, textiles and plastics.

"Such steep duties will erode our competitiveness and risk disrupting supply chains that have taken years to develop," Sahai said, adding that this development also underlines the little urgency for India and Mexico to fast-track a comprehensive trade agreement.

The GTRI also said that the electronics and machinery

sector faces an equally sharp setback.

Smartphones, which recorded USD 284.53 million in exports to Mexico in FY2025, earlier entered the country duty-free. "From January 2026, they will face a 35 per cent tariff, effectively shutting the Mexican market for Indian handset exports," it said.

It added that industrial machinery, India's second-largest export category to Mexico at USD 547.99 million, will see duties rise from 5-10 per cent to 25-35 per cent, significantly raising landed costs and curbing demand for Indian capital goods in price-sensitive segments.

Further, it said in metals, the tariff shock is particularly punitive.

Aluminium exports worth USD 383.28 million face duties increasing from 5-10 per cent to 25-35 per cent, weakening India's competitiveness against regional and USMCA-based suppliers, Srivastava said.

Shoppers in US say this is the season for inflation, an AP-NORC poll finds

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Washington

This holiday season isn't quite so merry for American shoppers as large shares are dipping into savings, scouring for bargains and feeling like the overall economy is stuck in a rut under President Donald Trump, a new AP-NORC poll finds.

The vast majority of US adults say they've noticed higher than usual prices for groceries, electricity and holiday gifts in recent months, according to the survey from The Associated Press-NORC Centre for Public Affairs Research.

Roughly half of Americans say it's harder than usual to afford the things they want to give as holiday gifts, and similar numbers are delaying big purchases or cutting back on nonessential purchases more than they would normally.

It's a sobering assessment

for the Republican president, who returned to the White House in large part by promising to lower prices, only to find that inflation remains a threat to his popularity just as it did for Democrat Joe Biden's presidency. The poll's findings look very similar to an AP-NORC poll from December 2022, when Biden was president and the country was grappling with higher rates of inflation. Trump's series of tariffs have added to inflationary pressures and generated anxiety about the stability of the US economy, keeping prices at levels that many Americans find frustrating.

The president has insisted there is "no" inflation and the US economy is booming, as he expressed frustration that the public feels differently.

"When will people understand what is happening?" Trump said Thursday on Truth Social. "When will Polls reflect the Greatness of

America at this point in time, and how bad it was just one year ago?"

Most US adults, 68 per cent, continue to say the country's economy is "poor," which is unchanged from December 2024, before Trump returned to the presidency.

Americans are feeling strained as they continue to see high prices: White House officials plan to send Trump barnstorming across the country in hopes of bucking up people's faith in the economy before next year's midterm elections. But the president this week in Pennsylvania defended the price increases tied to his tariffs by suggesting that Americans should buy fewer dolls and pencils for children. His message is a jarring contrast with what respondents expressed in the poll, even among people who backed him in the 2024 election.



Sergio Ruiz, 44, of Tucson, Arizona, said he is using more buy now, pay later programs to spread out over time the expense of gifts for his children. He doesn't put a huge emphasis on politics, but he voted for Trump last year and would like to see lower interest rates to help boost his real estate business. He believes that more Americans having higher incomes would help to manage any affordability issues.

"Prices are up. What can you do? You need to make more money," Ruiz said.

nonessential items less than usual.

Views are largely similar to when Biden was president: People felt similarly dismal about holiday shopping and the economy when Biden was president in 2022. Inflation had spiked to a four-decade high that summer. Three years later, inflation has eased substantially, but it's still running at 3 per cent, a full percentage point above the Federal Reserve's target as the job market appears to have entered a deep freeze.

The survey indicates that it's the level of prices — and not just the rate of inflation — that is the point of pain for many families. Roughly 9 in 10 US adults, 87 per cent, say they've noticed higher than usual prices for groceries in the past few months, while about two-thirds say they've experienced higher prices than usual for electricity and holiday gifts. About half say

they've seen higher than normal prices for gas recently. The findings on groceries and holiday gifts are only slightly lower than in the 2022 poll, despite the slowdown from an inflation rate that hit a four-decade peak in the middle of that year.

Consumer spending has stayed resilient despite the negative sentiments about the economy, yet Trump's tariffs have caused changes for shoppers such as Andrew Russell. The 33-year-old adjunct professor in Arlington Heights, Illinois, said he used to shop for unique gifts from around the globe and buy online. But with the tariffs, he got his gifts locally and "this year, I only bought things that I can pick up in person," he said.

Russell, who voted Democratic in last year's election, said he worries about the economy for next year. He thinks the investment in artificial intelligence has

become a bubble that could burst, taking down the stock market.

Little optimism about an economic rebound in 2026: Few people expect the situation to meaningfully improve next year — a sign that Trump has done little to instill much confidence from his mix of tariffs, income tax cuts and foreign trips to attract investments. Trump has maintained that the benefits from his policies will begin to snowball in 2026.

About 4 in 10 US adults expect next year will be economically worse for the country. Roughly 3 in 10 say conditions won't change much. Only about 2 in 10 think things will get better, with Republicans being more optimistic.

The belief that things will get better has slipped from last year, when about 4 in 10 said that 2025 would be better than 2024.

FROM THE WORLD

NEPAL

PM inducted 4 new ministers

Nepal's PM Sushila Karki on Friday inducted four new ministers in her cabinet, bringing the strength of the council of ministers to 14. President Ramchandra administered the oath of office and secrecy to the four newly appointed ministers of the interim Government at a ceremony in the Office of the President. The newly appointed ministers are Shradha Shrestha, Madhav Chaulagain, Rajendra Singh Bhandari and Kumar Innam, according to officials at the PM Office. Shradha has been appointed as the Minister for Women, Children and Senior Citizens, Madhav has got the portfolio of Forest and Environment, while Rajendra Singh Bhandari got the portfolio of Labour and Social Security, and Kumar Innam has got the portfolio of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation.

PAKISTAN

5 cops injured in TTP attack

At least five policemen were injured after Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terrorists attacked a police checkpoint in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, officials said. The incident took place on Thursday night. The terrorists targeted the Shaikh Landak police checkpoint, located within the Havalid police jurisdiction in Bannu district. A statement released by the spokesperson said that Fitna al Khawarij terrorists attacked the post late on Thursday night. Fitna al Khawarij is a term the state uses for terrorists belonging to the banned TTP. The statement said that police personnel showed courage, bravery and acted in a timely manner, managing to repel the attack. The exchange of fire continued for three hours between the attackers and the police.

Indian High Commission in Singapore opens OSC to help women

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Singapore

The High Commission in Singapore has opened a One Stop Centre (OSC) as part of the Government's scheme to support Indian women in distress overseas. The initiative has been taken under the Indian Government's Sakhi One Stop Centre scheme, marking a major step in extending women-centric welfare initiatives overseas. "The establishment of 'One Stop Centre' at the High Commission of India in Singapore will provide a comprehensive support system to Indian (national) women in distress," High Commissioner Shilpak Ambule told on Friday. "As part of this initiative, assistance would be extended to distressed Indian

Thailand's Parliament dissolved amidst border clash

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Bangkok

Thailand's Parliament was dissolved Friday for new elections early next year as the country engaged in deadly fighting with Cambodia. Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul dissolved the House of Representatives after getting approval from King Maha Vajiralongkorn, whose endorsement became effective Friday with its publication in the Royal Gazette. Anutin had signalled the move with a Facebook post late Thursday saying: "I'd like to return power to the people." The election must be held 45 to 60 days after the royal endorsement, a period during which Anutin will head a caretaker Government with limited powers that cannot approve a new budget. The move comes at a tricky political moment, as Thailand is engaged in large-scale combat with Cambodia over a longstanding border dispute. Anutin has been prime minister for just three months, succeeding Paetongtarn Shinawatra, who served only a year in office before losing office over a scandal that erupted out of a



Evacuees sitting on the ground as they take refuge in Banteay Menchey provincial town

AP

previous round of border tensions. Anutin won the September vote in Parliament with support from the main opposition People's Party in exchange for a promise to dissolve Parliament within four months and organise a referendum on the drafting of a new constitution by an elected constituent assembly. The party, which runs on progressive platforms, has long sought changes to the

constitution, imposed during a military Government, saying they want to make it more democratic. The issue of constitutional change appeared to trigger the dissolution, after the People's Party prepared to call a no-confidence vote Thursday. That threat came after lawmakers from Anutin's Bhumjaithai Party voted in favour of a bill to amend the constitution that

the opposition party felt ran against the spirit of the agreement they had reached in September. The People's Party holds the largest number of seats in the House of Representatives and is seen as the main challenger to Bhumjaithai. As news of the pending dissolution circulated late Thursday, its leaders said they hoped Anutin would still honour the agreement to arrange a constitutional ref-

erendum. Anutin served in Paetongtarn's former Government but resigned from his positions and withdrew his party from her coalition Government as she faced controversy over a phone call with Cambodia's Senate President Hun Sen in June. Paetongtarn, daughter of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, was suspended from office ahead of the July fighting, after being found guilty of ethics violations over the politically compromising call. With Thailand now again engaged in heavy combat against Cambodia, Anutin has embraced an aggressive military posture to appeal to nationalistic public sentiment, and has said Thailand will keep fighting until its sovereignty and safety are guaranteed. After the five days of border fighting in July, US President Donald Trump pushed the two countries to agree on a ceasefire by threatening to withhold trade privileges from them. Trump has vowed again to make peace between them after widespread fighting flared up again this week. If he employs the cudgel of high tariffs on Thai exports should Thailand fail to comply

with his peacemaking effort comply, it could cause serious damage to its already sluggish economy. Trump said twice this week that he expects to speak by phone with the Thai and Cambodian leaders, expressing confidence that he would persuade them to stop the fighting. Anutin on Friday confirmed that he is scheduled to speak with Trump on Friday night, saying he would brief him on the latest situation along the border. As of Thursday, about two dozen people had been reported killed in this week's fighting, while hundreds of thousands have been displaced on both sides. The Thai military estimates that 165 Cambodian soldiers have been killed, though no number has been officially announced by Phnom Penh. "Anutin has capitalised on the renewed border tensions with Cambodia to portray himself as a leader willing to take a nationalist, hard-line stance in defending Thailand's sovereignty and territorial integrity," commented Napon Jatusripitak, director of the Centre for Politics and Geopolitics at Thailand Future, a Bangkok-based think tank.

Accused Charlie Kirk killer makes court appearance

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Provo

The 22-year-old Utah man charged with killing Charlie Kirk made his first in-person court appearance on Thursday as his attorneys push to further limit media access in the high-profile criminal case. A Utah judge is weighing the public's right to know details in the prosecution of Tyler Robinson against his attorneys' concerns that the swarm of media attention could interfere with his right to a fair trial. Robinson's legal team and the Utah County Sheriff's Office have asked Judge Tony Graf to ban cameras in the courtroom. Prosecutors have charged Robinson with aggravated murder in the September 10 shooting of the conservative activist on the Utah Valley University campus in Orem, just a few miles north of the Provo courthouse. They plan to seek the death penalty. Robinson arrived in court with restraints on his wrists and ankles and wearing a dress shirt, tie and slacks. He smiled at family members sitting in the front row of the courtroom, where his mother teared up and wiped her eyes with a tissue. Robinson's father and brother sat next to her. The defendant had previously appeared in court via video or audio feed from jail. A coalition of national and local news organisations, including The Associated Press, is fighting to preserve media access in the case. Graf has already made allowances to protect Robinson's presumption of innocence before a trial, agreeing that the case has drawn "extraordinary" public attention. Graf held a closed hearing on October 24 in which attorneys discussed Robinson's courtroom attire and security protocols. Under a subsequent ruling by the judge, Robinson is allowed to wear street clothes in court during his pretrial hearings but must be physically restrained due to security concerns. Graf also prohibited media from filming or photographing Robinson's restraints after his attorneys argued widespread images of him shackled and in jail clothing could prejudice future jurors.

Bilawal calls Imran Khan Pharaohs of their time

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lahore

Pakistan People's Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has called incarcerated former prime minister Imran Khan and ex-ISI chief Gen Faiz Hameed "pharaohs" of their time saying he welcomes his (Hameed) jail term. Former Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief Faiz Hameed was sentenced to a 14-year jail term on Thursday after being convicted on four counts related to violating secrecy laws, engaging in political activities, misuse of authority and causing harm to others. "This is a historic verdict. I welcome it," Bilawal said. "In my political career, I witnessed two pharaohs -- one is Imran Khan and the other Gen Faiz Hameed. Imran Khan as prime minister threatened the opposition leaders and sent many to jail and he

even targeted women leaders like Faryal Talpur and Maryam Nawaz. "Today both are reaping what they had sown," Bilawal said and added Gen Faiz, who was "so intoxicated" by power that he violated his oath and targeted politicians, media owners, businessmen and others. The PPP chief advised Khan and Gen Faiz to seek forgiveness for their crimes from God. "Both should seek mercy from God. This should be a message that such mistakes must not be repeated by anyone," he said during an event at Chiniot district, about 200 kilometres from Lahore. Khan and his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), on the other hand have been accusing the incumbent military establishment of openly interfering in politics, stealing its mandate of last year's general elections and engineering court verdicts against its leaders.

Bulgarian Parliament approves PM Rosen resignation

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Sofia

Bulgarian Parliament on Friday approved the resignation of the coalition Government of Prime Minister Rosen Zhelyazkov amid nationwide anti-corruption protests, and weeks ahead of the country's scheduled euro zone entry. Protesters, many of them young Bulgarians, have been protesting in the tens of thousands across the nation for weeks. The direct trigger was a proposed budget for next year that would have increased taxes and social security contributions to finance more state spending. The deeper cause, however, was rising anger over a perception of widespread corruption among the political elite, and a sense that a lack of justice prevails for regular citizens. The protests and the fall of the 9th Government in five years underlined the political instability in the country as it plans to join the common European currency. The 240-seat chamber



Prime Minister Rosen Zhelyazkov announcing that Bulgaria's Government resigns following mass protests, at the Bulgarian Parliament in Sofia

AP

voted 127-0 to accept the resignation. The Cabinet will continue performing its duties until a new Government is elected. Zhelyazkov's minority Government survived six votes of no confidence since it was appointed in January, but this time the large turnout of protesters on the streets changed the game. The prime minister announced his resignation on Thursday saying it was a

direct response to the growing public pressure and that the demand for the Government to step down had become impossible to ignore. "Vox populi, vox Dei," Zhelyazkov said, using a Latin expression meaning "the voice of the people is the voice of God." In a next step, President Rumen Radev must now give the biggest group in parliament the chance to form a new Government. If that fails,

the second-largest grouping will get a chance before the president chooses a candidate. If all attempts fail — which is likely — Radev will appoint a caretaker Cabinet until a new election is held. Political analysts expect that another election — which would be the eighth since 2021 — would likely produce another deeply fragmented parliament with difficulty forming a stable Government.

Washington floods sweep away homes, families stranded

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Mount Vernon

Days of torrential rain in Washington state has caused historic floods that have stranded families on rooftops, washed over bridges and ripped at least two homes from their foundations, and experts warned that even more flooding expected Friday could be catastrophic. Washington is under a state of emergency and evacuation orders are in place for tens of thousands of residents. Gov Bob Ferguson on Thursday urged everyone to follow evacuation instructions as yet another river neared record levels. "I understand that many in our state have experienced significant floods in the past," he said on the social platform X. "However, we're looking at a historic situation." About 78,000 residents of a major agricultural region north of Seattle were ordered to evacuate the floodplain of the Skagit River, which was expected to crest Friday morning. The floods were impacting large parts of the state, with several bridges flooded and some major roads inundated or washed out. Some roads had



no alternate routes and no estimated reopening time, including a large part of state Route 410. A landslide blocked part of Interstate 90 east of Seattle, with photos showing vehicles trapped by tree trunks, branches, mud and standing water. In the north near the US-Canada border, the cities of Sumas, Nooksack and Everson were evacuated after being inundated. The border crossing at Sumas was closed and Amtrak suspended trains

between Seattle and Vancouver, BC. Sumas Mayor Bruce Bosch said much of the city has been "devastated" by the high waters just four years after a similar flood. The Snohomish River surged nearly a foot (30 centimetres) higher than its record Thursday in the picturesque city that shares its name, while the Skagit River rose just above its record Thursday night in Mount Vernon, according to the National Water Prediction Service. Earlier Thursday,

the Skagit just missed its previous record as flooding surged through the mountain town of Concrete. The waters stopped just short of getting inside Mariah Brosa's raised riverfront home in Concrete, but the raging river still slapped debris against her home and totalled her fiancé's work car, she said. "I didn't think it would come this high," she said. Flooding from the Skagit has long plagued Mount Vernon, the largest city in Skagit County with some 35,000 residents. Flooding in 2003 displaced hundreds of people. A floodwall that protects downtown passed a major test in 2021, when the river crested near record levels. Water was at the foot of the floodwall as of late Thursday morning, Mayor Peter Donovan said. In nearby Burlington, officials hoped dikes and other systems would protect their community from catastrophe, said Michael Lumpkin, with the police department. Authorities across Washington state in recent days have rescued people from cars and homes after an atmospheric river soaked the region.



Noem defends Trump's immigration policies

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Washington

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem defiantly defended the Trump administration's hard-line immigration policies on Thursday during a House committee hearing, portraying migrants as a major threat faced by the nation that justifies a crackdown that has seen widespread arrests, deportations and a dizzying pace of restrictions on foreigners. Noem, who heads the agency central to President Donald Trump's approach to immigration, received backup from Republicans on the panel but faced fierce questioning from Democrats — including many who called for her resignation over the mass deportation agenda. The secretary's testimony was immediately interrupted by protesters shouting for her to stop Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids and "end deportations."



Chileans are divided on presidential runoff

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Santiago

Ask many Chileans how their country fared in the past several years and they'll describe a descent into disaster: Venezuelan gangs surged across porous borders, bringing unprecedented kidnappings and contract killings to one of the region's safest nations. A social uprising unleashed violent chaos on once-sleepy streets. An economy long vaunted for its rapid growth sputtered into a stall. These are the voters who hope to elect their country's most right-wing president since its military dictatorship on Sunday. Former lawmaker José Antonio Kast, 59, they argue, can bring back the simple, stable life that Chileans lost to rising crime, uncontrolled migration and left-wing excesses. Kast's rival in this runoff presidential election is their worst fear: a communist.

India invites US industries to partner in country’s AI journey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Washington

Indian Ambassador Vinay Mohan Kwatra invited US industries to become valuable partners in India’s AI journey at a roundtable, ahead of the ‘India AI Impact Summit 2026’ scheduled to be held in New Delhi in February. The Ambassador shared insights on how India’s AI Mission, designed to create a robust framework for AI development in India, and the upcoming summit are shaping global norms for responsible, inclusive, and innovation-driven AI, the organiser of the roundtable, DGA-Albright Stonebridge Group, said on social media on Thursday.

“Had an engaging conversation on India’s AI Goals and AI Impact summit with industry representatives at a round table organised by the Albright Stonebridge Group. Invited US industries to become valuable partners in India’s AI journey,” Kwatra posted on social media. Several industry, academic, and philanthropy leaders joined the discussion held in Washington, DC.



The role of companies in supporting India’s AI transformation through compute infrastructure, indigenous capability development, and workforce and talent initiatives was also highlighted at the discussion. The Indian envoy also held discussions with Rep Yvette D Clarke, Chair of the Black Caucus, and appreciated her perspective on advancing India-US collaboration.

“Had a productive meeting with @RepYvetteClarke, Chair of the House @TheBlackCaucus and a steadfast supporter of strong India-US relations. Appreciated her perspective on advancing India-US collaboration in the AI space, including data privacy and data security,” Kwatra

posted. The India-AI Impact Summit 2026 will be held in New Delhi on February 19-20, focusing on the principles of ‘People, Planet, and Progress’.



People visiting the Christmas Market at Yokohama Red Brick Warehouse in Yokohama near Tokyo

AP

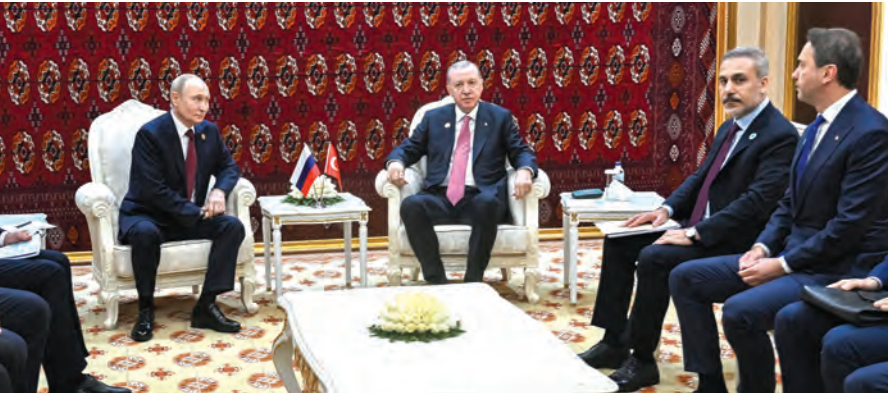
Russian police, National Guard to stay in Donbas: Kremlin

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Kyiv

A senior Kremlin official says that the Russian police and National Guard will remain in eastern Ukraine’s Donbas to oversee the prized industrial region, even if a peace settlement ends the nearly four-year war — a possibility that is likely to be rejected by Ukrainian officials as US-led negotiations drag on.

Moscow will give its blessing to a ceasefire only after Ukraine’s forces have withdrawn from the front line, Kremlin adviser Yuri Ushakov said in comments published Friday in Russian business daily Kommersant.

Ushakov told Kommersant “it’s entirely possible that there won’t be any troops (in the Donbas), either Russian or Ukrainian” in a postwar scenario. But he said that “there will be the National Guard, our police, everything necessary to maintain



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attending a meeting on the sidelines of an international forum in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

AP

order and organise life.” For months, American negotiators have tried to navigate the demands of each side as US President Donald Trump presses for a swift end to Russia’s war and grows increasingly exasperated by delays. The search for possible compromises has run into a major obstacle over who keeps

Ukrainian territory that Russian forces have occupied so far. Since Moscow’s 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea and the seizure of territory in the east by Russia-backed separatists later that year, as well as land taken after the full-blown invasion was launched on February 24, 2022, Russia has captured about 20 per cent of its

neighbour. Ukraine says its constitution doesn’t allow it to surrender land. Russia, which illegally annexed Donetsk and three other regions illegally in 2022, says the same.

Ushakov said that “no matter what the outcome (of peace talks), this territory (the Donbas) is Russian Federation territory.”

Radical leader shot in Bangladesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Dhaka

A youth leader of a right-wing cultural group and a candidate at the February 12 general elections was on Friday shot at by unidentified gunmen in Bangladesh capital. Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus expressed deep concern over the shooting and serious injury of Sharif Osman Hadi, spokesperson of Inqilab Manch, and said the incident is “completely unacceptable.”

The Inquilab Mancha was on the forefront of a campaign to disband deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina’s Awami League. Police said three assailants on a motorbike shot Hadi as he initiated his election campaign at central Dhaka’s Bijoy Nagar area — from where he stood as an independent candidate — in the afternoon.

“Osman Hadi was shot at 2:25 pm in front of DR Tower on Box Culvert Road at Bijoy Nagar. We have initially learned that three assailants on a motorcycle shot him and fled the scene,” a spokesman of Dhaka police said.

Hadi was rushed to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH).

“His (Hadi’s) condition is critical. He has been provided a life support system. The bullet remained inside his head,” Prothom Alo newspaper said, quoting DMCH director Brigadier Mohammad Asaduzzaman as saying.

Chief Adviser Yunus expressed deep concern over the shooting incident and asked the authorities concerned to bring the perpetrators under the law soon. “Such a violent attack in an election environment is completely unacceptable and a deeply regrettable incident for the country’s peaceful political atmosphere,” Yunus said in a statement.

The Chief Adviser gave strict instructions to the law enforcement agencies to conduct a swift and comprehensive investigation to identify and bring all those involved in the attack to justice, the state-run news agency Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) said. The Inquilab Mancha

KHALEDA PLACED ON VENTILATOR SUPPORT

Dhaka: Former Bangladesh prime minister Khaleda Zia’s health condition has deteriorated and she was placed on ventilator support, doctors said. “Her breathing difficulties increased, her oxygen level fell, and carbon dioxide levels rose,” according to a statement on Thursday by the chief of the medical board cardiologist Shahabuddin Talukdar.

It said the 80-year-old former premier was previously being treated with “High Flow Nasal Cannula and BiPAP support, but as there was no improvement, she was placed on elective ventilator support to give rest to her lungs and other vital organs.” The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairperson has been undergoing treatment at Dhaka’s Evercare Hospital since November 23 for multiple health complications. The statement said the three-time premier was kept under round-the-clock medical watch by a team of local and foreign specialists, as several of her vital organs continue to be under severe stress. “Her kidney function has stopped completely, and she is undergoing regular dialysis,” the board said, adding she currently needed blood transfusions.

emerged as a rightwing cultural and pressure group in August 2024 after a student-led violent protest in July and August toppled the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina’s Awami League government.

The incident occurred a day after the election commission announced the polls schedule saying the 13th parliamentary election would be held on February 12. The Inquilab Mancha was on the forefront of a campaign to disband Awami League. Yunus-led interim government disbanded Hasina’s party in May this year disqualifying it from contesting the polls.

The group spearheads a campaign to arrest “all terrorists” of the disbanded Awami League from central to grassroots levels and ensure security of the “July warriors”.

KPK CM alleges Imran Khan subjected to mistreatment in jail



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Peshawar

Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province Chief Minister Muhammad Sohaib Afridi on Friday alleged that former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi are being subjected to mistreatment in jail. Afridi’s comments came after he was denied permission to meet incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan for the 10th time by the Adiala jail administration on Thursday. Addressing a meeting of the Provincial Cabinet, Afridi said that despite the harsh winter, basic necessities and warm clothing were not being provided to the detained couple. The Chief Minister said that the use of water cannon

against Imran Khan’s sisters was “shameful,” adding that the provincial government strongly condemned such “unjust and inhumane behaviour.” Khan, 73, has been in Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi since August 2023 in multiple cases. Speaking to mediapersons on Thursday, Afridi said that it was strange that an elected chief minister was not being allowed to meet his party’s founding chairman despite court orders to the contrary. He warned that both the federal and Punjab government leadership would face consequences once the PTI returned to power at the Centre. Afridi said efforts had been underway for the past three years to “minus Imran”, but all such attempts had failed.

Japan lifts tsunami advisory after 6.7 magnitude quake



ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Tokyo

Japan on Friday lifted a tsunami advisory after a 6.7 magnitude earthquake shook the country’s northeast, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency. The quake occurred off the east coast of Aomori prefecture, in the north of Honshu, the main Japanese island, at a depth of 20 kilometres at 11:44 am local time, JMA said. The advisory was lifted about two hours later. There were no immediate reports of serious damage or injuries. Friday’s

quake followed a 7.5 magnitude earthquake earlier this week in the north that caused injuries, light damage and a tsunami in Pacific coastal communities. At least 34 people were injured in that quake on Monday off the coast of Aomori, the northernmost prefecture of Japan’s main Honshu island. A tsunami more than 2 feet (0.6 metres) above tide levels was measured in Kuji port in Iwate prefecture before all tsunami advisories were lifted. Power was knocked out for hundreds of homes but was mostly restored Tuesday morning.

Belarus leader hosts US envoy as he seeks to improve his country’s ties with the West

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Minsk

Authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko on Friday hosted a US envoy for talks in the Belarus capital of Minsk, the latest step in the isolated leader’s effort to improve ties with the West.

Lukashenko met with US special envoy for Belarus John Coale, according to state news agency Belta and the presidential press service. The press service said the talks would continue Saturday. The last time US officials met with Lukashenko, more than 50 political prisoners were released and brought to Lithuania. Overall, Belarus released more than 430 prisoners since July 2024 in what was widely seen as an effort at a rapprochement with the West. A close ally of

Russia, Minsk has faced Western isolation and sanctions for years. Lukashenko has ruled the nation of 9.5 million with an iron fist for more than three decades, and the country has been sanctioned repeatedly by Western countries — both for its crackdown on human rights and for allowing Moscow to use its territory in the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Lukashenko’s rule was challenged after a 2020 presidential election that kept him in power, when tens of thousands of people poured into the streets to protest a vote widely seen as rigged.

In an ensuing crackdown, tens of thousands of people were detained, with many beaten by police. Prominent opposition figures either fled the country or were imprisoned.

Five years after the mass demonstrations, Lukashenko won a seventh term in an election that the opposition called a farce.

More recently, however, Belarus has begun to free some political prisoners to try to win favour with the West. Since Donald Trump returned to the White House this year, Lukashenko has released dozens of prisoners, including key dissident figure Siarhei Tsikhanouski — the husband of exiled opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. His release came after a visit to Belarus by US envoy Keith Kellogg. Trump spoke to Lukashenko by phone in August after one such release and even suggested a face-to-face meeting in what would be a big victory for the Belarusian leader, who has been dubbed “Europe’s Last Dictator.”



Danish intelligence report warns of US military threat

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Copenhagen

The United States is using its economic power to “assert its will” and threaten military force against friend and foe alike, a Danish intelligence agency said in a new report. The Danish Defence Intelligence Service, in its latest annual assessment, said Washington’s greater assertiveness under the Trump administration also comes as China and Russia seek to diminish Western, especially American, influence. Perhaps most sensitive to Denmark — a NATO and European Union member country, and a US ally — is growing competition between those great powers in the Arctic. US President Donald Trump has expressed a desire to see Greenland, a semiautonomous and mineral-rich territory of Denmark, become part of the United States, a move opposed by Russia and much of Europe.



Germany summons Russian ambassador over cyberattacks

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Berlin

Germany summoned Russia’s ambassador on Friday following accusations of sabotage, cyberattacks and election interference, an official said. The German Government has also accused Moscow of perpetrating disinformation campaigns. “The goal of these Russian cyber and disinformation attacks is clear: It is to divide society, stir up mistrust, provoke rejection, and weaken confidence in democratic institutions,” German foreign ministry spokesperson Martin Giese said. “This targeted manipulation of information is one of a wide range of activities by Russia aimed at undermining confidence in democratic institutions and processes in Germany,” he said during a government news conference. German officials have previously accused Russia of hybrid warfare attacks to destabilise Europe.

PROSPECT

Orunodoi has led to socio-economic empowerment of women: CM Himanta

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday launched the third phase of the Orunodoi scheme in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), stating that the financial support initiative has significantly contributed to the socio-economic empowerment of women across Assam.

The scheme, which provides a monthly financial grant of ₹1,250 to beneficiary families, was rolled out for five districts of BTR, covering 4.12 lakh families initially. The launch, held at Bodofa Nwgrw in Kokrajhar, was delayed in BTR due to the BTC elections, having already been implemented in other parts of the State on October 7.

Sarma, after discussions with BTC Chief Hagrama Mohilary, informed that the scheme will ultimately benefit around 4.5 lakh women in BTR. This includes 1,20,854 beneficiaries in Kokrajhar, 60,676 in Baksa, 60,545 in Chirang, 61,578 in Tamulpur and 1,09,034 in Udalguri.

“Currently, 38 lakh women in Assam have been brought under the ambit of Orunodoi,” the



Chief Minister Stated, adding that the direct benefit transfer (DBT) of ₹1,250 on the 10th of every month has enhanced their socio-economic status.

He also announced that a special gift will be provided to all Orunodoi beneficiaries across Assam on January 1, 2026, from January 1, essential commodities (lentils, sugar and salt), currently supplied by the State Government at ₹117 per kg, will be provided at Rs 100 per kg.

Sarma also Stated that women in BTR will receive cheques of ₹10,000 under the Mukhya Mantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan (MMUA) by January 20. The Chief Minister added that a scheme similar to “Nijut Moina” for college-going girls would be announced on January 1.

Finance Minister Ajanta Neog, PHED Minister Jayanta Mallabaruah, BTC Chief Hagrama Mohilary, MLAs Rabiram Narzary, Lawrence Islary, jiron Basumatary, former minister Pramila Rani Brahma, along with several dignitaries and senior officials were present on the occasion.

IRFC ‘2.0’ era begins; targets ₹60,000 cr sanctions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Marking the beginning of what he termed the “IRFC 2.0 era,” Indian Railway Finance Corporation’s CMD Manoj Kumar Dubey on Friday outlined a long-term strategic vision for the Navratna CPSE at its 40th Foundation Day Celebration, declaring that IRFC is firmly positioned to cross ₹60,000 crore in sanctions by Q3.

He said that this achievement signals the organisation’s strong fundamentals, disciplined financial architecture and renewed strategic focus, setting the tone for the next phase of IRFC’s growth story. Addressing the delegates comprising serving and retired Indian Railway Accounts Service officers, Dubey said, “Forty years is not just a milestone for IRFC; it is a testament to the trust this institution has earned through discipline, stability

and an unwavering commitment to national development. As we look ahead, our shared ambition is to elevate IRFC to even greater heights over the coming years, backed by sound fundamentals and a future-ready strategy.”

He further highlighted that the organisation is set to exceed its internal business targets for the year. “We are moving decisively towards crossing ₹60,000 crore in sanctions by Q3. This reflects the confidence our partners place in us, the expanding role of IRFC in the national financing landscape and the growing capex appetite across the railway ecosystem,” Dubey noted.

The Foundation Day also featured a technical conclave attended by Aparna Garg, Member Finance, Railway Board, who acknowledged IRFC’s critical role in empowering the financial strength of Indian Railways



IRFC CMD Manoj Kumar Dubey extending a courtesy visit to Railway Board Member Finance Usha Venugopal on the occasion of IRFC’s Foundation Day on Friday

over the past four decades. Her presence underscored the deep institutional partnership between IRFC and the Railway Board in driving forward India’s infrastructure priorities.

At the celebrations, NP

Srivastava, former CMD of IRFC, was honoured with the title Legend of IRFC for his foundational contributions to the organisation and to the wider railway financing ecosystem. His stewardship was recalled as an era that

shaped IRFC’s institutional culture, strengthened its financial architecture and laid the groundwork for its rise as a globally recognised infrastructure financing institution. Reflecting on the organisa-

tion’s legacy, Dubey said, “IRFC stands tall today because of the values, discipline and vision seeded by its leaders and carried forward by every member of this fraternity. As we celebrate 40 years, we honour not just our achievements but also the people who shaped them. The recognition bestowed upon NP Srivastava is a tribute to a legacy that continues to inspire this institution.”

Sessions at the conclave highlighted IRFC’s evolving role in rolling stock financing, its expanding participation in allied sectors and the corporation’s growing global benchmarks in efficiency and governance. The evening concluded with a cultural programme featuring renowned singer and composer Papon, whose performance added warmth, emotion and a celebratory spirit to the landmark occasion.

DG (BrahMos), DRDO Dr Jaiteerth R Joshi takes over as President of ISNT

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Dr Jaiteerth R Joshi, Director General (BrahMos), DRDO and CEO and MD, BrahMos Aerospace, stands tall as one of India’s most distinguished scientific leaders - a visionary whose clarity of purpose, depth of knowledge and unwavering commitment to national technological advancement have made him a transformative force in the field of Non-Destructive Evaluation (NDE).

Dr Joshi has championed innovation with remarkable foresight and precision. His leadership has fortified India’s defence capabilities through the seamless integration of advanced materials, cutting-edge NDE technolo-

gies and rigorous scientific standards. His contributions have not only strengthened mission-critical systems but also set new benchmarks for reliability, safety and excellence across defence platforms.

Today as he assumes the prestigious role of President of the Indian Society for Non-Destructive Testing (ISNT), Dr. Joshi enters history as the first DRDO scientist in four decades to be entrusted with this honour.

This milestone is a reflection of both his towering professional stature and the profound respect he commands within the NDE community. Over the years, Dr Joshi’s sustained contributions to the NDE arena have significantly elevated India’s

capabilities - fostering research, nurturing talent and promoting global standards.

His work has bridged science, engineering and real-world application, reinforcing NDE as a critical pillar of national infrastructure and defence integrity.

In recognition of his exemplary service, scholarly excellence and transformative impact, he is conferred the Honorary Fellowship of ISNT - one of the highest accolades bestowed by the society.

This honour not only celebrates his past achievements but also heralds the continued leadership he will bring to the organisation in the years ahead. Dr Jaiteerth R Joshi’s journey exemplifies dedication, intellect and



Dr Jaiteerth R Joshi, DG (BrahMos), DRDO and CEO & MD, BrahMos Aerospace receives the Honorary Fellowship of ISNT during an event in Mumbai on Dec. 11, 2025. Dr Joshi took charge as the President of ISNT on Dec. 12, 2025

visionary leadership. His elevation as President of ISNT, along with the conferment of Honorary Fellow, stands as a

proud moment for the scientific community and a beacon of inspiration for future generations. On this occasion, he

delivered Dr Baldev Raj Memorial lecture on “Role of Materials and NDT in any Defence Operation”.

NDMC Vice-Chairman Chahal visits Virender Akhara to boost wrestling talent

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

In line with Prime Minister Modi’s vision for sports, athlete empowerment, and strengthening India’s global sporting excellence, NDMC Vice-Chairman Kuljeet Singh Chahal visited the renowned Virender Akhara in Chhara village, Jhajjar, Haryana. The akhara is one of India’s leading wrestling training centres, where young athletes prepare for national and international championships.

Head coach and Arjuna Awardee Virender Dahiya and Dushyant Lather were present during the visit, along with a large group of trainees. Wrestlers



shared their experiences with Chahal, highlighting how training at Virender Akhara is giving them a strong founda-

tion and international-level exposure.

During the interaction, Kuljeet Singh Chahal said India continues to excel in sports because of its young population and the government’s increased focus on developing sporting talent. He emphasised that sports build character, instil discipline and keep youth away from negative influences.

Chahal personally met several young wrestlers, motivating them to stay focused, work hard and remain dedicated to achieving success at the national and global levels. He also praised the coaches and the akhara’s management team for nurturing talent and offering world-class training facilities.

IRCTC launches meal trials to elevate on-board dining experience

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

In a significant move aimed at transforming the on-board dining experience for rail passengers, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd (IRCTC) has initiated Proof of Concept (PoC) meal trials across select Vande Bharat and Amrit Bharat trains.

The initiative was announced on December 11, 2025, marking a decisive shift in the corporation’s approach to catering, which is currently serving nearly 16.50 lakh meals daily across the Indian Railways network, said

a IRCTC Press release.

Positioned as a “Paradigm Shift” in service quality, the PoC aims to bring evident improvements to the entire catering chain from kitchen infrastructure and meal production to transfer and on-board service.

Notably, IRCTC is experimenting with de-linking meal production from meal service by onboarding reputed branded food and beverage operators, including industrial kitchens, restaurant chains and flight caterers. The effort seeks to provide passengers with fresher, more hygienic and restaurant-quality meals.

The trials are being rolled out on

several newly introduced trains, including Train Number: 20101/20102 - Nagpur-Secunderabad Vande Bharat Express by M/s Haldiram’s (Nagpur) and Elior (Secunderabad), Train number: 14047/14048 Delhi-Sitamahi Amrit Bharat - M/s Touch Stone Foundation (Delhi).

Passengers have already responded positively to the enhanced meal offerings, particularly the inclusion of diverse regional delicacies. IRCTC Stated that insights gathered from the ongoing trials will help shape future improvements and potential expansion of upgraded catering services for travellers nationwide.

ORISSA SPONGE IRON & STEEL LIMITED
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POSTAL BALLOT NOTICE AND REMOTE E-VOTING INFORMATION

The members of "Orissa Sponge Iron & Steel Limited" ("the Company") are hereby informed that in compliance with the provisions of Section 108 and 110 of the Companies Act, 2013 ("the Act") read with Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014, read with General Circular No. 14/2020 dated April 08, 2020, 17/2020 dated April 13, 2020, 22/2020 dated June 15, 2020, 33/2020 dated September 28, 2020, 39/2020 dated December 31, 2020, 10/2021 dated June 23, 2021 and 20/2021 dated December 08, 2021, 3/2022 dated May 05, 2022 and 11/2022 dated December 28, 2022, General Circulars No. 20/2020 dated May 05, 2020, 09/2023 dated September 25, 2023, issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs ("MCA Circulars") and other applicable provisions including any statutory modifications or re-enactment thereof for the time being in force and as amended from time to time, a Postal Ballot Notice ("Notice"), seeking consent of the members on the resolution as set out in the said Notice has been sent electronically to the members whose e-mail address are registered with the Depository Participants/ Registrar & Share Transfer agent i.e. Skyline Financial Service Private Limited ("RTA"), as on Friday, December 05, 2025 (**Cut-off Date**). The dispatch of the said notice through e-mails has been completed on Friday, December 05, 2025.

The Postal Ballot Notice ("Notice") is available on the website of the Company at <https://orissasponge.com/docs/Postal%20Ballot%20Notice%20Dec%2025.pdf> and on the website of the National Securities Depository Limited ("NSDL") at www.evoting.nsdl.com.

Members holding shares either in physical form or dematerialized form, as on the Cut-off date i.e Friday, December 05, 2025, may cast their vote electronically on the business item set out in the notice of the Postal Ballot dated Monday, December 08, 2025, through electronic voting system (remote e-voting) of National Securities Depository Limited ("NSDL").

The members are further informed that:

- The special business set out in the notice of the Postal Ballot is to be transacted through voting by electronic means.
- The remote e-voting begins at 9:00 a.m. (IST) on Monday, December 15, 2025.
- The remote e-voting ends at 5:00 p.m. (IST) on Wednesday, January 14, 2026.
- The cut-off date for determining the eligibility to vote by electronic means is Friday, December 05, 2025.
- The members may note that i) the remote e-voting module shall be disabled for voting and the voting by electronic means shall not be allowed after the date and time mentioned under point 'c' above; and ii) once the vote on resolution cast by a member, the member shall not be allowed to change it subsequently;
- The manner of remote e-voting for the members holding shares in physical mode or dematerialized mode or who have not registered their email address with the Company/Depository Participant, is provided in the notice of the Postal Ballot as available on the Company's website www.orissasponge.com and NSDL's website www.evoting.nsdl.com.
- Manner of registering/ updating email address:
 - Members holding shares in physical mode, are requested to get their email ids registered by writing to the RTA at compliance@skylinertn.com or to the Company at corporate@orissasponge.com along with signed request letter mentioning the name and address of the Member, scanned copy of the share certificate (front and back), self-attested copy of the PAN card, and self-attested copy of Address proof.
 - In case shares are held in demat mode, members are requested to register / update their e-mail addresses with the relevant Depository Participant(s)
 - Alternatively, members may send a request to evoting@nsdl.co.in for procuring user id and password for e-voting by providing above mentioned documents. The members may also refer the said Notice.
- In case of any queries, the members may refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for shareholders and e-voting user manual for Shareholders available at the download section of www.evoting.nsdl.com or call on toll free no.: 022-48867000 or send a request to Pallavi Mhatre, Senior Manager, NSDL at evoting@nsdl.com. Further, for any grievance regarding e-voting the members may also write to Mr. Suraj Kumar Thakur at email id: corporate@orissasponge.com.
- The Company has appointed Mr. Neeraj Jain, Practicing Company Secretary (Membership No. FCS 9599, COP 26163), Proprietor of M/s. Neeraj Jain & Associates, Company Secretaries, to act as the Scrutinizer for conducting the Postal Ballot including e-voting process in a fair and transparent manner. The Scrutinizer will submit his report to the Chairman / any other Director / person as may be authorized by the Chairman, on or before Friday, January 16, 2026. The results of the voting conducted by Postal Ballot along with Scrutinizer's Report will be made available on the website of the Company at www.orissasponge.com and on the website of NSDL at www.evoting.nsdl.com. Additionally, the results will also be displayed at the Registered Office of the Company.

For Orissa Sponge Iron & Steel Limited

Sd/-

Suraj Kumar Thakur

Company Secretary and Compliance Officer

Place: New Delhi
Date: December 12, 2025

IFSEC India 2025 spotlights security and surveillance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The 18th edition of IFSEC India 2025, organised by Informa Markets in India, opened today at Bharat Mandapam, presenting the country's rapidly advancing security and surveillance ecosystem.

The event brings together senior Government officials, police and defence representatives, enterprise security leaders and top technology innovators to explore next-generation solutions across AI-driven surveillance, IoT-enabled infrastructure, fire safety and integrated command systems.

This year's edition is the

largest so far, featuring over 150 exhibitors, more than 350 brands and an expected 20,000 industry visitors. The theme, "Shaping Nations, Securing Futures," highlights India's evolving national security priorities amid digital transformation and urban expansion.

Speaking at the inauguration, senior officials emphasised the need for advanced cybersecurity frameworks. Alok Tiwari of NICS said cyberattacks on Government networks have risen nearly sevenfold post Operation Sindoor, underscoring vulnerabilities in ministries and data centres. He also warned that quantum computing could



render existing algorithms obsolete by 2028, calling for quantum-resilient security systems.

Smt Padma Jaiswal, Secretary of the UT of

Puducherry, noted that cybercrime has grown into a trillion-dollar global threat, urging stronger public-private partnerships to safeguard India's expanding

digital economy.

Yogesh Mudras, Managing Director of Informa Markets in India, said the country's electronic security market has grown into a ₹1 lakh crore opportunity, driven by safe-city projects, metro networks, industrial automation and AI-led security infrastructure.

Day 1 also featured panel discussions on corporate security, AI-enabled surveillance and deep-tech innovations, with participation from leading global and domestic firms. The event continues tomorrow with sessions on logistics security, drone-based surveillance and certification standards by MeitY, RBI and Meta.

Mood Indigo 2025 kicks off December 16 at IIT Bombay

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

IIT Bombay will host Mood Indigo, known as (MI) 2025, Asia's largest college cultural festival, from December 16 to 18. The event is free for all college students and is expected to attract thousands of attendees from across India and abroad.

Started in 1971 as a small campus event, Mood Indigo has grown into a major festival featuring music, performing arts, fashion and entertainment.

This year's lineup includes



singers Sonu Nigam and Dhruv, hip-hop artists Seedhe Maut and Karma, rock and fusion bands Chaar Diwari and Anand Bhaskar Collective, Sufi performer Bismil and EDM artist Romeo Blanco.

Celebrities attending include actors Rakul Preet Singh, Pulkit Samrat, Vicky Kaushal and Jaideep Ahlawat, singer Kavita Seth, comedian Archana Puran Singh and stand-up comic Rahul Subramanian.

"This year, from 16th to 18th December, the campus will come alive for three unforgettable days when

thousands of young people from across India (and beyond!) gather to dance harder, cheer louder, try crazier things and make brighter memories than ever before.

This is where legends perform, stars are born and college kids turn into campus celebrities overnight. Mood Indigo is youthful, chaotic, vibrant and absolutely unforgettable," according to a Statement.

Students can register at moodi.org and follow updates on Instagram at @iitbombay.moodi.

BRIEFLY

INTER MIAMI EXTENDS IAN FRAY'S CONTRACT



MLS champion Inter Miami's roster for next season continued taking shape, when it announced the signing of defender Ian Fray to an extension that runs through the 2028-29 season. Fray had one goal and four assists in 35 appearances across all competitions this season for Inter Miami. He missed the 2021 and 2022 seasons with injuries. "To continue this journey here feels amazing, this club has put so much trust in me for the last five years I've been here," Fray said. "Going through injuries, they kept their trust in me to sign a new contract and now we've won the MLS Cup, so I'm excited for next year." Inter Miami declined contract options on Fafa Picault and William Yarbrough, has let Ryan Sailor's deal expire and has seen the loan of Marcelo Weigandt to the club expire as well.

FIA PRESIDENT MOHAMMED BEN SULAYEM RE-ELECTED



Mohammed Ben Sulayem was re-elected unopposed Friday as president of auto racing governing body the FIA, after a campaign overshadowed by allegations from his rivals that election rules unfairly kept them off the ballot. Ben Sulayem's new four-year term, rubber-stamped at the FIA general assembly in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, continues a tenure that has included disagreements with Formula 1 drivers and a high rate of staff turnover at the governing body. "Thank you to all our FIA members for voting in remarkable numbers and placing your trust in me once again," the former rally driver from the United Arab Emirates said in a statement. "We have overcome many obstacles but here today, together, we are stronger than ever."

Aston Villa win 2-1 over Basel in Europa League

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Basel

Aston Villa extended its winning streak to eight games in all competitions with a 2-1 victory against Basel in the Europa League to secure at least a playoff spot.

Villa is tied with Lyon and Midtjylland atop the standings of the second-tier European competition on 15 points with five wins from six games. Villa bounced back from a poor start to the season and is now third in the Premier League, including a 2-1 victory over leader Arsenal on Saturday.

At St. Jakob-Park in Basel, summer signing Evann Guessand put Villa 1-0 ahead early following a corner kick before Flavius Daniliuc met Xherdan Shaqiri's curling free kick to equalize.

Halftime substitute Youri Tielemans needed just eight minutes to place a shot from 20 meters (yards) into the bottom corner of the net to restore Villa's lead for good.

Villa manager Unai Emery has won the Europa League trophy four times during



stints in charge of Sevilla and Villarreal.

Afonso Moreira and Pavel Šulc scored inside the opening 11 minutes for Lyon to secure a 2-1 win over Go Ahead Eagles, while Cho Gue-sung netted the winner for Danish team Midtjylland in a 1-0 victory over Genk. After eight games, the top eight in the 36-team table go directly to the round of 16 in March.

Teams placed ninth to 24th advance to the knockout play-offs in February.

In other games, Celta Vigo, which had stunned host Real Madrid 2-0 on Sunday in La Liga, came down to earth

with a 2-1 defeat at home to

India lose 1-2 to Spain in FIH Junior Women's World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Santiago

India ended a disappointing 10th in the FIH Junior Women's Hockey World Cup after being handed a 1-2 defeat by Spain in their final classification match.

Kanika Siwach (41') was the sole goal-scorer for India, while Natalia Vilanova (16') and Esther Canales (36') netted one each for Spain at the Centro Deportivo de Hockey Cesped in the 9th/10th place playoff.

It was a cagey yet entertaining first quarter as Spain were through on goal with only the goalkeeper to beat but India's Nidhi heroically stepped out and made two back-to-back saves to keep the scores level.

In the 14th minute, Spain were awarded the first penalty corner of the match, which was again denied by



Nidhi. In the early moments of the second quarter, Spain launched a quick counterattack as Sara Carmona Ramos dribbled skill-fully around the circle and played a pass inside, successfully deflected by Natalia Vilanova (16') into the net to claim the lead.

India had a couple of bright chances in the following minutes but Spain hardly

made any mistakes and didn't give any penalty corner to maintain their advantage.

In the 36th minute, India had a brief moment of celebration as Sonam did well to intercept a pass and score with a powerful strike. However, the goal was cancelled after Spain took a successful video referral.

Unfortunately for India, in

Messi's GOAT India Tour set to dazzle

TAPAN MOHANTA
■ Kolkata

Argentine superstar Lionel Messi's long-awaited return to India, after a magical maiden visit back in 2011, will be high on glitz but low on actual football, promising a spectacle that may not recapture the raw sporting frenzy that once shook the Salt Lake Stadium here.

His artistry in a competitive match will be missing this time. It would be quite unlike 2011 when more than 85,000 fans packed the stadium, some even perched on terrace edges, to watch Argentina edge Venezuela 1-0 in a FIFA friendly.

The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner is not scheduled to play serious football on the 'G.O.A.T. India Tour 2025'. It is a fully promotional, and commercially-curated event which will begin on Saturday here and wind up on Monday in New Delhi.

Yet, for a city that once worshipped Maradona, Pele, dazzled Dunga and



A vendor sells Argentine footballer Lionel Messi's jerseys ahead of his visit to the city as part of the 'G.O.A.T. India Tour 2025' in Kolkata

PTI

embraced Ronaldinho, the arrival of Messi even without football is unmissable because Kolkata cannot ignore him.

The organisers have opened 78,000 seats at the Salt Lake Stadium with ticket prices going up to ₹7,000 for his 45-minute appearance on Saturday morning, raising questions on whether the city will respond with the

same unrestrained passion.

Messi will spend less than 72 hours in India but will traverse four metropolis — Kolkata, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi — in what has increasingly

begun to resemble a high-profile roadshow involving chief ministers, corporate heavyweights, Bollywood celebrities and even a scheduled meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

PT Usha urges Government to promote manufacturing of anti-doping kits in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Indian Olympic Association President (IOA) and Rajya Sabha member P T Usha on Friday urged the central government to promote production of indigenous anti-doping testing kits under the 'Make in India' initiative, saying that it will not only reduce cost but also increase transparency.

Usha raised the issue in Rajya Sabha and said that having to import testing kits causes delayed results and dependency on "external agencies". Two Swiss companies, Berlinger and LockCon, are the major suppliers of these testing kits to India right now, according to a well-placed source.

"I want to draw the urgent attention of this house to a matter that affects the integrity of our athletes and the global image of our nation. The need to promote indigenous production of anti-doping kits under the



MP PT Usha speaking in the Rajya Sabha during the Winter session of Parliament in New Delhi

PTI

Make in India initiative to work towards making India a dope-free sporting nation.

"...The menace of doping continues to threaten fair-play, athlete health and our country's reputation on the world stage. At present a significant portion of high quality dope testing kits is imported, resulting in high cost, delay in testing cycles and dependency on external agencies," she said.

India is bidding to become an Olympic host in 2036 and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has made it clear that the country will have to considerably improve its current doping record. India ranks poorly in tackling the menace and regularly features in the global top five of dope offenders.

Her statement comes a week after Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, in



Vinesh Phogat returns from retirement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Star Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat on Friday announced that she would be coming out of retirement to take another shot at an elusive Olympic medal at the 2028 Los Angeles Games as the "the fire never left" her and was merely buried under "exhaustion and noise".

The 31-year-old had walked away from the sport after the heartbreak of the Paris Games last year, where she was dramatically disqualified for being 100 grams over the permissible weight limit ahead of her 50kg category gold medal bout.

She had appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), seeking a joint silver medal, but the verdict remained unchanged, leading her to announce her retirement and join politics to be elected as an MLA from Haryana's Julana constituency.

"People kept asking if Paris was the end. For a long time, I didn't have the answer. I needed to step away from the mat, from the pressure, from the expectations, even from my own ambitions. For the first time in years, I allowed myself to breathe," Vinesh posted on her social media accounts.

"I took time to understand the weight of my journey the highs, the heartbreaks, the sacrifices, the versions of me the world never saw. And somewhere in that reflec-

THE 31-YEAR-OLD HAD WALKED AWAY FROM THE SPORT AFTER THE HEARTBREAK OF THE PARIS GAMES LAST YEAR

tion, I found the truth, I still love this sport. I still want to compete."

She along with her husband Somvir Rathee welcomed a baby boy into their family in July.

"In that silence, I found something I'd forgotten 'the fire never left'. It was only buried under exhaustion and noise. The discipline, the routine, the fight... It's in my system. No matter how far I walked away, a part of me stayed on the mat."

Vinesh said she will begin her journey towards LA28 with renewed spirit and her son by her side.

"So here I am, stepping back toward LA28 with a heart that's unafraid and a spirit that refuses to bow. And this time, I'm not walking alone my son is joining my team, my biggest motivation, my little cheerleader on this road to the LA Olympics," she added.

Vinesh had already scripted history by becoming the first Indian woman wrestler to reach an Olympic gold-medal bout.

A three-time Olympian, she has won gold medals at both the Asian Games and the Commonwealth Games.

From small towns to world stage: The fearless young brigade of Indian Hockey

MONA PARTHSARATHI
■ Chennai

A cherished inheritance, a platform to fetch a job or quite simply a leap of faith — every member of India's World Cup bronze-winning junior men's hockey team has a different take to offer on what the sport means to them. But what binds this under-21 bunch together is the dream of an Olympic medal for the country.

And that ambition has grown manifold after they fought their way to a podium finish at the World Cup ending India's nine-year wait for a medal at the showpiece.

In the process, they assured hockey watchers that

the inevitable and upcoming transition period in the senior team would not be as turbulent as is being anticipated.

Every player comes from a different world and is shaped by adversity which is unique to his story of grit and hope.

For 21-year-old captain Rohit from Dabra village in Haryana, even eating a simple meal was once a battle. A facial fracture during a practice game against the senior team last year left him nearly immobile for months, enough to make him wonder if he would ever play again.

"Those few months were so difficult that even eating and drinking became painful," Rohit told 'PTI Bhasha' on the sidelines of

the Junior World Cup here.

"At one point, I thought I wouldn't be able to play again. But once I returned to hockey, I felt I couldn't stop. I wasn't afraid anymore. Now I want to play for the senior team and win World Cup and Olympic medals. We hope this bronze inspires more boys to take up hockey."

In Sundargarh, Odisha, which was once India's hockey nursery, 19-year-old Anmol Ekka was born in a village of barely 3,000 people.

After losing his mother early, he was raised by his maternal grandparents, and it was in their village that he found the sport that changed his life.



"Everyone in my village played football. But when I moved in with my grandparents, I started playing Hockey which was very popular there. After shifting to a hostel, I realised I could

work hard and play for the country," said the full-back, who is a Birendra Lakra fan.

His performance in the bronze medal match against Argentina marked him as one of the standout players of

the tournament.

Another product of Sundargarh, 21-year-old midfielder Roshan Kujur, grew up playing on grass fields before stepping on astro turf. His inspiration is Olympian Manpreet Singh, the man he hopes to emulate at the senior level.

"There are many grassroots tournaments in my village and we used to play on grass. I became a midfielder watching Manpreet Singh from childhood, however I never imagined playing for India," he added. In Pathankot, Punjab, goalkeeper Princedeep Singh found his calling after leaving football behind.

He trained at the Cheema

Academy and wore the iconic No. 16 jersey, which once belonged to the great P R Sreejesh who is now his coach. He did Sreejesh and his team proud with a superb performance in the shootout against Belgium in the quarterfinals.

A Cristiano Ronaldo fan, who unwinds with Sidhu Moosewala songs, Princedeep said he never lost belief even when the team was trailing Argentina by two goals for three quarters in the bronze medal play-off.

"We just told each other that we had to play for one another, it was our last junior tournament. The crowd support pushed us further. We're not afraid of any team

and can beat anyone on our day," he said.

For Manmeet Singh, hockey runs in the family.

The 20-year-old mid-fielder from Verowal in Tarn Taran, Punjab is the nephew of Olympian Akashdeep Singh and grew up in a home where mistakes on the field meant a dressing down not just from coaches but family too. "My father was in the army and played hockey at the national level. Uncle Akashdeep is an Olympian and another uncle represented Punjab Police. If I make an error, everyone points it out," he said.

After five months of preparation in Bengaluru, Manmeet now longs to go home. (PTI)

Suryavanshi powers India to 234-run win over UAE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Dubai

Vaibhav Suryavanshi was at his imperious best while smashing a 171 off 95 balls, powering India to a mammoth 234-run win over hosts UAE in the inaugural match of the U19 Asia Cup on Friday.

The 14-year-old from Samastipur, Bihar, unleashed a stunning display of batting, hitting 14 sixes — the most by any batter in a single innings in the U19 level — en route to his breathtaking innings.

Half-centuries from Vihaan Malhotra (69) and Aaron George (69) further bolstered India's charge as they piled up 433 for 6 in 50 overs. The 400-plus total is India's highest-ever in U19 ODIs and is the highest in the U-19 Asia Cup's history.

In reply, the UAE were never in the contest despite fighting fifties from Prithvi Madhu (50) and Uddish Suri (78 not out), as they could only manage 199/7 in their allotted 50 overs.

Suryavanshi's blistering knock, studded with nine boundaries, is now the second-highest score by an Indian in youth ODIs, behind Ambati Rayudu's unbeaten 177 against England in 2002 and the ninth-highest score by a batter in a men's U19 ODI.



Vaibhav Suryavanshi

Sent into bat, the young opener looked a class apart as he pummelled the UAE bowlers into submission, racing to his fifty off just 30 balls and bringing up his hundred in only 56 deliveries.

He then shared a 212-run stand with George to completely flatten the hosts' attack. His fiery innings finally came to an end in the 33rd over when he was bowled by spinner Suri.

After his dismissal, the

middle-order maintained the tempo, with Vedant Trivedi (38), Abhigyan Kundu (32 not out) and Kanishk Chouhan (28) keeping the runs flowing to take India past the coveted 400-run mark.

Faced with a daunting target, the UAE lost two wickets inside the first four overs, before the quick dismissals of Muhammad Rayan, Ayaan Misbah, and Ahmed Khudadad in the space of nine balls left them tottering

at 48 for 5, effectively ending the chase. Suri and Madhu added 85 runs to arrest the slide, but the damage had long been done.

Brief Score:

India 433 for 6 in 50 overs (Vaibhav Suryavanshi 171, Vihaan Malhotra 69, Aaron George 69; Yug Sharma 2/75.

UAE 199 for 7 in 50 overs (Uddish Suri 78 not out, Prithvi Madhu 50; Deepesh Devendran 2/21).

Don't want Shubman to justify his place in team, says Doeschate

BHARAT SHARMA
■ Mullanpur

Shubman Gill has been guilty of taking too much load on himself since his T20 comeback, and the Indian team wants him to bat as freely as he does in the IPL, said assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate.

Gill was brought back into the T20 setup with the Asia Cup in September after he led India to two famous Test wins in the drawn five-match series in England.

He replaced Sanju Samson at the top of the order, but runs have not flown from his bat, raising questions ahead of the World Cup at home in February-March.

Speaking to the media after the loss in the second T20 against South Africa, ten Doeschate said Gill needed to loosen up a bit in the shortest format, and he showed signs of that at the back end of the Australia tour last month.

"Taking on the captaincy the way he did in England and how well he led and how much pride he took in that performance, I think an element of that carried over into what he wanted to do in the T20 side," said the assistant coach in response to a PTI query. "So if anything, he was too caring and maybe a little bit too tight. As I said, towards the back



end of Australia, the talks were around freeing up a little bit more, trying to relinquish that responsibility, certainly in that capacity where you feel like it is all about you and you really need to justify your place in the team.

"We don't want him to do that. We want him to play as freely as he does during IPL seasons. We believe in his class and we believe he will come good, and the same with Surya (captain too has had an extended lean run)," said ten Doeschate.

The former Netherlands all-rounder also backed Suryakumar, who has not been able to find consistency since taking over as captain last year.

"Surya again is of such quality, and we have high expectations of the players. If you are going to be India's number three, there is pres-

sure on you to score runs. "There has been a fairly long string of form now where he hasn't got the scores we like. But in isolation, we are certainly not worried about it. Batting at three again, the job we want from him is to go out there and attack.

"Again, he is someone I also thought had a lightbulb moment in Australia. I thought he had been batting really nicely leading into this series as well. As I said, two games we are not worried about, and we are confident that he will come well," said ten Doeschate.

We had a poor night with the ball

India conceded 213 runs in good batting conditions, with the pace duo of Arshdeep Singh and Jasprit Bumrah having an off day, leaking 54 and 45 runs in their four overs, respectively. (PTI)

SALIL ARORA'S HUNDRED GOES IN VAIN AS JHARKHAND BEAT PUNJAB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Ambli (Maharashtra)

Salil Arora made a sparkling 125 for Punjab, but batters fired in unison as Jharkhand scored an impressive six-wicket win in their Super League Group A match of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy on Friday.

Arora's knock (45b, 9x4, 11x6), in which the hundred came in 39 balls, helped Punjab post a solid 235 for six in 20 overs after getting reduced to 28 for two. Arora punished Sushant Mishra, clobbering the left-arm pacer for three sixes and a four in the final over of the innings to lift Punjab to an imposing total.

The IPL scouts would certainly have noted this outing of Arora, which came four days ahead of next week's mini auction, and he has been included in the Rs 30 lakh group. Arora can double up as a wicketkeeper-batter, but on this day, Punjab skipper Prabhsimran Singh donned the big gloves.

But led by Kumar Kushagra (82 not out, 46b), skipper Ishan Kishan (47, 23b), Anukul Roy (37, 17b) and Pankaj Kumar (39, 18b), Jharkhand hunted down the target in 18.1 overs. Jharkhand made 237 for four.



India's captain Suryakumar Yadav arrive at Kangra Airport ahead of the third T20 international cricket match between India and South Africa, to be held at the HPCA Stadium in Kangra on Friday

PTI

Keshav Maharaj to lead Pretoria Capitals in SA20

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Johannesburg

Senior South African spinner Keshav Maharaj was on Friday appointed as the captain of Pretoria Capitals for the upcoming SA20 tournament.

Maharaj, who had captained SA in white ball cricket, has played 40 T20Is in his career, taking 38 wickets. In SA20, the left-arm spinner has taken 27 wickets from 33 matches at an economy rate of 7.3. "One of South Africa's most experienced and respected leaders, Maharaj brings a wealth of international pedigree across formats, along with a proven track record of guiding teams with composure, clarity and intent," the SA20 said in a media release.

"His presence strengthens the balance and direction of the Pretoria Capitals squad as the team heads into the new season," it added.

India slip to 6th in WTC standings after New Zealand's big win against WI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Dubai

India on Friday slipped a rung to sixth position in the World Test Championship standings after New Zealand's comprehensive nine-wicket victory against the West Indies in Wellington propelled them to third place.

Runners-up in the first two WTC cycles, India were placed fifth after they were blanked 2-0 by South Africa at home last month, with New Zealand occupying the sixth position. However, the table saw a major turnaround after the Kiwis' big win in the second Test at Basin Reverse on Friday.

Former champions Australia continue to hold the top position with 100 percentage points (win-loss percentage), with South Africa in second place with



75 percentage points. Sri Lanka (66.67) and Pakistan (50) occupy the fourth and fifth positions, respectively.

New Zealand have so far accumulated 66.67 percentage points, while India has a win-loss percentage of 48.15. India can drop further down to seventh if England stage a comeback against Australia in the Ashes. The Aussies lead the series 2-0 with three more matches to play. India's next assign-

ment is against Sri Lanka in August next year.

With the latest result, New Zealand have also boosted their prospects of a second appearance in the World Test Championship Final.

The Black Caps' bowlers did the damage on the third day at Basin Reserve, with Jacob Duffy's five-wicket haul helping the hosts dismiss the West Indies for just 128 in their second innings.

If we start judging Gill after two T20I games, then we have a problem: Nehra

KUSHAN SARKAR
■ New Delhi

Gujarat Titans head coach Ashish Nehra is not amused by the snap judgments being passed on skipper Shubman Gill's form, cautioning that writing him off after a couple of outings in the volatile T20 format reflects the growing tendency of arriving at quick conclusions.

Gill, who made a comeback to the T20I set-up as vice-captain during the Asia Cup, has totalled 181 runs in the last 10 games at a strike-rate below 140. Nehra, who has watched Gill from close quar-



ters as the GT head coach for the past two seasons, was asked whether he is worried, considering that IPL is three months away. "Forget three

months, had IPL been three weeks away, I (still) wouldn't be worried. Because you are talking about a format like T20. And only two matches have

been played against South Africa, if I am not wrong," Nehra, the former fast bowler known for straight shooting, replied to a query from PTI during an interaction with a select group. Nehra feels that the fundamental problem with criticism in India is reaching a conclusion on the basis of numbers alone.

"This is our problem. In such a fast-paced tournament format, whether it's international cricket or IPL, if a player like Shubman Gill is judged after not coming good in two to three matches, then it will be difficult," Nehra said. In his inimitable style laced with

sarcasm, Nehra said if one reckons that change is needed, there are many options are there to be tried.

"You have a lot of options if you want to see. You can remove Abhishek Sharma and Shubman Gill, and you can open with Sai Sudharsan and Ruturaj Gaikwad," Nehra said, and his dig at critics wasn't lost on anyone.

"If you want to remove them (Sai and Ruturaj), you can open with Washington Sundar and Ishan Kishan. So, you have a lot of options.

"Now, if you lose 1 or 2 matches, if the stats of the so-called batsmen or bowlers

are not good and if you talk about changing them, then it will be difficult," Nehra batted with full force for Gill.

Washington is a batter who can play anywhere

Washington Sundar played only six games for the Titans last season because of a set combination, but Nehra did drop hints that if fit, the Tamil Nadu man would be used way more this time. Washington's role in the Indian team has created a lot of confusion as to whether he is more of a batting all-rounder or a specialist spinner who is also a capable batsman. (PTI)

You never know what you have until you've lost it: de Kock on reversing international retirement

BHARAT SHARMA
■ Mullanpur

Quinton de Kock has got his hunger back to win games for South Africa, feels fitter than ever and is batting as if he never spent time away from international cricket. His sublime 90 off 46 balls in the second T20I against India was a testament to the left-hander's renewed purpose in playing for the country again. In the age of power-hitting, de Kock relies on conventional strokeplay and makes batting look effortless. The 32-year-old had retired from ODIs after the 2023 World Cup and had not played the shortest format since the loss to India in the 2024 T20 World Cup final until October.

De Kock is now back

playing white-ball cricket and says the time away from the game actually allowed him to realise what he was missing out on.

"I think before my retirement, I was losing my hunger to win games for this team. That time away just brought back my hunger. I was telling the guys, I don't think I've ever felt this way," de Kock spoke in depth about his reasons for an international comeback. "Before, when you're young, you're trying to just play to score runs and impress. I feel now that there's a renewed energy where I'm not just playing. I'm playing to win every game with renewed energy."

De Kock said he had lost his motivation after going through the grind of interna-



tional cricket day in and day out. "Before, it would be hard to wake up and go play for the team again. Especially when you play a series over and over where

you've played India multiple times, home and away. Over time, I was getting sick of it. I was looking for a new challenge, and I wasn't getting it. "Now coming back, I feel

like this is actually what I missed. Everyone knows, you never know what you have until you've lost it. Now coming back, there's a renewed energy where I feel

I can play much longer than what I thought previously," said the elegant left-hander.

Now that he has found the drive to excel for his team in white-ball formats, is there a possibility for a return to Test cricket?

"You are not the only one who has asked me this, but as of now, it's a straight no," de Kock said on a lighter note. The opener said his decision to reverse retirement was taken after due deliberation, and the break was needed for him to rekindle his love for the sport.

"It wasn't a decision that I just woke up and had. I think over time, the more breaks I had, the more I felt ready to come back. I'd already played in international cricket for more than a decade.

"When I left, I was quite exhausted from international cricket. So, my break, I still feel, was much needed. So when I came back now, I've got a lot of energy, I feel I can put back towards the team.

"I've always said to coach, to Shooks (Shukri Conrad), I want to play as long as I can now.

I don't think I could have had that mindset if I carried on playing.

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